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**RHETORIC,
PROFESSIONAL
COMMUNICATION, &
GLOBALIZATION**

PUBLICATIONS ON THE THEORY, PRACTICE, AND TEACHING OF
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION IN CRITICAL GLOBAL CONTEXTS



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The *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization* publishes articles on the theory, practice, and teaching of professional communication in critical global contexts. Articles can take a variety of forms, including formal empirical studies, illustrative case studies, book, software, and academic program review, and curriculum development. The Journal is predominantly cross cultural, concentrating on how professionals from a variety of cultural and rhetorical traditions communicate with each other across a range of contexts using various communication media.

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1. Improve our research, teaching, and practice of professional communication in global contexts.
2. Develop better theoretical models of global professional communication.
3. Develop more valid and ethical research methodologies for global professional communication.
4. Improve the practice of global business and manufacturing through more effective communication.
5. Improve professional communication research and practice in critical cross-cultural and international contexts such as the environment, law, immigration, health, energy, economics, and human rights.
6. Develop issues and research agendas that address the most pressing issues and challenges for communicating in the context of globalization.
7. Develop better curricula and materials for teaching global professional communication not only in the United States and Europe, but around the world. Special attention will be given developing culturally sensitive curricula of professional communication for the developing world, including parts of Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and India.
8. Address the influence of new communication technologies in global professional contexts.
9. Improve our ability to use professional communication to address issues of social justice in the context of globalization

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Submitted articles cannot have been previously published, nor be forthcoming in an archival journal or book (print or electronic). In addition, by submitting material to *Journal of Rhetoric, Professional Communication, and Globalization*, the author is stipulating that the material is not currently under review at another journal (electronic or print) and that the author will not submit the material to another journal (electronic or print) until the completion of the editorial decision process at the Journal. "Publication" in a working-paper series does not constitute prior publication.

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Introduction to Special Issue on Intercultural and Participatory Risk Communication About COVID-19: Using Immaterial Labor to Promote Social Justice in a Pandemic

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COVID-19 has introduced much disruption to all walks of life and posed threats to the livelihood and survival of millions of individuals. Healthcare systems were overburdened. Due to health disparities, varying access to vaccination, and failing public health infrastructure in different countries, people got infected and died without access to masks, oxygen, or proper treatment. Many countries have gone through multiple waves of outbreaks due to relented masking, quarantine, and social distancing policies in attempts to boost workforce participation and economic recovery. In 2021, 47 million American workers voluntarily quit their jobs during the Great Resignation due to burnout or search for better employment during the pandemic (Chugh, 2021; Fuller & Kerr, 2022). In the labor market, millions of jobs have been permanently lost due to accelerating automation, business closure, or sectoral adjustments (Autor & Reynolds, 2020; Ben-Achour, 2020; Stevenson, 2020). Between March 2020 and May 2021, the U.S. labor market witnessed a massive exodus of three million women, who had to cope with the increasing needs for unpaid care—shopping, homeschooling, childcare, and elderly care—due to furloughs, layoffs, illnesses, and school closures (Saraiva, 2021).

The global vaccine inequity has been immense, with almost 85% of global vaccine doses administered in high- and upper-middle-income countries in comparison with five percent in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) by April 2021 (Asundi et al., 2021; Mathieu et al., 2021). This

glaring inequity in global vaccine allocation was caused by barriers related to intellectual property, manufacturing, and regulatory considerations, and can bring a heavy toll on the economy, morbidity, and mortality to LMICs (Burki, 2021).

Racial and ethnic minority groups and vulnerable populations, particularly low-income African American, American Indian, and Hispanic American communities, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic with higher infection, hospitalization, and death rates (Mackey et al., 2021; Remeikis, 2020; Stevenson, 2020). This disproportional impact highlights the long-existing structural racism, health disparities, and economic hardship that drive the vulnerability of Black and Brown people to COVID (Boddie, 2021). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2020) highlights the important roles played by social determinants in COVID consequences, which include neighborhood and physical environment, i.e., affordable and quality housing, access to quality healthcare, lower incomes, education barriers, disproportionately high representation in essential work with frequent direct contact and thus higher exposure and infection risks.

One of us (Ding) published a book on transcultural risk communication about SARS among China, the United States, and the World Health Organization (WHO) back in 2003 (Ding, 2014). Focusing on a pre-social media era, the data examined in the book were print or digital: fliers, official documents, traditional mass media, as well as alternative media such as individual websites, text messages, and discussion forums. Today, people communicate about COVID-19 on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, WhatsApp, Telegram, and WeChat, leveraging the affordances provided by individual platforms for amplification (Lee et al., 2021; Walwema, 2021). This proliferation of COVID-19 information on social media results not only in an information overload that impedes the search for reliable facts but also the quick spread of online misinformation, be it rumors or fake news, about the pandemic (Cinelli et al., 2020). WHO (2021) characterized this phenomenon as infodemic, namely,

excess information, including false or misleading information, in digital and physical environments during an acute public health event. It has led to confusion, health-detrimental and/or risk-taking behaviours, all of which have been compounded by higher levels of mistrust in health authorities and public health responses.

To cope with the risks of infodemic and reduce its impact on health behaviors during public health crises, scholars have examined the correction of COVID-19 misinformation through mainstream news media (Lwin et al., 2021), fact-checking labels (Zhang et al., 2021), and social media interaction (Lee et al., 2021); challenges and remedies of public health messaging (Nan et al., 2022); as well as ethical issues in COVID-19 communication to mitigate the pandemic (Guttman & Lev, 2021).

The foundational issues underlying risk communication processes remain little changed despite the rapid technological advancement. For quantitatively oriented disciplines such as economics, statistics, and engineering, risk is used to refer to the unpredictability of outcomes, which can be objectively and quantitatively assessed (Sandman, 1993; Weber & Johnson, 2009). The field of psychology, in contrast, treats risk both as a concept influenced by more factors than just probability and outcome level (Weber & Milliman, 1997) and as a culture-driven subjective experience that often generates negative emotions such as fear and vulnerability (Figner & Weber, 2011; Slovic et al., 2004; Weber & Ancker, 2011; Weber, Blais, & Betz, 2002).

Beck (1992) defined risk as “a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself” (p. 21). Beck described the two divergent disciplinary ap-

proaches to framing risks as “natural objectivism” and “cultural relativism” (1995, p. 162). Based upon scientific knowledge and economic calculation, the natural objectivist approach has dominated institutional risk-assessment practices with the power of expert rationality (Beck, 1999, p. 99). Cultural relativism, in contrast, considers risks as a social reality shaped by institutional discourses, cultural beliefs and values, and individual perceptions (Mythen, 2004). Risk perceptions thus are culturally situated (Beck, 1996, 1999), discursively mediated, and structured by social contexts (Mythen, 2004).

The emerging communication technologies produce little impact on this existing power structure, the global health disparities, the racial divide, or the expert-non-expert divide that results in the one-directional, top-down, and technocratic information flow from authorities to the public (Grabill & Simmons, 1998). These technologies also have limited impacts in generating the so-called “rational responses” from the concerned and sometimes panicked public to reduce potential harm done by “irrational” responses, i.e., fear, anger, anxiety, distrust, despair, and resistance. Many scholars have argued that calling emotional responses from the public “irrational responses” is a misnomer, since “irrational” responses are “sometimes a more appropriate and reasonable response than logic” (Katz & Miller, 1996, p. 131; see also Ding, 2020; Fischer et al., 1991; Leiss & Powell, 2004). In their influential article titled “Risk as Feelings,” Loewenstein et al. (2001) distinguished between the cognitive and emotional evaluations of risks before emphasizing the central role the latter play in determining behavior outcomes in individual risk responses from the perspective of psychology.

Beverly Sauer (2003) argued for the need to acknowledge and incorporate the knowledge and experiences owned by the public to produce effective risk communication processes and results. How can the public, particularly communities and citizens affected by greater risks, make their concerns, knowledge, and experiences both heard and considered in risk deliberation processes? We argue that, as rhetoricians, we can leverage our understanding of immaterial labor, particularly communicative labor and affective labor, to help promote social justice in risk communication endeavors.

Immaterial Labor in Risk Communication

Immaterial labor is defined as the labor that does not produce material or durable commodities but results in the “informational and cultural content of the commodity” (Lazzarato, 1996). Seeing immaterial labor as the new forms of forces in networks of biopolitical production, Hardt and Negri (2001) introduced three types of immaterial labor: cooperative, “massified” intellectual labor, i.e., the “interactive labor of symbolic analysis and problem solving;” communicative labor, of “industrial production that has newly become linked in informational networks;” and affective labor, or “the production and manipulation of affects” (p. 30). Greene (2004) argued that such immaterial labor shares rhetoric’s informational, instrumental, cultural, and cooperative dimensions while producing the commodity of “bodies, affect, and social networks” (p. 201). Greene (2004) suggested that a materialist-communicative approach respecifies rhetorical agency as communicative labor, which functions as “an instrument, object, and medium for harnessing social cooperation and coordination” (pp. 203–204).

Focusing on academic labor, Gist-Mackey, Kunkel, and Guthrie (2021) employed the concept of communicative labor to examine how communication in research, teaching, and service can be emotionally laden work for critical women scholars. They define communicative labor

as “the ongoing, interconnected tasks requiring the use of communicative and literate skill sets (i.e., listening, speaking, responding, disclosing, writing, reading, negotiating, and analyzing) to execute work in a way that is undergirded by workplace emotion (i.e., emotional labor, emotion work, emotion with work, emotion at work, and emotion toward work) and compassionate communication.” Their study highlights the communicative aspect of faculty labor across research, teaching, and service, which can manifest as compassionate communication, workplace emotion, and gendered work.

Often referred to as *emotional labor*, performances of affective labor are often required by supervisors as the way that work should be executed (Wharton, 1999). Much has been published about work as an emotional experience in the service industry (Choi et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2007) and in the helping professions, which include healthcare, policing, K-12, and higher education (Hochschild, 2012; Kramer & Hess, 2002; van Gelderen et al., 2017).

Risk communication reveres only one type of immaterial labor: the intellectual labor of “symbolic analysis and problem solving,” which generates data, scientific results, and public health recommendations (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 17). Intellectual labor comes from experts who conduct research on emerging risks and evaluate risk factors using scientific methods such as laboratory experiments, computer modeling, surveys, or interviews. By contrast, communicative labor, as a part of the abstract labor that “manipulates symbols and information,” is rendered secondary and often takes place at the end of intellectual labor (p. 293). Featured by “human contact and interaction,” affective labor is often designated to risk communicators and health educators to help create “a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion” (p. 293). Viewed as an add-on to dress up communicative labor, affective labor often remains unacknowledged and invisible, if not institutionally excluded (see Ding, 2019; Hardt & Negri, 2000; Greene, 2004).

When coming from concerned citizens, affective labor is often brushed away as irrational responses that express the anxiety, concerns, and fears experienced by communities directly impacted by such risks. Rather than being legitimate responses to be acknowledged and addressed by experts and authorities, such disruptive affective labor gets stigmatized, silenced, and condemned as inconvenient problems to be addressed. Public perceptions of risk are closely connected with the unofficial communicative labor and affective labor made by concerned communities and citizens. Multiple factors have shaped the individual perception of and responses to risks, including class (Douglas, 1985; Graham & Clemente, 1996), gender (Flynn et al., 1994; Gustafson, 1998; Weaver et al., 2000), age (Hinchcliffe, 2000, p. 127; Jackson & Scott, 1999; Mooney et al., 2000), and ethnicity (Caplan, 2000; Finucane et al., 2000; Mackey, 1999). To better understand and engage with affective labor in public responses to risks, it is important to understand the demographics of the communities affected by such risks, the material conditions and constraints they face, and the concerns they have about such risks before inviting participatory deliberation and decision making input from affected communities.

The Social Justice Turn in Technical and Professional Communication

The field of technical and professional communication (TPC) is experiencing a “social justice” turn (Walton & Jones, 2013). Social justice research investigates “how communication broadly defined can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, politically, and/or economically under-resourced” (Jones & Walton, 2018, p. 347). TPC research offers great potential to improve social justice efforts because professional communication strategies “can be

complicit in reinforcing which perspectives and whose experiences are valued and legitimized” (Jones, 2016, p. 343). Therefore, TPC scholars have a responsibility to critique and intervene in the potentially oppressive technical documents or technologies that are influencing already marginalized groups (Jones & Williams, 2018, p. 374).

Social justice issues have been long-standing concerns in the field, such as participatory decision-making and public engagement (Ding, 2013, 2019, 2020; Gerdes, 2022; Grabill & Simmons, 1998; Simmons & Zoetewey, 2012), user advocacy, human-centered design, and social activism (Agboka, 2013, 2014; Jones, 2016; Rose, 2016; Walton, 2016), civic engagement and service learning (Crabtree & Sapp, 2005; Dorpenyo, 2019; Grant, 2022), digital media and mobile technologies (Agbozo, 2022; Sano-Franchini, 2018), disability and accessibility (Baker et al., 2021; Oswal & Melonçon, 2014), and data (visualization) practices (Gouge & Carlson, 2022; Welhausen, 2022). A growing body of TPC scholarship has used social justice as an explicit construct, exploring theories, methodologies, and pedagogies for advocating for positive changes for disempowered and silenced groups (Walton & Agboka, 2021). In public health crises like COVID-19, for example, scholars have explored how data visualizations can render invisible the realities of vulnerable communities (Atherton, 2021; Carlson & Gouge, 2021) and how visual framing of masks may exacerbate racial antagonism (Batova, 2021).

To enact diversity, inclusion, and social justice in TPC, Jones, Moore, and Walton (2016) developed a framework that involves three macro-level concepts (3Ps): positionality, privilege, and power. This 3P heuristic scaffolds researchers in (1) critically thinking about how certain groups are disenfranchised and in (2) recognizing ways that TPC research can either “reinscribe marginalization and disempowerment or promote agency and advocacy” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 220). Extending this framework, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) further proposed practical strategies for redressing inequalities (the 4Rs): recognizing injustices and systems of oppression, revealing these injustices to others as a call to action, rejecting injustices and opportunities to perpetuate them, and replacing unjust practices with intersectional, coalitional approaches (p. 133). The 4Rs heuristic helps bridge the gap between recognizing injustices and oppression and replacing the systems that uphold them.

Social justice can also be considered an actual or ideal situation that involves three major perspectives, namely, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Jost & Kay, 2010). First, distributive justice has been used interchangeably with social justice by philosophers and the lay public. Focusing on “proportional equality,” distributive justice concerns the dispersion of benefits, resources, and burdens in society according to allocation principles. Second, procedural justice, including both decision control and process control, relates to the “procedures, norms, rules” involved in public decision-making to protect the “basic rights, liberties, and entitlements” of individuals and communities (Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1122). Third, interactional justice, encompassing informational and interpersonal justice, means that social actors, either authorities or fellow citizens, treat human beings with dignity and respect (Jost & Kay, 2010, p. 1143).

Drawing on Jost and Kay’s (2010) three-part typology of social justice and Greene’s (2004) materialist approach, Ding (2019) illustrated a materialist social justice approach by mapping out the theoretical connections between immaterial labor and social justice. Specifically, affective labor is associated with interpersonal justice, while communicative labor, or rhetorical endeavor, improves both informational justice and process control. Collectively, communicative and affective labor can function as what Ding, Li, and Haigler (2015) called “strategic entry points” for marginalized publics to circumvent institutional power and create space for alternative politics

and civic intervention to combat social injustice. Kong (2021) extended this framework to include the less studied construct of corrective justice, which corrects or compensates the wrongdoings and destructions for the sufferers of injustice.

Social justice and ethics are intertwined constructions. Believing “all social justice actions as ethically motivated,” Walwema, Colton, and Holmes (2022), in their co-edited special issue, argued that ethics has a great deal to offer social justice work. They called for operationalized ethical frameworks and moral values to help us understand how to enact social justice and identify just/unjust behaviors, actions, and policies. For instance, Bennett and Hannah (2022) proposed an ethical framework to promote disability justice in the workplace while Pihlaja (2022) illustrated how ethics enables the formation of normative goals to inform social justice at the Mexico-U.S. border.

Intercultural Participatory Risk Communication

In their co-edited special issue on new directions in intercultural professional communication for *Technical Communication Quarterly*, Ding and Savage (2013) called for the move from nation-centric perspectives to study transnational rhetoric (Hesford & Schell, 2008; Hunsinger, 2006), transcultural flows (Appadurai, 1996), translingual practices, and power-knowledge dynamics (Foucault, 1976) while paying attention to social justice and accountability in such transcultural work. Studying transcultural communication requires researchers to go beyond monocultural preoccupation to explore cultural contexts and local needs, to collaborate with community partners to solve messy local problems, and to employ methodological reflectivity to cope with challenges posed by such intercultural work (Agboka, 2013, 2014; Baniya, 2022; Ding, 2020; Dorpenyo, 2019; Frost, 2013; Gerdes, 2022; Schoch-Spana et al., 2007; St. Amant, 2017; Sun, 2012; Thatcher, 2012; Walton, Zraly, & Mugengana, 2015).

What new developments have emerged in the last decade and how can we update existing theories on intercultural professional communication in the context of a new pandemic? How can scholars, teachers, and practitioners of technical communication engage in critical practices for promoting social justice in transcultural contexts? The objective of this special issue is to examine how immaterial labor can be used to promote social justice in transcultural risk communication about COVID-19. This special issue covers a series of topics on risk communication and brings together a diverse collection of methodological practices for technical communication practitioners and scholars to examine risk discourses and risk communication practices operating both locally and globally to shape our embodied experiences during the pandemic.

We include studies that bring communicative and affective labor to the forefront of risk communication whether as storytelling, rhetorical care technologies, content reuse, or coalition-building efforts to support language access in indigenous communities. Taken together, this special issue provides insights into possible ways that technical communication and rhetorical scholars can contribute to the search for strategic entry points in rhetorical negotiations to promote social justice in a pandemic shot through with uncertainties, challenges, and crises.

Overview of Articles in the Special Issue

We group the five articles in this special issue by general topic areas, including translational and translingual practices in community-based settings, tactical communication through alternative

media to intervene in dominant narratives, and social media's mediation of anti-Asian discourses.

Articles on the first topic focus on informational justice, language access, and translational practices in language minority communities. Erika Hernández Cuevas and Laura Gonzales demonstrate coalition-building strategies for promoting Indigenous language justice during the COVID-19 pandemic. They offer an expanded view of language access that includes not only translation or interpretation of content, but also community knowledge and collaboration. Through collaborative work with Indigenous language speakers, translators, and activists in both the U.S. and Mexico, they highlight three essential elements of building coalitions for Indigenous language access: translation, indigenous perspective, and technical communication. Drawing on translation studies, transcultural risk communication, and care ethics, Soyeon Lee provides an ethnographic case study of the communicative and caring activities—what she calls “rhetorical care technologies”—in a Korean-speaking transnational migrant community in the U.S. in COVID-19 recovery. She categorizes nonprofit organization workers' caring strategies into four types, including translanguaging attunements, transmodal attunements, translational attunements, and coalitional actions. Such rhetorical labor helps multilingual community members navigate the monolingual standardized design provided by government officials.

Articles on the second topic explore how citizens engage in tactical communication through alternative media to counter official narratives. Focusing on the case of Fang Fang's Wuhan Diary, Chen Chen illustrates the mediating roles that public pandemic diaries play in circumventing institutional barriers. Using a social justice-informed, critically contextualized methodology, she explains how the communicative and affective labor of Fang Fang's diary enacted social justice by recognizing, revealing, and rejecting oppressions experienced by Wuhan residents during the lockdown. Pritisha Shrestha and Gabriella Wilson offer another illustration of how alternative information flows promote social justice during a pandemic and infodemic. They discuss the ways that Nepali netizens use immaterial labor to disrupt and dismantle deficiency narratives about non-Western countries. They highlight the importance of examining localized resistance and collaboration in grassroots communities.

Articles on the third topic examine how mass and social media disseminate and mediate anti-Asian discourses using content reuse analysis. Drawing on intercultural communication frameworks, Chenxing Xie's article investigates how Chinese and American mass and social media employed content reuse strategies in reporting anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her study offers implications for technical communicators to strategically reuse content while considering the cultural differences of target audiences.

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Building Coalitions to Support Indigenous Language Speakers During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

While the work of language access is ongoing and has been taking place for a long time in various contexts, language access efforts often ignore Indigenous communities. As such, more interventions are needed to recognize how health-related messaging needs to be adapted not only across languages, but across worldviews. In this article, a technical communication scholar and Spanish-English translator and a Chinateco-Spanish translator, interpreter, and activist from the Municipio de San Pedro Yolox discuss their work to foster language access during the COVID-19 pandemic for and with Indigenous language speakers in Oaxaca de Juárez, Mexico, and Gainesville, Florida, USA. Through their reflective examples, the authors argue that in order to work toward language access through a social justice orientation during the COVID-19 pandemic, technical communication researchers and health justice activists should collaborate with and amplify the work of Indigenous language speakers, particularly by learning about, embracing, and centralizing Indigenous frameworks and understandings of language.

Keywords: Indigenous languages; community engagement; language access; coalitions

Introduction

“Buenas tardes. Mi nombre es _____. Le hablo para preguntar si usted conoce alguien que nos pueda ayudar con una traducción sobre el virus COVID-19.”

“Good afternoon. My name is _____. I’m calling to ask if you might know someone who can help us with a translation related to the COVID-19 virus.”

As the world continues experiencing the multi-layered tragedies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, translators, interpreters, and language activists across the world have been coming together in various capacities, uttering different versions of our opening lines, “Do you know someone who can help us with a translation related to COVID-19?” In other words, “do you know anyone who can help save lives?”

Indeed, many organizations serving minoritized communities during and before the pandemic point to the importance of language access—of providing information to community members in a language that they are comfortable speaking (García, 2021; Getahun, 2021; United Nations, 2020). For example, the report, “COVID-19 and Indigenous Peoples,” produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020), notes that

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic poses a grave health threat to Indigenous peoples around the world. Indigenous communities already experience poor access to healthcare, significantly higher rates of communicable and non-communicable diseases, lack of access to essential services, sanitation, and other key preventive measures, such as clean water, soap, disinfectant, etc. Likewise, most nearby local medical facilities, if and when there are any, are often under-equipped and under-staffed. Even when Indigenous peoples are able to access healthcare services, they can face stigma and discrimination. A key factor is to ensure these services and facilities are provided in indigenous languages, and as appropriate to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples (n. pag.).

As this report makes clear, Indigenous language speakers are often not provided with adequate information related to COVID-19 prevention and treatment in their own languages, and already experience racism and discrimination based on other factors. Thus, the lack of language access forms an added layer of oppression that makes Indigenous communities more vulnerable to the disease than other communities. These disparities in terms of health and information access, as the United Nations report emphasizes, are not unique to the United States, but are also present in global contexts. Thus, across the world, Indigenous communities are building networks, often through immaterial labor, to support and sustain each other by providing and sharing critical information in Indigenous languages.

In technical communication research, language access is becoming increasingly important, as scholars begin to recognize that processes like translation and localization are central to effective technical communication in contemporary global contexts (Agboka, 2013; Batova, 2018). While technical communication as a field acknowledges the value of globalization and the importance of translation in fostering global reach, the expertise of translators and language activists could be further highlighted within technical communication scholarship, particularly during global crises. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, as is the case with all health crises, issues of language accessibility are impacting marginalized communities at alarming rates, particularly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) who rely on accessible information to attain services and healthcare in already-oppressive systems (Ding, 2020; Ding, Li, & Haigler, 2015). For this

reason, it is imperative that technical communicators and translators collaborate to mitigate misinformation and structural oppressions during the pandemic. As Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) argue, “to engage in the work of justice, we need theories of power imbued with understandings of oppression, theories that centralize the experiences of multiply marginalized people, who are in the best position to see those oppressive structures that block empowerment” (p. 108). In other words, oppression (i.e., the unequal treatment and violence inflicted upon a specific group of people) is systemic and is embedded in all aspects of our society (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019), and those who consistently experience oppression are the best equipped to speak on its impacts. Similarly, individuals with experience navigating linguistic oppression (e.g., translators and interpreters who know what it feels like to not be able to access information in one’s own language) have important perspectives regarding the definitions and value of language access. These perspectives can provide insights for technical communicators who work toward social justice. In this special issue on using immaterial labor to promote social justice in a pandemic, recognizing the immaterial, collaborative work of Indigenous language speakers can provide technical communicators with strategies for building coalitions and expanding the impact of language access.

Language Access for Indigenous Language Speakers During COVID-19

One of the reasons Indigenous language speakers across the world are at a disadvantage when it comes to language access is because Indigenous communities and Indigenous languages are consistently erased and ignored by colonial governments. For example, Zapotec activist Abigail Castellanos García (2021) explains that in Mexico, “la pandemia por la COVID-19 llegó a México y llegó no solo a desestabilizar nuestra vida cotidiana, sino también a revelar las desigualdades estructurales existentes en el país” (the COVID-19 pandemic reached Mexico and managed to not only destabilize our daily lives, but also to reveal the structural inequities already existing across the country” (n. pag.). Indeed, in Mexico, Indigenous communities make up 19.4% of the general population and speak over 68 different Indigenous languages. Yet, throughout the pandemic, the Mexican government has been publishing COVID-19 related information in Spanish alone, leaving Indigenous activists and organizations to translate, localize, and share information in multiple Indigenous languages. For example, throughout the pandemic, the organization that Castellanos García (2021) works in has been revising information produced by the Mexican government to better reflect Indigenous values, languages, and orientations to health. This immaterial labor is often unrecognized and uncompensated. If technical communicators working in colonial organizations were to collaborate with Indigenous language speakers during the information design process, rather than waiting until after information is written, designed, and shared before incorporating Indigenous experiences, we could better honor the labor and expertise of Indigenous language speakers as we work collectively toward social justice.

Linguistic discrimination toward Indigenous language speakers is also prevalent in the US, where several sources point to the negative impacts that the pandemic continues having on Indigenous language speakers, many of whom are migrant farmworkers living in California, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Washington (Archury, Estrada, & Quandt, 2010). As sources document, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated language access issues for Indigenous language speakers in the United States, particularly those who come from Latin American countries, and who are then assumed to speak Spanish based solely on their nationality (Gutahun, 2021; United Nations, 2020). For example, in North Central Florida, community organizations such as the Rural Women’s Health Project, the only health justice organization in the region, have noted the increasing presence of Indigenous language speakers

in the area, and outlined the need to provide adequate language access to Indigenous language speakers from Latin American who are often assumed to speak Spanish (Gonzales et al., 2022).

Since governments and local agencies don't always take the time to research the language preferences and skills of the people they serve, Indigenous language speakers are often erased from the written cultural record of various institutions, including on documents like the census. Since many Indigenous language speakers in the US are migrant farmworkers with varying documentation status who may not feel comfortable completing the census or being involved in local events, many institutions ignore the presence of Indigenous language speakers and the need to provide language access in Indigenous languages. Through this erasure, Indigenous language speakers continue facing linguistic oppression during the pandemic through the erasure of their languages, which then perpetuates other oppressions such as lack of healthcare. As Hannah Getahun (2021) reported, California, to name just one example, is home to 350,000 Indigenous Oaxacans who speak Indigenous languages and work as migrant farmworkers (n. pag.). As Getahun (2012) continues, "often unvaccinated, with limited access to information about the vaccines, many of these immigrants are farmworkers who live in poverty, with low wages, less access to health care and crowded housing. Combined with the language barriers that allow pandemic misinformation to spread, they are particularly vulnerable to infection and serious illness" (n. pag.). These oppressions and discrimination are especially prevalent in rural parts of the United States, including rural parts of Florida, where many Indigenous language speakers who work as migrant farmworkers provide nourishment and support for the community at large, during and beyond the pandemic.

Providing language access for Indigenous language speakers, both in the US and Mexico, requires much more than translating information from one language to another. Due to the cultural values and principles, as well as the work and living conditions of Indigenous communities in both countries, COVID protocols such as social distancing are difficult to comply with and perhaps antithetical to a particular group whose values are community-driven rather than individualistic. In this case, translating information into Indigenous languages is just one aspect of language access, as localization (the adaptation of information for a particular cultural context) and transcreation (rewriting or redesigning information for specific contexts during the process of translation) are often necessary to ensure that health messaging during the pandemic is both understood and actionable (García, 2021). Furthermore, digital distribution and literacy levels also influence language accessibility for Indigenous language speakers, as "la brecha digital y el poco acceso a servicios de telecomunicaciones que no permite el acceso pleno a la información y aun más a información con pertinencia cultural y lingüística, se hizo más evidente y remarcó las desigualdades que existen aún en nuestro país para los hablantes de lenguas indígenas" (the digital divide and limited access to telecommunication services that does not allow full access to information, and even more so to culturally and linguistically accessible information, become more evident and highlighted the inequities that continue to exist in our country for Indigenous language speakers" (García, 2021, n. pag.). As Ding (2020) further elaborates, "Numerous publications call attention to a number of factors that contribute to blocked or inadequate access to information and communication technologies (ICT) as well as Internet. These include socioeconomic status, connectivity, affordability, power, motivation, usage, social resources and relationships, community and institutional infrastructure, and literacy and skills" (p. 147). Thus, language access, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, is not only a translation issue, but also a technical communication problem that requires attunement to digital distribution, immaterial labor, project management, localization, collaboration, and much more.

Translation as a Social Justice in Technical Communication Issue

In the United States, language access is a human right protected by Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and other regulations, including Executive Order 13166, which requires that any agency receiving federal funding provide vital information to individuals who speak languages other than English in the US in a language that they can understand. While these policies have been in place for decades, different agencies and organizations have multiple, and sometimes problematic, interpretations of language access. For example, while some organizations may claim to provide language access by having some phone interpretation services available, organizations don't always publicize their language services, train staff to work with multilingual clients, or ensure that speakers of languages other than English feel welcomed or encouraged to participate within the organization. For this reason, several organizations and entities differentiate between language access, or the availability of information in languages other than English, and language justice, which can be defined as "recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice" (Communities Creating Healthy Environments, 2011, p. 2). In other words, the components of language justice go beyond the translation of information to consider how organizations can be more holistically inclusive in their work.

Justice-driven orientations to language access are particularly important when working toward language access for and with Indigenous language speakers, whose perceptions and understandings of language do not align with colonial values often embraced by Western institutions. For example, Gonzales (2022) explains "as Indigenous language researchers and activists have long argued, decolonial approaches to language diversity must, 'visibilizar cómo el elemento cultural 'lengua' es un concepto polisémico que en este campo refiere más a sistemas de representación social y de organización del pensamiento que un sistema de sonidos y/o palabras' (make visible how the cultural element known as 'language' is a polysemic concept that [in the field of Indigenous language studies] refers more to a system of social representation and organization of thought than to a system of only sounds and/or words) (Córdova Hernández, 2019, p. 19)" (p. 6). Thus, considering language access from an Indigenous perspective requires more than translating information from one language to another. Instead, language access for Indigenous language speakers encompasses the transformation of ideologies and worldviews away from Western ideals (Córdova Hernández, 2019). This type of transformation cannot be achieved without close collaboration and coalition-building with Indigenous language speakers.

In technical communication, multiple scholars define and embrace the social justice turn in the field, which signals a "shifting from critical analysis to critical action" (Walton, 2016, p. 411), and a need to "shift out of neutral" (Shelton, 2020, p. 20) in technical communication practices, methodologies, and pedagogies. While tools, technologies, and technical information have never been neutral (Jones, 2016; Jones & Williams, 2018), social justice in technical communication scholars emphasize the importance of highlighting power structures embedded into technical tools and technologies to intervene in oppression (Walton, Moore, and Jones, 2019). As part of this work, several scholars have pointed to issues of language diversity as important aspects of social justice in technical communication that should be considered when working with communities in both national and transnational contexts (Dorpenyo, 2019; Rivera, 2021; Rose & Racadio, 2017; Verzella, 2017). As Verzella (2017) explains, "what makes international technical communication particularly challenging is the fact that rhetorical expectations shift across social groups and cultural traditions" (p. 56). As such, "translators are always involved in collaborative networks that bring together document initiators,

authors, translation initiators, target audiences, and other translators in a process of negotiation” (Verzella, 2017, p. 55). Writing directly about Indigenous translation and interpretation, Nora K. Rivera (2021) explains that “historiographies of Indigenous rhetorics and their influences on contemporary practices remain rare, abnormal sub-topics of dominant Western academic traditions that persist on regarding Indigenous worldviews and practices unreliable, especially in matters of technology and technical and professional communication. In places where Indigenous language translation and interpretation are greatly needed, Indigenous translators and interpreters face the lack of adequate systems to professionalize their field, withstanding public sector policies that do not align with the cosmovision of their cultures” (p. 3).

During global pandemics and crises, language accessibility becomes part of a broader network of interactions that are necessary to combat misinformation and other structural oppressions. These interactions are often immaterial, intangible, and yet critical to the survival of marginalized communities. As Ding (2020) explains, “combatting global epidemics requires careful attention to complicated challenges posed by transnational research and multinational intervention” (p. 144). These complicated challenges are prevalent in the work of Indigenous language activists, who must advocate not only for the importance of Indigenous language translation, but also for the recognition and visibility of Indigenous communities across the world.

As we demonstrate in this article, providing language access, and working toward language justice for and with Indigenous language speakers during a pandemic requires globally distributed partnerships committed to social justice (Ding, 2020). Due to the vast number of Indigenous languages and Indigenous language variants spoken throughout the world, finding local translators and interpreters in a particular US region may be difficult or impossible. Furthermore, local governments and organizations, both within and beyond the US, are not always trained to work with Indigenous language translators and Indigenous communities. With the rapidly changing recommendations and circumstances related to COVID-19, Indigenous language speakers, activists, researchers, translators, and activists continue coming together to design, localize, translate, and share information, often through informal networks like WhatsApp messaging and social media. As technical communication researchers continue working with organizations to facilitate these transnational collaborations, we argue that it’s important to pay closer attention to what Indigenous activists are doing in their local contexts to better serve Indigenous language speakers. As Itchuaqiyaq (2021) argues, “those who wish to develop ‘Indigenist’ research paradigms need a framework that challenges default dominant-culture perspectives” (p. 34). Thus, rather than imposing Western frameworks onto Indigenous frameworks, working toward social justice in technical communication requires an attunement to listening and learning from multiply-marginalized communities (Walton, Moore, & Jones, 2019), in this case, Indigenous language speakers.

Context and Purpose: Collaborating with Indigenous Language Speakers to Strengthen Language Access

This article is written by a technical translator and technical communication researcher living in Gainesville, Florida, as well as an Indigenous language translator, interpreter, and activist from the Municipio de San Pedro Yoloix, speaker of Chinateco, who also works as the coordinator of the “Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales” (Network of Intercultural Interpreters and Promoters) in Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico. Throughout the pandemic, authors 1 and 2 have been collaborating with Indigenous language translators and interpreters as well as with nonprofit and governmental organizations in Florida and Oaxaca to help coordinate, translate, edit, and share COVID-19 related information with Indigenous language speakers in both the

US and Mexico. These collaborations entail providing over the phone interpretation services to Indigenous language speakers at two vaccination events, consulting on the development of print, audio, and video materials about COVID-19, and providing feedback on translations, all while conducting research on best practices for building coalitions with and for Indigenous language speakers in both the US and Mexico. Thus, as we demonstrate throughout this article, the process of collaboration for and with Indigenous language speakers can provide an example of the role that immaterial labor plays in promoting social justice during the pandemic.

Together, Authors 1 and 2 and their collaborators in Gainesville and Oaxaca have co-produced over 40 audio, video, and written pieces documenting COVID-19 treatment and prevention for speakers of over 9 Indigenous languages. Throughout this process, Authors 1 and 2 and their teams reflected on how technical communicators can collaborate with Indigenous language speakers to create, translate, and share multilingual technical documents that can contribute to social justice efforts by enhancing language access (Gonzales et al., 2022). Rather than focusing on the products of translation alone (i.e., the translated material), we also traced the process of translation, noting the immaterial labor that goes into not only translating, but also designing, revising, localizing, and transcreating across languages during a pandemic. The goal of tracing this process of collaboration was to be able to identify practical takeaways for other technical communication researchers seeking to build coalitions with Indigenous language speakers to support language access work in community contexts. For two years, we met virtually and wrote together as we also co-developed materials to be shared with our communities through our partnering organizations. Since the conditions of the pandemic continue changing quickly (as new variants develop, new research emerges, and vaccine rollouts differ in the US, Mexico, and in other areas of the world), we didn't have the luxury of waiting for finalized study results before sharing and adapting information. Instead, as we developed, tested, shared, and assessed materials, we met regularly to discuss potential issues as well as successes. In these discussions, we noted lessons learned from the work we were developing together. For example, after providing interpretation for a vaccination event, we met and discussed what went well and what didn't go well in those interactions, and we used these reflections both to improve future events and to continue tracking our coalition-building process.

The collaborative work that we introduce in this article is grounded in reflexive research about coalitional work in technical communication (Walton, Moore, Jones, 2019). As Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) explain in their discussion of social justice coalitions in technical communication, "technical communicators can and should build coalitions...and through intersectional, coalitional approaches to technical and professional communication (TPC) we can address issues of inequality and oppression" (p. 133). At the same time, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) clarify that "we need practical strategies and tactics for getting this work done" (p. 133). Thus, based on our reflexive work advocating for language access for Indigenous language speakers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we share recommendations and strategies for other technical communicators seeking to build coalitions in their local contexts to advocate alongside Indigenous language speakers, both in the US, in Mexico, and worldwide.

The primary argument we make in this article is that in order to work toward language access through a social justice orientation during the COVID-19 pandemic, technical communication researchers and health justice activists should collaborate with and amplify the (often immaterial) work of Indigenous language speakers, particularly by learning about, embracing, and centralizing Indigenous approaches to language access.

Rather than presenting findings from a traditional study, we describe the collaborative elements of our language access efforts during the pandemic, bringing specific attention to the work that Author 1 has been doing to promote Indigenous language justice in both Mexico and the US.

To this end, in the section that follows, Author 1 introduces the “Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales” (Network of Intercultural Interpreters and Promoters), which she coordinates in Oaxaca de Juárez, Mexico. As Author 1 explains, this organization is led by Indigenous language speakers and has worked throughout the pandemic to address linguistic justice and its ties to multiple systemic oppressions through a multifaceted approach that extends beyond translation. Following Author 1’s discussion, Author 2 will explain how learning from Author 1’s organization has impacted Author 2’s work as a translation and technical communication researcher. We both then present implications for other technical communication projects working toward social justice for and with Indigenous language speakers during the pandemic. To make visible the immaterial labor of translation that took place in writing and conceptualizing this discussion, we present the next section in its original language, Spanish, and we then provide a translation as a footnote. This practice of highlighting languages other than English in US-based academic publications aligns with research on the importance of disrupting definitions of academic literacy as literacy centered on standard white English (Alvarez, 2018). Furthermore, this multilingual representation is important in a special issue on immaterial labor and social justice published in an international technical communication journal.

Learning from Indigenous Activists: Introducing the Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales (Network of Intercultural Interpreters and Promoters)

La Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales somos un grupo interdisciplinario de jóvenes indígenas, estudiantes y egresados en distintas áreas del conocimiento, como Derecho, Administración Pública, Biología, Medicina, entre otras, que se forma en el 2018, a raíz de la publicación del informe “El acceso a la justicia de las personas indígenas privadas de libertad: caso Oaxaca”, donde varias organizaciones identificaron que los procesos judiciales de más de mil personas indígenas en los centros de reinserción social en Oaxaca estaban detenidos porque no contaban con un intérprete que les pudiera explicar, en términos claros y adecuados a su cultura, la situación jurídica en la que se encontraban y las medidas que se podían tomar para continuar sus procesos. Por ello, inicialmente nuestro objetivo se centró en garantizar los derechos de las personas indígenas en el ámbito de la justicia.

Una vez conformado el colectivo, se identificaron diversas problemáticas alrededor de las personas privadas de libertad, como la falta de información sobre los derechos humanos que les asisten, la falta de apoyo inmediato de intérpretes y/o traductores en su lengua durante el procedimiento penal que se les instruye, la falta de sensibilización sobre las circunstancias particulares de las personas indígenas e insuficientes oportunidades para el desarrollo de las actividades laborales encaminadas a su reinserción social.

A lo largo de nuestro camino, a la par de las problemáticas anteriores, entendimos que, si queríamos generar un cambio en el sistema de Justicia, también debíamos trabajar en la preservación de las culturas indígenas de nuestro estado. Por eso, en la actualidad trabajamos para realizar acciones que garanticen el acceso a la justicia a las personas indígenas y que visibilicen, promuevan y preserven la cultura e identidades indígena, mismas que se podrán encontrar en el expediente correspondiente.

Los 120 jóvenes que conformamos esta Red estamos en procesos de formación continua para adquirir y mejorar las habilidades como intérpretes en el ámbito de la procuración y administración de la justicia, así como en el desarrollo, planeación y ejecución de proyectos culturales, lo que nos permite ayudar a preservar más de 80 variantes lingüísticas, de las 177 existentes en el estado.

Nos constituimos legalmente como asociación civil en enero de 2022, sin embargo, desde el 2018, como colectivo, hemos tenido la oportunidad de colaborar con instituciones académicas, gubernamentales y de la sociedad civil, lo que nos da la experiencia para diseñar y ejecutar acciones de impacto en nuestras comunidades. CIELO A.C., la Secretaría de los Pueblos Indígenas, Defensoría Pública del Estado de Oaxaca, el Municipio de Oaxaca de Juárez y la Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca son algunas de las instituciones que nos han ayudado en estas tareas. Finalmente, para reconciliar la deuda histórica con las comunidades indígenas, nuestro trabajo seguirá la ruta de transmitir el espíritu intercultural de este maravilloso estado, buscando encontrar al menos un intérprete y promotor intercultural de cada una de las 177 variantes lingüísticas, y, posteriormente, trascender al ámbito regional y nacional.

A continuación, enumeramos algunas de las actividades desarrolladas por la Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales que construyen acciones para que la sociedad pueda ejercer sus derechos.

- 1) Conocer para defender: es una campaña en lenguas indígenas para que las personas conozcan sus derechos en caso de ser detenidas por la policía, desde el derecho a contar con un defensor, hasta recibir visitas y solo permanecer 48 horas en el primer recinto policial y fue trabajada con la Defensoría Pública del Oaxaca:
- 2) Protege tu trabajo artesanal: es una campaña en lenguas que trabajamos en coordinación con el Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Artesanías para que las y los artesanos oaxaqueños conozcan sus derechos y sepan qué hacer al momento de llegar a acuerdos con intermediarios, esta campaña surge debido a un fraude del que fueron víctimas mujeres artesanas monolingües. Se llevaron a cabo 2 acciones para proteger el trabajo de nuestras artesanas y artesanos:
 - a. Producción de videos en lengua para que conozcan sus derechos y los servicios gratuitos de dichas instituciones. Actualmente hemos publicado 9 videos, los que se han hecho llegar a los Municipios para su difusión, 55 están en proceso de grabación.
 - b. Ser el puente de comunicación entre la Defensoría Pública y los artesanos, donde se brindó asesoría jurídica en temas de acuerdos y convenios con intermediarios.
- 3) Cuidémonos entre todos: es una iniciativa que se creó a raíz de la pandemia, por iniciativa de la actriz Yalitza Aparicio, donde se realizó un video con la participación de algunos intérpretes para enviar mensajes de aliento a nuestras comunidades, con el fin de afrontarla y tomar las medidas necesarias para cuidarnos.
- 4) Si te cuidas tú, nos cuidas a todos: es una campaña para nuestras comunidades, donde se explica qué es el Covid19 y las medidas que se necesitan tomar para disminuir el riesgo de contagio. Se realizaron 25 videos en diferentes lenguas
- 5) Quédate en casa: es una campaña realizada de la mano de la Defensoría Pública del Estado

de Oaxaca, en la que, a través de una imagen, se solicitaba a las comunidades quedarse en casa.

- 6) **Habla tu lengua:** Es una actividad que consiste en motivar el rescate, la preservación y el uso de las lenguas indígenas, a través de imágenes pintadas en lugares públicos, donde transita la población. Los mensajes hacen alusión a elementos de la cultura donde se pintan, para que exista un interés por parte de la población en leer y usar su lengua. Es decir, sentirse orgulloso de su identidad.¹

¹The Network of Intercultural Interpreters and Promoters is an interdisciplinary group of Indigenous youth, students, and graduates from different areas of specialization, including law, public administration, biology, medicine, and more. The group was established in 2018 following the publication of the report, "Access to Justice for Indigenous People Deprived of their Liberty: the Case of Oaxaca," where various organizations explained that the judicial processes of more than one thousand Indigenous people at social reintegration centers in Oaxaca were being stalled because they did not have interpreters who could explain, in clear and culturally-adequate terms, the legal situation that they were in and the actions they could take to continue with their processes. Due to this, initially our goal was to guarantee Indigenous people's rights in the legal field.

Once the collective was established, we identified several challenges faced by people being denied their freedom, such as the lack of information regarding their human rights, the lack of immediate assistance by interpreters and/or translators who speak their language during legal proceedings, the lack of cultural sensitivity about the circumstances faced by Indigenous people, and the lacking opportunities for the development of social and work-related activities that can support social reintegration.

Throughout this long journey, in addition to the previously mentioned challenges, we understood that if we want to generate change in the justice system, we also have to work to preserve Indigenous cultures of our state. For this reason, we are currently working on projects that strive to guarantee access to justice for Indigenous people and that also make visible, promote, and preserve Indigenous cultures and identities, which we further describe here.

The 120 youth who make up this network are enrolled in continuing education to acquire and improve our capacities as interpreters in the delivery and administration of justice, as well as in the development, planning, and execution of cultural projects. This allows us to help preserve more than 80 linguistic variants of the 177 variants that exist in our state.

It's important to note that we are not yet a legally recognized institution. However, as a collective, we've been able to collaborate with academic institutions, government entities, and social services, which has granted us the experience to design and execute impactful projects in our community. Some of the organizations that have supported us in these endeavors include: CIELO A.C., the Secretary of Indigenous Peoples, the Public Defender's Office in the State of Oaxaca, the Municipality of Oaxaca de Juárez and the Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca.

Finally, to reconcile historical debts to Indigenous communities, our work will continue to promote the intercultural spirit of this wonderful state, looking to find at least one interpreter and promoter for each of the 177 language variants of the state, and later, to extend to regional and national realms.

In the following paragraphs, we outline some of the activities developed by the Network of Intercultural Interpreters and Promoters, which make up actions to help our society to exercise their rights.

- 1) **Know to Defend:** This is a campaign in Indigenous languages intended so that people understand their rights if they are detained by the police, from the right to a public defender to visitation rights, to the fact that you can only be detained for 48 hours when first arrested. This project was executed in collaboration with the Public Defender's Office in Oaxaca.
- 2) **Protect Your Artisanal Labor:** This is a public campaign in Indigenous languages that we worked on with the Instituto Oaxaqueño de las Artesanías (Oaxacan Institute for Handicrafts) so that Oaxacan artisans learned about their rights and understand what to do when negotiating with intermediaries. This campaign arose due to fraud experienced by monolingual Indigenous women artisans. Two projects were conducted to protect the rights of our artisans:
 - a. Production of videos in Indigenous languages so that artisans can know their rights and the free legal services provided by some institutions. As of now we have published 9 videos that have been delivered to various municipalities for distribution. 55 videos are still being recorded.
 - b. Being the communication channel between the Public Defender's office and the artisans, where we provide legal counsel on various agreements and arrangements with intermediaries.
- 3) **Let's Take Care of Each Other:** This is an initiative that arose during the pandemic through the work of the actress Yalitza Aparicio, where we created a video with some interpreters to share encouraging messages to our communities, with the goal

All of the materials produced by La Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales are open-access and shared widely through the organization's social media channels. For example, [this video](#) (see Figure 1) illustrates the "Know to Defend" campaign, where Indigenous language speakers provide information in Indigenous languages about how to protect themselves and their rights when they have interactions with the police. Figure 1 presents a screenshot of Indigenous artisan, Nayali Osorio, speaker of Zapoteco de San Vicente, who is describing the importance of protecting artisanal labor as part of the "Protect your Artisanal Labor" campaign.



Figure 1. Nayali Osorio discusses artisanal labor.

Finally, Figure 2 is a visual created as part of the "Stay at Home" campaign, which asked community members to stay home during the pandemic as a way of protecting their community, their elders, and therefore, their Indigenous languages. As evidenced in these examples, all of the materials developed by La Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales were developed in coalition with other organizations, and required the negotiation of multiple languages, technologies, and methods of design and sharing. In this way, La Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales is an Indigenous-led organization that can provide important perspectives regarding coalition-building with Indigenous language speakers.

of facing the pandemic and taking the necessary precautions.

- 4) If You Take Care of Yourself, You Take Care of All of Us: This is a campaign for our communities where we explain what COVID-19 is and where we discuss the measures that must be taken in order to decrease the risk of contagion. 25 videos were created in various Indigenous languages.
- 5) Stay at Home: This is a campaign supported by the Public Defender's Office of Oaxaca, where, through an image, we asked community members to stay at home.
- 6) Speak Your Language: This project is intended to help rescue, preserve, and encourage the use Indigenous languages through images painted in public places with a lot of foot traffic. The messages resemble cultural elements that will entice Indigenous community members to read and use their language. In other words, this project is intended to help Indigenous language speakers be proud of their identity.



**Na kitaun, nyii maaun
tsitsi ve'un**

Mixteco, San Juan Colorado
Traductor: Oziel B. M.

Bian talidla

Zapoteco de San Vicente Coatlán
Traductora: Azucena J. A.

Quédate en casa 

Tnia nei't jâu kia'

Chatino Oriental
Traductora: Lucia S.

Tnia nei't jâu kia'

Chinanteco de San Felipe Usila.
Traductora: Italy M.R.

Bian ruaidxilu

Zapoteco de San Baltazar Chichicapam
Traductora: Tania S. H.

Figure 2. Image from Stay at Home campaign.

Transnational Networks for Indigenous Language Accessibility: Experiences from North Central Florida

Author 1's expertise, and La Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales have significantly influenced the work that Author 2 coordinates in Gainesville, Florida, a rural part of Florida that is home to Indigenous language speakers from multiple parts of Mexico and Guatemala. Prior to the start of the pandemic, Author 2 and Author 1 met in Oaxaca as part of a different project on Indigenous language activism. At the start of the pandemic, Author 2 was contacted by a local organization in Gainesville to help facilitate COVID prevention and treatment information from

Spanish into languages like different variants of Mixteco and Zapoteco. That's when Author 2 reached out to Author 1 to help coordinate translation, and, perhaps more importantly, to discuss how COVID-19 related information could be adapted for Indigenous language speakers in Gainesville.

One of the biggest challenges that local organizations in Gainesville face while attempting to translate COVID-19 related information into Indigenous languages is deciding which variants of specific languages to translate into. As Author 1 explained, in Oaxaca de Juárez, for instance, there are over 177 Indigenous language variants, each of which is unique and is connected to a specific community. In Gainesville, and in many parts of the US, agencies and organizations don't always take the time to learn which variants their community members speak, which can lead to incomplete and inaccurate translations. Languages like Mixteco and Zapoteco, for example, have multiple different variants, many of which are completely different from each other. Thus, as Author 2 worked with organizations to facilitate translation, it was important to first research the specific locations in Oaxaca that communities came from, and to then decide which variants would be most appropriate for translation.

Connections to land and community are critical in understanding the language variants of a specific Indigenous language. For instance, the closer that two communities are to each other physically, the more recognizable the language variants will be to one another. A person who speaks one variant of Zapoteco is more likely to understand another variant from a community nearby, rather than being able to understand a variant spoken by a community further away. For this reason, an effective strategy for agencies seeking to identify the language variants spoken by Indigenous language speakers in their community is to survey where the community members are from in their home country. It's important to get as specific of a location as possible. Once possible home communities are identified, agencies can work with Indigenous language translators and interpreters to develop a list of potential variants to use in translations. It's critical to test the translations in specific variants with community members, to verify that the variants selected are recognizable to members of the target community. Ultimately, in the North Central Florida community, materials were initially translated into two specific variants, Zapoteco de Villa Alta and Mixteco de San Juan Mixtepec (sometimes known as *Mixteco Alto*), corresponding with the communities who we believed at the time have the highest number of community members in rural Florida. As the pandemic progressed and we learned more about our community, we expanded and adapted the number of languages into which we translated documents.

In addition to the importance of understanding and recognizing language variants, learning from the work of Author 1 also helped Author 2 understand the important connections between language accessibility and language preservation. Initially, when working with local organizations in the US, Author 2 was focused on providing information to Indigenous language speakers who do not speak Spanish at all. Thus, much of the work was focused on translating information verbatim from Spanish to Indigenous languages only for those who did not speak Spanish. However, upon learning about the multiple levels of language competency that Indigenous language speakers might have both in Spanish and in their first languages, the purpose of the translations became not only to provide information for Indigenous language speakers, but also to demonstrate to Indigenous communities in the US that they were being accounted for and cared for in their local community. This visibility and recognition were critical in engaging Indigenous communities in Florida with COVID-19 related information, even if Indigenous community members spoke Spanish. We recommend that other agencies and researchers seeking to build coalitions with Indigenous language speakers also recognize the importance of engaging with Indigenous

communities and contributing to the goals of those communities' efforts, even if those efforts don't seem to correlate directly to language access. Through Indigenous frameworks, language encompasses many factors beyond the transformation of words from one language to another. Thus, building coalitions with Indigenous language speakers means recognizing the connections between language, culture, and identity in the lives of Indigenous communities, and working to connect with Indigenous communities by supporting and recognizing their languages.

For example, during two vaccination events, Author 1 and her team provided over phone interpretation services for Indigenous language speakers in attendance. Furthermore, Author 1 and her team helped to transform flyers about COVID into both written translations and audio files that were shared through Whatsapp groups by a local organization. When Indigenous language speakers heard the audios, saw the flyers, and were provided with interpretation services at the vaccination event, they commented that they felt not only informed, but also heard and understood. For some Indigenous language speakers, their interaction with the audio files in their Indigenous languages was the first time that they had heard their Indigenous language spoken in the US. As several Indigenous language speakers whom Author 2 interacted with are in the US as undocumented temporary residents who have not been able to return home for some time, hearing their Indigenous language spoken in a US context provided a sense of comfort and community during a time of pandemic isolation and fear.

In addition to helping contextualize the impact and importance of language access for Indigenous language speakers, Author 1 and her network also helped Author 2 make local recommendations for localizing COVID-related information for Indigenous communities in Florida. Messaging such as "stay home" and "keep a safe distance," which were often shared by US-based organizations and translated into Spanish, were difficult to practice for Indigenous communities in the US, many of whom left their communities to help take care of their families and community members by working in the US. For this reason, for many Indigenous language speakers living in the US, "taking care of your family" meant going to work and providing income for family back home. As the whole world experienced the pandemic, migrant farmworkers' families, for instance, were also in great need of resources. Furthermore, many Indigenous language speakers who are migrant farmworkers in the US live in multiple-family homes, where social distancing is nearly impossible. Thus, through conversations with Author 1, Author 2 was able to make recommendations to local agencies to adjust health messaging to better fit with the lives of Indigenous language speakers in the US, including migrant farmworkers. Messaging related to social distancing was adapted to encourage community members to isolate from each other when someone is sick (since staying completely away from each other is impossible) and to wear masks even indoors whenever possible. In this way, the work of language access for Indigenous language speakers in the US was influenced by Author 1's recommendations as well as the work of her organization. Coalition building with Indigenous language speakers means advocating for the localization of health-related messaging during a pandemic, to account for the lived realities and experiences of Indigenous language speakers. It's also important to note that Author 1's labor in making these recommendations was also compensated by Author 2 and by partnering agencies in the US. This type of compensation is critical when building coalitions with marginalized communities, and Indigenous communities specifically, during global health crises.

Coalitions Among Language Activists to Centralize Indigenous Language Speakers

Based on our work together, we recommend increased coalition building among translators, Indigenous language speakers, and technical communicators, all of whom can play an important

role in redressing linguistic oppression during and beyond health crises. To build these coalitions, it's critical to establish relationships and trust between technical communicators and Indigenous language speakers. One way in which technical communicators can work to establish these relationships is by contributing to the language activism goals that Indigenous communities are already pursuing, such as language preservation and education. It's also important to ensure that Indigenous language speakers are compensated for their work, and that they are included in all parts of the design process, rather than only being consulted after something has already been designed and shared with the broader community. In this way, coalitions with Indigenous language speakers can focus on redressing oppression, minimizing harm, and leveraging the strengths and experiences of Indigenous communities. As we hope this paper makes clear, for Indigenous people, language is much more than just words—language is community, life, and land, as Indigenous languages are always connected to the communities and environments in which they are practiced.

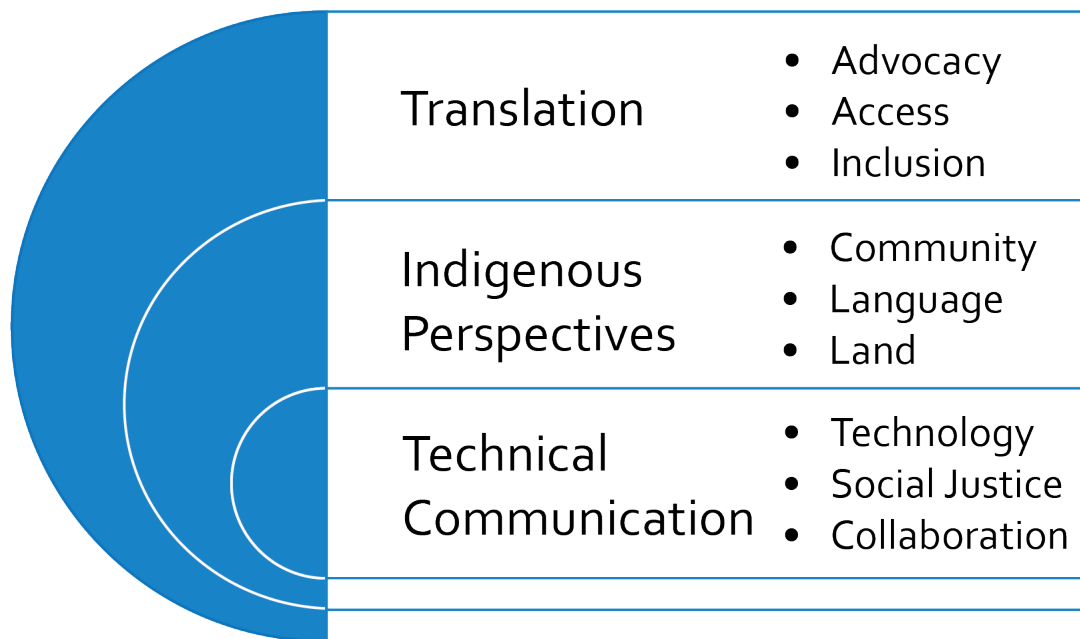


Figure 3. Building coalitions for Indigenous language access.

Figure 3 provides three elements that we deem as essential to building coalitions for Indigenous language access: translation, which includes advocating for access and inclusion in multiple languages, Indigenous perspectives, which encompasses a recognition of community values, of language as a living element, and of the land and the environment as critical to communal survival. Finally, technical communication, particularly its focus on collaboration, social justice, and leveraging technologies for access, is incorporated into this model for coalitional action, centralizing the importance of designing tools and technologies that are accessible not only on a linguistic level, but also on a cultural level that incorporates Indigenous worldviews.

As we introduce this model for coalition-building, we recognize that “decolonial frameworks must begin with an Indigenist paradigm (Wilson, 2003, 2007, 2008), an enactment of value-laden beliefs that are based upon restoring and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, lands,

knowledges, supporting community-developed aspirations, and supporting the changing and improving of unjust conditions” (Itchuaqiyaq, 2021, p. 36). While Indigenous language access, preservation, and revitalization can be part of decolonization, we are not claiming that all coalitions toward Indigenous language access are decolonial. Instead, we are suggesting that technical communicators, through their training in coalition-building, communication, and collaboration, can work to foster coalitions among translators and Indigenous language speakers. When these coalitions are built with Indigenous perspectives at the center, as demonstrated by Figure 1, they can work toward enhancing language access and visibility for Indigenous language speakers.

Expanding Language Access through Indigenous Frameworks

While the work that we present in this article can be filed under the umbrella of “language access,” we also learned that language access for Indigenous language speakers must expand beyond the mere translation of written content or interpretation of verbal content. Language access also encompasses the immaterial labor of cultural negotiation, adaptation, and collaboration. As demonstrated by the Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales, advocating for Indigenous language rights can span beyond the transformation of words to include the preservation of cultural knowledge, representation of Indigenous values in court proceedings and other systems, and even advocacy for adequate compensation for Indigenous artists. While some of these elements may seem outside the “scope” of language access, through Indigenous frameworks that centralize relationality, language access encompasses translation and interpretation in addition to community knowledge and collaboration, as depicted in Figure 4.

One of the biggest lessons that Author 1 and her work with the Red de Intérpretes y Promotores Interculturales continues teaching is the importance of recognizing language as part of a broader constellation of cultural elements that are critical to survival. To communicate health-related information during a pandemic, it’s not enough to just translate information that is being written in Western languages; instead, it’s important to consider how health-related information

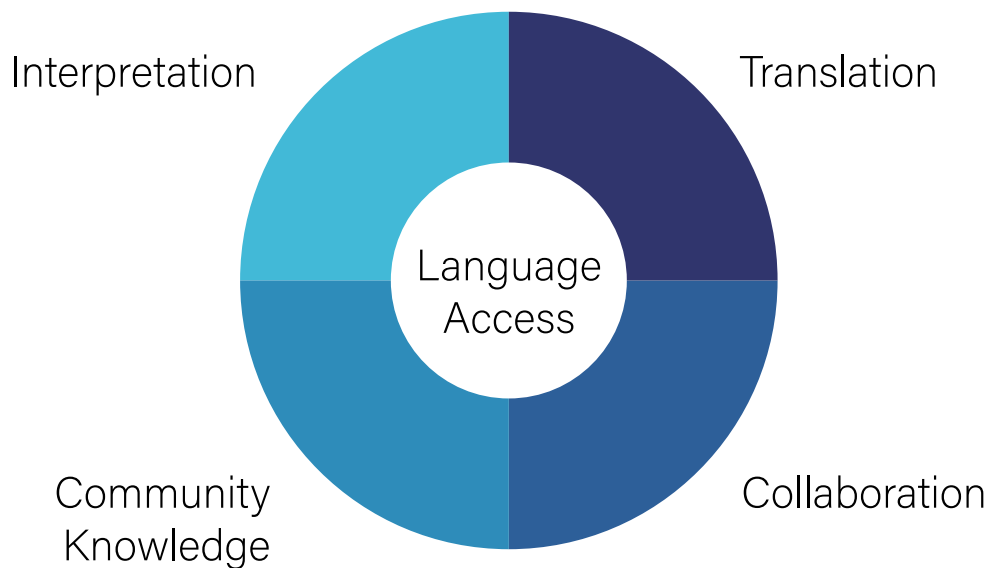


Figure 4. Expanding language access for Indigenous language speakers.

will be perceived and understood by Indigenous language speakers who are consistently undermined and excluded in healthcare. Telling an Indigenous language speaker to seek medical attention may also mean encouraging that person's exposure to racism and discrimination. Thus, when designing health-related messaging during (and beyond) a pandemic, translators should collaborate with technical communicators who have expertise in areas such as user-experience and usability, as well as with Indigenous language speakers and advocates, who can help to ensure that information is not only accurately translated, but also effective and helpful rather than harmful. Through these interactions, technical communicators should seek feedback from Indigenous language speakers at each stage of the design process, and should incorporate Indigenous language speakers as co-designers and co-researchers on projects related to Indigenous language access. As Rose and Racadio (2017) explain, "User experience researchers and practitioners can be invaluable in supporting transnational users, however we must approach the task with humility and care. We need to leverage cultural and linguistic expertise to adapt usability methods to meet user's diverse needs" (p. 22). Likewise, we argue that working toward language access for and with Indigenous language speakers requires an adaptation of traditional translation and interpretation processes to account for Indigenous perspectives. This can only be successfully achieved by collaborating with Indigenous language speakers not just as participants in a usability study, but as designers, researchers, and technical communicators who have the knowledge and expertise needed to make information accessible during (and beyond) a pandemic.

Conclusion

In her discussion of crowdsourcing processes during a pandemic, Ding (2020) outlines crowdsourcing efforts as approaches to tackling global epidemics through the strengths of local, national, and transnational interventions among different stakeholders, including the following:

1. Seekers, namely, organizations with problems to be tackled,
2. Innovation intermediaries such as solution seekers, or organizations that broadcast technology needs of seekers to their networks of external experts via online platforms,
3. Individual or team solvers from crowds of external actors. (p. 145)

In reflecting on the work that Indigenous language translators, activists, and allies are doing to facilitate language access during a pandemic, we also find crowdsourcing efforts to be critical, especially due to the vast number of different Indigenous languages and language variants spoken across the world, and due to the lack of institutionalized support for Indigenous language speakers provided by governments in multiple parts of the world. These crowdsourcing and collaborative activities require an attunement to relationality and connections over production. As such, collaborating with Indigenous language speakers, translators, and activists requires a recognition of the immaterial labor embedded in language access. As part of this collective work, Indigenous language translators function as seekers, intermediaries, and solvers of pandemic issues, including access to information, healthcare advocacy, and representation. As technical communicators continue working to foster social justice initiatives in their work, we encourage them to build coalitions with Indigenous language translators and activists, and to expand crowdsourcing and other collaborative efforts to further centralize Indigenous epistemologies. While the work of language access is ongoing and has been taking place for a long time in various contexts, language access efforts often ignore Indigenous communities. As such, more interventions are needed to recognize how health-related messaging needs to be adapted not only across

languages, but across worldviews entirely. This type of coalitional change is necessary in a pandemic that is already disproportionately affecting Indigenous communities worldwide.

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Translingual and Translational Practices as Rhetorical Care Technologies in COVID-19 Recovery

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Abstract

Drawing from an ethnographic study with Korean-speaking language minority communities in an urban metropolitan area in the United States, this study illuminates how multilingual transnational community workers and members cope with disaster recovery-specific technologies in the aftermath of COVID-19. Networking studies on language and cultural differences and studies on care rhetorics in feminist science and technology studies, this study examines how language minorities enact translingual and translational activities as care practices. By attending to racial, linguistic, and cultural differences and unequal power structures, this study identifies four emerging findings: 1) developing translingual attunements; 2) cultivating transmodal attunements; 3) producing translational attunements; and 4) enacting transcultural coalitional actions. These findings suggest multilingual transnational communities rhetorically negotiate disaster management technologies and unequal distributions of disaster relief resources by translating a wide range of forms and leveraging diverse translingual and transmodal resources. To disrupt technocratic textual regimes of disaster recovery, the author argues that more research should investigate diverse rhetorical strategies and caring practices performed by marginalized communities.

Keywords: migration; translingualism; translation; care; COVID-19

Introduction

Immigration populations, particularly those who use minority or minoritized languages¹, have encountered barriers in accessing information, social network, and financial assistance in the aftermath of a disaster. Multilingual transnational migrants² in the United States from non-English speaking countries have struggled to access resources and have experienced social discrimination during the time of COVID-19. In particular, during the pandemic, Asian immigrant communities have faced unique challenges such as social discrimination (Cho et al., 2021), lack of disaster literacies, and social network in accessing recovery resources including financial aids and health care systems. Although these injustices and social inequalities in communication design in disaster recovery systems still exist and are even being reinforced, disaster-specific professional and networked communication activities of multilingual transnational migrants have been underrepresented and understudied as a result of the gaps in epistemologies that have historically used a White/Black dichotomy as a dominant framework (Dennis et al., 2021; Frith, 2021; Park, 2020).

Until recently, the COVID-19 pandemic provoked rhetorical exigencies in multilingual settings. Critical approaches to and justice-oriented scholarship in risk communication have already taken up the question about language and culture differences and transcultural contexts (Baniya & Chen, 2021; Ding, 2013, 2014; Frost, 2013; Grabill & Simmons, 1998; Walwema, 2021). In this article, I extend this ongoing conversation in risk communication scholarship by bringing empirical examples of disaster recovery communication that navigate monolingual normative and decontextualized recovery systems and Western design ideologies in disaster communication settings. Although risk and disaster communication in non-Western contexts has been studied, discussions on how information about COVID-19 recovery is circulated in multilingual transnational migrants' lives in the United States need more attention. The lack of accessibility and other sociocultural factors in navigating governmental recovery technologies have been observed in city-, county-, and community health center-based COVID-19 vaccine-related forms such as screening and consent forms and registration forms for waitlists. Often, language minority communities have culture-specific differences in understanding vaccination information, registration processes, and consent forms, and in response to these difficulties, they often generate grassroots discursive and nondiscursive practices.

Based on ethnographic case study methods including a survey, a semi-structured interview, field observations, artifact collection, I examine the range of technologies and communication practices that occurred in response to COVID-19-related language, design, and information injustice in the communities of Asian immigrants located in a southwestern state in the United States in the time of the global pandemic. This study illustrates the complex rhetorical processes of grassroots care practices, performed by nonprofit organization workers and community members, in the form of translanguaging, transmodal, and translational practices. Drawing on studies on translation studies in community-based contexts (Bloom-Pojar & DeVasto, 2019; Gonzales, 2022; Gonzales & Turner, 2017), transcultural risk communication (Ding, 2013, 2014; Frost, 2013), and studies on the ethics of care in feminist technoscience studies (Mol, 2008; Mol et al., 2010; Murphy, 2015; Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011; Winance, 2010), I argue that communicative and caring activities

¹ In this article, I use the terms *minority languages* or *minoritized languages* to refer to the languages not only spoken by small numbers of speakers but also affected by unequal social structures and the one-nation-one-language ideology often rooted from colonialism, modernization, and language standardization (Tenedero, 2017).

² I use the term *multilingual transnational migrants* to refer to migrants who bring a wide range of diverse language repertoires and linguistic and cultural differences to the United States, which often disrupt monolingual paradigms and biased presumptions about language, culture, and race (Milu, 2021; Rosa & Flores, 2018).

of transnational community workers and publics, what I would call *rhetorical care technologies*, address communicative injustice engineered in top-down disaster-related communication technologies in creative ways by leveraging their prior experiences, working knowledge, and diverse language and cultural resources. My study shows that based on their interactive and dynamic understanding of the ecological factors, needs, and desires, multilingual communities adopted rhetorics of care and translingual practices, what can be referred to as *translingual care*, as care technologies to navigate technocratic product-based technologies and build alternative communication and care systems.

In this article, I use the term *attunements* to foreground multilingual communities' coordinated and materially tangled interactions with surrounding contexts, which resonate with existing ecological approaches to language, rhetoric, and communication, such as "rhetorical attunement" (Leonard, 2014), "ambient rhetoric" (Rickert, 2013), rhetorical agency as circular interactions (Cooper, 2011). In what follows, I explain the background of this study with a focus on the COVID-19 vaccine registration and vaccination procedures. Then, I review theoretical frameworks with two theoretical strands: revised approaches to translation studies and care theories. To make the case for language minorities' rhetorical care technologies, I discuss four categories including translingual attunements, transmodal attunements, translational attunements, and coalitional actions derived from a larger ethnographic case study to illustrate concrete examples in community-based settings.

Background

This article presents data derived from a 12-month, community-based, participatory action research study of how multilingual transnational communities, particularly Korean-speaking community workers and members in an urban metropolitan area, cope with disaster-related technologies such as automatized digital platforms governed by disaster recovery-specific bureaucracy in the aftermath of COVID-19. Under a partnership with Korean American Community Network (KACN, a pseudonym), a group growing into a formal nonprofit organization at the time of the study, located in one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse cities in a southwestern state in the United States, I started researching their community-building activities for COVID-19 recovery from mid-July 2020 to June 2021. This partnership was based on reciprocal relationships I have built with the KACN members while working as an informal volunteer for the events organized by the KACN since 2018. The KACN workers had helped ethnic minority community members, mostly Korean-speaking residents, with a focus on disaster responses, citizenship, voter registration, and Korean-language education. This KACN group of community workers have worked for decades, since the 1960s when immigration populations from Korea started substantively growing. Although they had served immigration populations with a focus on Korean-speaking immigrants, temporary sojourners, international students from Korea, and other ethnic and low-income families in the neighborhood, they had yet to be fully recognized for their grassroots movement and rhetorical practices. Ironically, severe disasters made kairotic exigencies in which they needed to establish an official presence to apply for relief resources to heal from the impacts of the disasters.

Literature Review

Often, nonprofit organization workers have been reported to mediate information between government health agencies and vulnerable populations while adopting diverse genres and modali-

ties to help multilingual community members navigate health care literacies or other bureaucratic literacies (Bloom-Pojar, 2018; Gonzales & Turner, 2017; Rose et al., 2017; Walton & Hopton, 2018). Extending this community-based research work, this study is mainly grounded in two scholarships: a translingual orientation to translation and care ethics. I review studies on translingual and translation rhetoric and care theories together in disaster recovery communication and suggest that these intersected theoretical strands enrich our understanding of intercultural disaster communication. Integrating translingual approaches to translation and care theories, this study aims to contribute to community-based professional communication in a disaster recovery context, which often occurs outside of monolingual paradigms and professional clinical sites. In this section, I redefine translingual and translational work as rhetorical care technologies performed by multilingual transnational migrants (see Figure 1).

Rhetorical Care Technologies

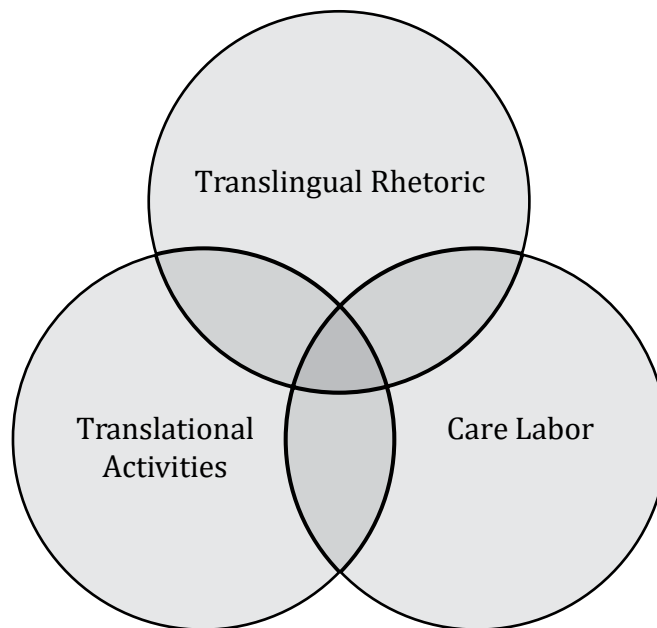


Figure 1. Theoretical intersections of rhetorical care technologies.

Translingual Rhetoric and Translation Studies

Traditionally, the complicated process entailed in translation have been reduced to a product-oriented mechanical understanding in which the source text is replaced by the target text with equivalent words. Recently, in the 2015 special issue of *Connexions: International Professional Communication Journal*, Maylath et al. made explicit conversations bridging translation and multilingual professional communication through a critical approach. For example, in this special issue, Yajima and Toyosaki (2015) extended translation studies and conceptualized translation as a political act that can be partially justice-oriented while it is embedded in and/or facilitates power and hegemony in global contexts (p. 93). Scholars in technical and professional communication also theorized translation as a rhetorical practice that embodies negotiation of meaning and fluid-

ity across languages, modalities, and contexts. For example, Gonzales (2018) proposes a “Revised Rhetoric of Translation” as a renewed “culturally situated orientation to studying linguistic fluency” (p. 5). In the context of community healthcare, Bloom-Pojar (2018) utilizes the term translation space to describe any space “where translation work is required for negotiating meaning making across modes, languages, and discourses” (p. 9). Although translation specifically aims to transfer meanings from tangible source texts to target texts, translation and translanguing or translanguaging activities have overlaps in terms of their attention to inherent fluidity, mobility, and meaning-making process in languages: “We can speak of translation-in-translanguaging and translanguaging-in-translation” (Baynham & Lee, 2019, p. 40). If translation can be revised in a broader sense with a translanguing turn, discursive translational activities³ in cross-cultural disaster communication can align with a more nondiscursive, affective, material attunements, and what is called “immaterial labor” that can create alternative practices and politics (Ding, 2020, p. 264). However, scholars also noted that “the presence of translation, interpretation, and localization does not guarantee access or respect for multilingual communities involved in a particular interaction” (Gonzales, 2022, p. 3). Thus, participatory approaches to localization (Agboka, 2013) and translation in non-professional settings (Gonzales & Zantjer, 2015) need to be more studied to advocate for minoritized language groups in community-based contexts.

Care as Relational Practices

As a way of engaging translanguing and translational activities in non-professional contexts in disaster-recovery with a more ethical, ecological, and ontological consideration, I turn to scholarship on care, which recently emerged from contemporary feminist science and technology studies (STC) and from the field of technical and professional communication. Although discussions on communicative labor and rhetorical strategies in disaster recovery communication contexts are not necessarily connected to care rhetorics, we need to pay attention to care discourses as care labor is an important site where silenced forms of agency can become visible. In STC, for example, Murphy (2015) theorizes “a better politics of care,” warning the danger of “the conflation of care with affection, happiness, attachment, and positive feeling as political goods,” which is often observed “in the history of North American feminist health activism and its entanglements in histories of persistent racisms, class privilege, colonialism, and American imperial ambitions of the late 20th century” (Murphy, 2015, p. 719). This anti- and postcolonial critique to Western care politics urges us to further review the definition of care in two ways: care as a process rather than as a product and care as a relational practice with technologies. According to Mol (2008), care is an “ongoing process” and “interaction” rather than a “transaction in which something is exchanged (a product against a price)” (p. 18). In this approach to care, care and technologies are no longer envisioned as separated but enmeshed (p. 14). Similarly, Puig de la Bellacasa (2011) states, “care is a force distributed across a multiplicity of agencies and materials and supports our worlds as a thick mesh of relational obligation” (p. 20).

In professional communication, care is often differently perceived across different (patient) groups, locations, and contexts (Meloncon, 2017; St. Amant, 2021; St. Amant & Angeli, 2019). St. Amant (2021) connected care to “cognitive concepts” (p. 425) and saw care as an everyday management, which is highly responsive to different cultural contexts by using “cognitive concepts, such as scripts and prototypes” (p. 425). St. Amant and Angeli (2019) unraveled that materials factors such as “the ‘when’ variable” and “the ‘where’ factor” affect the perception of “care-related

³ In this article, I use the term *translational* to indicate translanguing approaches to translation and revised views of translation, which can be observed in translation documents and activities performed by multilinguals.

activities” (2019, p. 2). In their international research work in a non-Western context, Hopton and Walton (2019) explain how hierarchical communication system administered by the government aligned with “culturally appropriate care” (p. 4) and how care could be viewed as a “rhetorical and cultural construction” (p. 6) in community-based settings.

Networking Translingual Rhetoric and Care Theories

I propose that understanding care labor through culturally sensitive and rhetorical approaches can enrich disaster-specific communication in community-based contexts, particularly when care theories are networked with translingual rhetoric that often culminates in translational products. Care ethics can complicate studies on language differences to examine multiply marginalized multilingual communities. In a similar manner, a nuanced, translingual, and critical approach to translation studies can expand the ethical and political potential of care.

To care is to do material and immaterial labor, and its meaning varies because of its contingency on multiple factors, that is, who care whom, when, where, and for what purposes. This divergence in the meaning of care reflects the ambivalence that the notion of care entails: care as an ethico-political relational practice and care as a less visible and unpaid labor. With this persisting ambivalence, which seems to be a generative and reflective power the concept of care inherently has, I investigate language difference in disaster recovery communication to further complicates the notion of care. I suggest a more nuanced and critical approach influenced by soci-olinguistics, transnational literacy studies, and intercultural communication can expand the ethical and political potential of care practices as alternatives to biopolitics. To do this, I use the term *translingual care*, by extending existing scholarships on literate practices in multilingual settings including translingual approaches to language, writing, and rhetoric (Horner et al. 2011; Canagarajah, 2013). I define translingual care as an affective, ecological, material, and immaterial act that addresses social and racial disparities in multilingual contexts. Here, by ecological, I mean the complexity of environments, to borrow Still’s (2010) framework that emphasizes an “ecological mapping of the surrounding system” in researching users’ interactions with products, services, and systems (p. 99). My approach to translingual care attempts to theorize informal and tactical strategies across languages, cultures, and complex environments as a part of collective ethical and political agency that constitutes an alternative public service system.

Methods

This study was grounded in the following research questions:

1. How did the COVID-19 crisis affect immigrants and their literacies in their everyday lives?
2. What rhetorical strategies played a role during the COVID-19 crisis and recovery process particularly in vaccine registration processes and economic relief programs in the aftermath of the crisis?
3. What modalities and technologies did community members and workers communicate with government agencies and local community members?

Data Collection and Analysis

As part of a larger qualitative IRB-approved project⁴, I conducted ethnographic interviews with

⁴ This study was approved by the University of Houston Institutional Review Board (Study00002349).

11 participants composed of 5 community workers in the KACN and 6 community members and observed their activities relevant to COVID-19 recovery. In this article, I present a subset of this ethnographic project with a focus on interview transcripts and fieldnotes that documented my 1-year-long observations. One community member participant withdrew, and thus here I presented my analysis of the data from 10 participants (see Table 1). One participant allowed the interview to be collected but not to be audio-recorded and quoted. I included that participant's interview data non-verbatim. I prepared about 8 questions for community members and 17 questions for community workers to ask about their lived history, detailed experience in the aftermath of COVID-19, and reflection. In mid-July 2020, I started tracing rhetorical strategies of participants including community members and workers with a focus on economic relief programs and vaccine registration processes and vaccination procedures. While gathering data sets in response to RQ 1, 2, and 3, I saw most of their experiences in the aftermath of COVID-19 clustered around web-based or mobile applications required for participants to navigate vaccine registration processes, which generated technological challenges and alternative grassroots tactics. From a larger data set from the project⁵, this article is mainly focused on the data related to vaccine-related communicative activities.

I conducted an individual 45-minute semi-structured interview as a first interview with community members who were affected by COVID-19 and with community workers who were actively involved in COVID-19 relief activities. In the second and third interviews, which were optional, participants were asked more crisis-specific questions and reflexive questions on their previous responses. For the second and third interviews, participants were offered an option to participate either in a group setting or in a one-on-one setting. Out of 5 community workers, 4 participants attended group interviews and shared detailed activities and reflections. Out of 5 community members, 2 participants, who were in the same household, attended a follow-up group interview after individual interviews. Interviews were conducted either via online conferencing tools or in a face-to-face setting.

Observation sites were across different places where COVID-19-related activities occurred including vaccine drive sites, the KACN office and community center room, and participants' homes with a limited aim to observe their registration or application processes. Participants recalled their procedures and shared their screens to explain their experiences in interacting with COVID-19 recovery-related technologies and programs during the online interview sessions. I collected participants' artifacts, public records of the KACN organization, and public discourses distributed by government agencies and other non-profit organizations, related to COVID-19.

For data analysis, I adopted constructive grounded theories (Charmaz, 2014) and collected emerging initial codes and categories. Based on the initial codes, I generated focused codes and categories. Focused codes were clustered into tentative categories such as doing translational activities, doing translingual activities, doing transmodal activities, and affective/material/ecological concerns.

I acknowledge that my presence as a researcher and invited informal volunteer at once might have affected the dynamics of this community organization's work. However, this research study intentionally aims to find solutions and actions with community partners in an ethical way through that type of interactive and collaborative stances "to improve conditions and situation for all members of the learning community" (Craig, 2009, p. 7). My role as an informal volunteer

⁵ The preliminary result based on the other part of its larger data set was presented at the ACM SIGDOC 2021 conference (see Lee, 2021).

lasted until June 2020, and after the IRB approval was granted on July 9, I started working as a researcher to explore the activities of community members and workers in response to frequent changes and updates in vaccine programs and financial aids, provided by government authorities.

As a professional English-Korean and Korean-English translator, I transcribed all the audio recordings recorded in Korean and then translated them into English. In transcribing, translating, and writing up memos, I invited community worker participants and member participants to share what they think about my analyses and representations. Out of 10 participants, one participant shared substantive feedback.

Table 1. Participants*

Participant	Age Range	Years in the U.S.	Occupation
Kevin	45–54	34	Community Worker
Daniel	45–54	37	Community Worker
Helen	45–54	20	Community Worker
Teresa	45–54	42	Community Worker
Kelly	65 and above	40	Community Worker
Taehan	65 and above	44	Retiree/Community Member
Kyunghwa	65 and above	40	Retiree/Community Member
Sunjung	65 and above	32	Retiree/Community Member
Junhwan	45–54	7	Factory Worker/Community Member
Yunkyung	34–44	9	Full-Time Mother/Community Member

*All names are pseudonyms.

Findings

The common findings among participants are their mobile, adaptable, and resourceful approach to the COVID-19 recovery process and rhetorical negotiations in navigating documentation procedures of and access to government-sponsored recovery programs. Four types of caring strategies were found as follows: (1) developing translingual attunements; (2) cultivating transmodal attunements; (3) producing translational attunements; and (4) enacting transcultural coalitional actions. Table 2 gives an overview of focal participants' rhetorical care strategies and technologies.

Developing Translingual Attunements

In this section, I analyze participants' language awareness and dynamic practices across languages and registers. By translingual attunements, I mean their conscious awareness of language differences and activities across languages for the purpose of accomplishing their aimed rhetorical tasks. Mostly, community member participants, particularly those who are 65 years and above and accordingly belonged to the first eligible groups for vaccination at the time of the study, explained that they sought ways of registering and signing up for vaccination opportunities at the local, county, and state levels but often identified their needs of language resources and fair distribution of information from the government. For example, Taehan and his wife Kyunghwa said that they had difficulties completing their vaccine registration forms online via their smart-

phones or computers. In his interview, Taehan said, “I see that the CDC website has its Korean version, but there are no appointment pages in Korean. The webpages from the city and the county don’t have Korean language pages although they have Vietnamese, Chinese, and Arabic versions” (February 13, 2021).

Table 2. Care Technologies Used by Focal Participants for COVID-19 Recovery

Name	Position	Care Technologies	Task
Taehan	Community member	Local Korean newspaper (print), Google Translator, translator applications developed by Korean companies, an email account (Gmail)	Receiving the Economic Impact Payments, Signing up for the waitlist/ appointment for the vaccine registration (for the first shot)
Kyunghwa	Community member	Local Korean newspaper (print), translator applications developed by Korean companies, informal network with a Korean church, voice translators, a magnifying glass application, Korean websites, YouTube clips	Receiving the Economic Impact Payments, Signing up for the waitlist/ appointment for the vaccine registration (for the first shot)
Kevin	Community worker	Voicemails, nonprofit business email account, OOMA, KakaoTalk Business Channel	Application for COVID-19 relief loans
Helen	Community worker	Voice and text messaging via phone, desktop, Google Workspace (mainly, Google Docs), KakaoTalk	Vaccine registration, Grassroots vaccine drive events
Teresa	Community worker	Conference phone call, voice and text messaging via phone, desktop, Google Workspace, KakaoTalk	Informal medical interpretation, vaccine registration, Grassroots vaccine drive events
Kelly	Community worker	Internet search for medical terminology, online dictionaries, KakaoTalk	Vaccine registration, Grassroots vaccine drive events

To execute their vaccine registration process, participants seemed to develop translingual attunements. For example, Taehan and Kyunghwa rhetorically utilized ethnic Korean local news channels to get information on how to sign up for the waitlists on the city- or county-level digital vaccine portals or make an appointment for vaccination through the websites of the hospitals designated as vaccine hubs. When I asked what actions he took to get information from those digital vaccine portals or vaccine hubs-related websites that did not have a Korean translation, he said:

I change the sentences from English to Korean. You see, I take photos of these [showing the home screen of his phone] through this “English-Korean Snapshot Translation” app. If you just take a photo, it will translate the text in English into the text in Korean. It is very easy. Is there anything I can use for the [government] websites like this application, for translation? (February 13, 2021).

Taehan showed his rhetorical agency in adopting technological products through translingual attunements. While he had a lack of resources in his technological environment and faced a limited translation or interpretation service support, he used a wide range of different mobile application to compensate for that limitation. For example, instead of his Windows desktop that had not been updated for several years and thus had become inoperable for many tasks, he mostly used a mobile phone he purchased 3 months earlier to better administer this type of application processes. He said that he downloaded multiples mobile applications from Google Play Store, such as translation apps including “Korean-English Snapshot Composition” and “English-Korean Snapshot Translation” and dictionary apps, developed by Korean companies rather than Google Translator because they were more accurate and sounded natural in the results of translation.

This rhetorical choice was taken to meet his own translingual tasks and do caring practices for him and his spouse, as he should interact with multiple languages and sources to achieve his communication goal, that is, registering for vaccine programs.

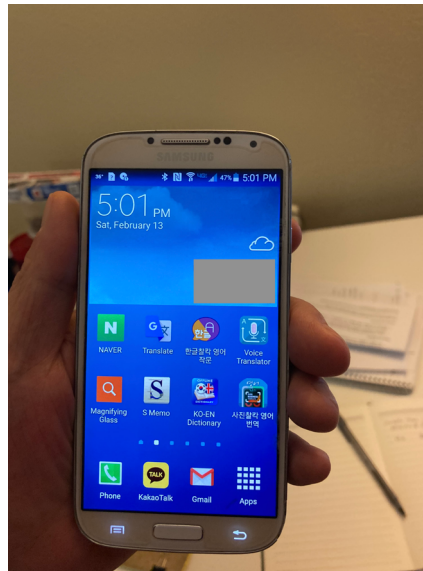


Figure 2. Kyunghwa’s mobile phone home screen. Photo by Soyeon Lee.

Similar to Taehan, when asked what technologies are used in everyday settings and/or in COVID-19-related processes, Kyunghwa shared her mobile phone’s home screens and let me know various applications she had downloaded, which ranged from translation apps to KakaoTalk (a Korean instant messaging application, often called KaTalk) (see Figure 2). For her, her phone was the only major device for communication. In her interview (February 13, 2021), she said that she used her mobile phone mainly to check local Korean newspapers, watch YouTube clips, and communicate with fellow church members in her neighborhood via KakaoTalk in Korean and that she used these mobile device-based communication channels to inform herself of government-led COVID-19 recovery programs.

Taehan’s interview and Kyunghwa’s home screen both showcase how they practice translingual care for themselves by shuttling between English and Korean through technologies and how they navigate English monolingual paradigms in the aftermath of a pandemic. After multiple and persistent attempts, Taehan signed up both himself and Kyunghwa for the waitlists through

two government vaccine portals. However, their translingual activities did not necessarily lead to achieving their goal, that is, actual vaccination processes. Taehan and Kyunghwa ended up being vaccinated at a local pharmacy store after he made daily visits to ask about available extra vaccines at the end of the day.

As shown in Taehan and Kyunghwa, who do not speak English as a first language, multi-lingual tools such as web-based and mobile applications and translingual activities emerged as tactics. Translingual attunements seemed to help them leverage their resources across languages and tools. Although their translingual activities do not necessarily result in the completion of their aimed tasks, these activities show their rhetorical agency in which they adopt diverse applications across English and Korean based on their own needs to navigate monolingual Western normative design in vaccine registration procedures.

Cultivating Transmodal Attunements

Such translingual attunements were often assembled with transmodal attunements in my participants' observed activities. By transmodal attunements, I mean participants' critical awareness of different modalities in communication and dispositions toward and activities across different technologies and modes. In her interview, Helen, one of the community worker participants, described her activities across diverse modalities. She said that she received lots of voice and text messages for asking help via her smartphone from her community members she previously served. Then she said that she quickly emailed those messages to her Gmail account and preferred addressing tasks by using her laptop connected to her desktop monitor because it was easier to read and type via big screens than through her smartphone to organize the information of senior community members she helped and to administer registration procedures on behalf of them. She said that she preferred laptops and big monitors because mobile apps provided by government websites are not fully responsive to mobile screens. In her interviews, she said, "Have you ever used that app ["Smart Waitlist," a mobile version of the vaccine portal application provided by the county]? I will not even mention any word about what it looks like ... [she frowned]" (February 6, 2021), critiquing this type of mobile applications that were not fully mobile responsive and often did not reflect the actual users' environments and conditions.

As the number of the senior Korean immigrants she served increased, Helen needed to create a community email account that could be used in multiple registration forms because she did not want to use her personal email on behalf of them any longer. Often, seniors did not have email accounts and were not capable to respond to a phone call from an English-speaking agent regarding vaccine appointments. Helen usually input the community email address she recently made and her phone numbers across multiple registration cases to respond to those calls and text messages from government agencies. She centered seniors as users and tried to meet their needs by understanding their environments and material constraints and by incorporating them into helping senior immigrants to be registered for vaccines.

Other transmodal attunements were observed when Helen and Teresa organized local vaccine drives under the partnership with philanthropic foundations, government agencies, and community health centers and created a flyer that was sent via direct messages and KakaoTalk rather than websites.

The flyer reads: "Vaccine Shot Opportunities!" (see Figure 3). This title is combined with a head image borrowed from the city's official vaccine website. This flyer shows how they negoti-

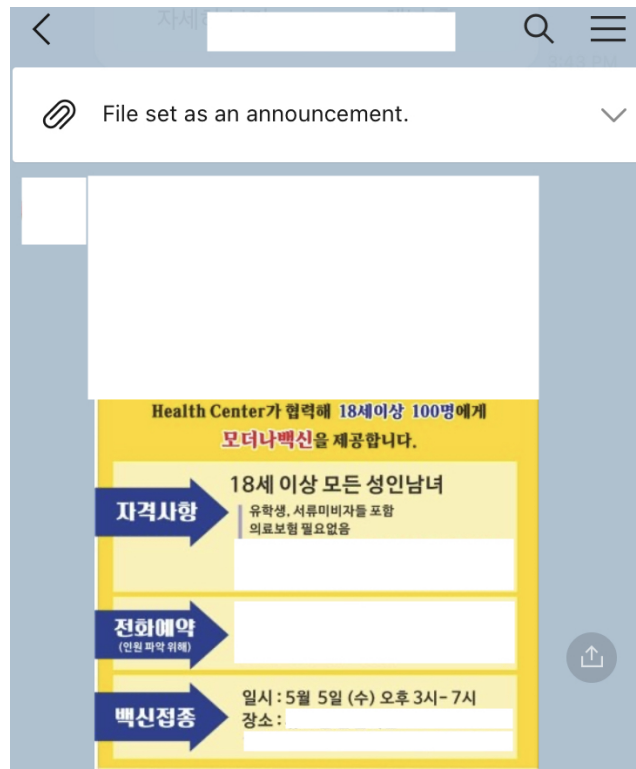


Figure 3. A screenshot of the flyer via Kakaotalk for the community vaccine drive event, which Helen and Teresa sent to the community members the KACN served.

ated public formal health events with local immigrant contexts by integrating the official authorities of the city vaccine program and the Korean language in alignment with smartphone-based messaging app environments, such as KakaoTalk, based on the understanding of the technological environment of the senior immigrants who mostly use smartphone data plans rather than access computers. This translingual and transmodal text across English and Korean with grassroots user-centered design components (larger fonts for senior readers and a high color contrast for accessibility) demonstrates that they leverage diverse resources with an ecological understanding of the surrounding material contexts. Rather than explain the details, they use minimal texts with a bright-yellow background to invite seniors or other vulnerable populations who had struggles in registration processes to government-sponsored vaccine programs.

This flyer shows a stark contrast to the city government agency's official COVID-19 emergency website at the time of the study. In the city-level website, all the vaccine hub locations and availability information in the state were listed in one Microsoft Excel sheet, which looked overcrowded with texts and made those who use language other than English feel far more marginalized because of a lack of language resources. This rhetoric as shown in the flyer exemplifies "the overall process of creating effective, ethical visual health communication for cross-cultural audience" and the ways of "facilitat[ing] dialogue or persuad[ing] communities to approach their health in a certain way" (Bloom-Pojar & DeVasto, 2019, p. 2). Community workers negotiate fluid, powerful, empowering tools in crossing languages, cultures, and contexts through transmodal

attunements with ecological and material considerations.

Producing Translational Attunements

In this section, I focus on community workers' translational attunements. By translational attunements, I mean participants' rhetorical negotiation across languages, modalities, contexts, and design elements, through translingual and transmodal approaches, for the specific purpose of producing textual and verbal materials. In response to these difficult circumstances prevalent in language minority senior immigrants as demonstrated in Taehan and Kyunghwa, the KACN community workers built a small team for COVID-19 vaccine supports and communicated the needs of these senior groups who lacked technological devices and literacies with other nonprofits, philanthropic foundations, government agencies, and local community health centers.

In this process, the KACN workers adopted two key strategies in translational attunements: (1) utilizing their prior experiences in creating language support resources and (2) using translation techniques, which are similar to "implication" and "explication" strategies (Verzella, 2017). Helen, Teresa, and Kelly were part of the small group within the KACN. First, they commonly said that they came to understand these immigrant population-specific needs and build contextual knowledge, after they helped their family or other community members with applying for government-led programs or communicating with medical professionals. For example, Kelly explained how she volunteered to help her neighbors to apply for citizenship applications after she finished obtaining citizenship by herself without hiring an attorney. Similarly, Teresa, a generation 1.5 immigrant whose extended family members were located across different states, explained how she built her translation and interpretation skills mediating communication between her family and medical professionals since she was 11 years old as an only child. She said that she had a clear understanding of what struggles senior immigrants usually encounter. For example, she explained that elderly community members often avoided contacting their own grown-up children or city officials because they felt ashamed when their requests were not taken or disregarded. According to her, in many cases, this avoidance is due to cultural gaps between themselves and their grown-up children or due to the fear of losing face in communicating with government officials due to their self-reported limited English proficiency and lack of understanding of U.S.-specific bureaucratic literacy (e.g., citizenship processes, Medicaid/Medicare applications, tax filing).

As explained above, the translational strategies community worker participants used can be discussed with the notions of "explication" and "implication" (Verzella, 2017). The explication strategy can be defined as "a stylistic translation technique, which consists of making explicit in the target language what remain implicit in the source language" (Verzella, 2017, p. 62). For example, in her interview (May 20, 2021), Kelly explained how she and other volunteers worked intensively and rhetorically purposively to translate the given texts to clarify ambiguous aspects of the information. For example, when she translated the term "blood thinner" in the vaccine screening and consent form, she explained that she selected "피를 묽게 하는 약" that can be back translated into "medicine that make blood thinner" as its translated term, instead of the term "혈액희석제" that can be back translated into "blood dilution medicine" to help people who came to a vaccine drive better understand the question on the screening and consent form. This shows how they negotiated language differences through a keen awareness of the rhetorical purpose of the screening and consent form, which requires a prompt and transparent understanding to check their biological conditions and medication histories and the ecological contexts of their target audience, which consists of mostly seniors with low vision or people with lack of medical English

and time constraints in actual vaccination sites. For this “explication” process, Kelly explained that she used the Internet and searched medical information websites such as Mayo Clinic and WebMD to investigate possible translations through multiple medical information websites.

At the syntactic level, this small group team in KACN used “implication” as one of the key rhetorical strategies in translanguaging and translational activities, which can be described as “a stylistic translation technique which consists of making what is explicit in the source language implicit in the target language by relying on the context or the situation for conveying the meaning” (Verzella, 2017, p. 63). When I arrived at the vaccine drive at one of the churches for my observation, Helen showed me a one-page form she created for the vaccine registration process. She said that she made a one-page document in which the main questions in English about the patient’s medical conditions were alternated with the translated questions in Korean in parallel, while important information about the consent process was selectively translated in Korean with the source text in English in parallel. In this process, implication strategies were used to prioritize crucial information in Korean. Rather than a full-length bilingual page, Helen created information hierarchies and then designed it into one page so that the patient can easily go through information and understand the consent process.

Instead of including a final translated version only, Helen and other community workers decided to show their translation process, in which Korean and English texts are interweaved or are made explicit or implicit. This translational practice was made through rhetorical negotiation across language, design elements, and environments and was primarily based on the understanding of language minorities’ needs and their ecological contexts such as their Internet access, digital literacy, and material environments.

Enacting Transcultural Coalitional Actions

For COVID-19 vaccination procedures, not only translanguaging, transmodal, and translational strategies but also coalitional strategies were adopted. My community worker participants approached other local community organizations, such as Chinese community organizations, local assistance ministries, community health centers, and government agencies to ask about partnership opportunities in organizing community-based vaccine drives. The KACN persuaded government agencies and other nonprofits to understand language minorities’ unique challenges in accessing government- or pharmacy-sponsored vaccine portals. As a result of coalitional attempts, between March 2021 and May 2021, the KACN hosted vaccine drives with community health centers and the county health department for their community members to access essential health resources. Through this, the KACN community workers helped more than 200 community members who relied on social benefits for living or who had been struggling to access vaccines because of their lack of digital environments to get vaccinated at convenient locations and times with in-person language services. In total, KACN created more than 6 vaccine drive events across three community-based sites including churches and community centers, which were convenient for community members to access. Their strategies can be discussed as “coalition” (Walton et al, 2019, p. 134) in non-professional settings, which were proposed by Walton et al. (2019) as a social justice-oriented action item in the field of technical and professional communication (TPC).

These coalitional actions provoked by KACN had major two differences, compared to other government-sponsored vaccine hubs or clinical sites. First, this vaccine support work relied on KACN’s rhetorical understanding of the community members’ environments. At the beginning of the vaccination campaign, KACN helped senior community members sign up for the coun-

ty-sponsored vaccine sites. Helen said, “English is not the only problem.” She and other KACN community workers considered the locations and technological environments of elderly community members. For example, Helen came to know that vaccination sites were too scattered across the metropolitan area for elderly members to drive. In many cases, the elderly members who registered for the county- or city-level vaccine hubs ended up being required to drive up to 30 miles to arrive the designated vaccine hub. Thus, instead of continuing signing up elderly members for the vaccine hub portals or the “Smart Waitlist” system provided by the county, she and other KACN workers came to organize local vaccine drives through coalitional approaches. This example shows how community workers adopt a keen ecological understanding of environmental factors in doing care and communicative practices.

Second, transcultural and localized vaccination practices were observed. In my observation of the vaccine drives across different places, the KACN community workers set up tables and greeted the patients and provided information about the vaccination process and the screening and consent form in Korean if needed. Then, the patients were guided to proceed to the nurses for getting a shot, and the translators/interpreters were ready to help them communicate with medical professionals such as the date of birth for identification, medication history, and any experienced symptoms (detailed below). This vaccine drive helped community member patients perceive this vaccination process with “prototypes” and “scripts” that can help people gather information and “perform information in a location or context” (St. Amant, 2021, p. 411). The script at this vaccine drive can be described into seven activities (see Figure 4):

1. Registering in with translation services
2. Checking in with translation services
3. Getting informed about the vaccination process with translated texts in Korean
4. Filling out the consent form with translated texts in Korean
5. Getting a shot with Korean translators if needed in communicating with nurses and other medical professionals
6. Waiting 15 minutes
7. Picking up gifts (a hygienic product package and a rice bag)

This script presents a part of their care technologies through translational activities. Along with these prototypes and scripts, the KACN workers also provided community members with transcultural contexts. In my observation, Helen spoke to all the patients who were waiting for 15 minutes after the shot at this vaccine drive:

Before you leave, please take a bag of rice. These rice bags were sponsored by the Chinese Community Center people, who helped those who had difficulties in the winter storm a month ago. They kindly shared extra rice bags with us. If you finished your 15 minute-waiting, please don't forget to pick up one bag.

These rice bags seemed to allow community workers to represent their transcultural partnership, implement their material care technologies, and build their relationships with community members, as rice is one of the most important food items across East Asian countries and cultures. The rice bags at the end of the series of activities can represent the KACN workers' coalitional actions, their material and discursive practices, and grassroots movements across diverse Asians

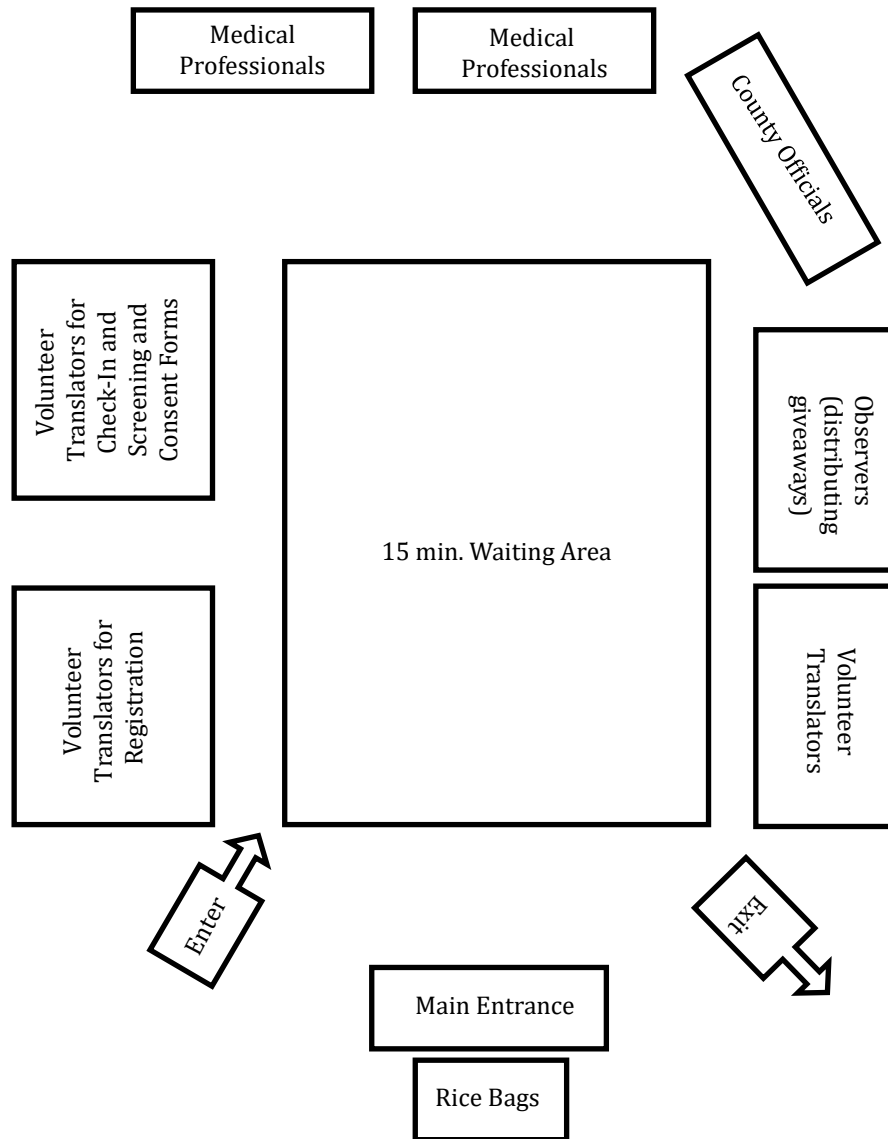


Figure 4. A vaccine drive map observed from a community center site, March 31, 2021.

and Asian-American communities, who navigated multiple disasters and health crises to support each other.

Furthermore, in their rhetorical care technologies, community workers including Helen and Teresa carefully considered the material circumstances and the affective and emotive dimension of immigration populations in vaccination processes. In her interview, Helen mentioned, "International students, ESL students, undocumented people, and small business owners and employees altogether were welcomed to our vaccine drives" (April 22, 2021). These ecological understanding of and material approaches to coalitional actions were reflected in their flyers and advertisements of the vaccine drives on local Korean newspapers and KakaoTalk. In their

flyer for the vaccine drives, Helen and Teresa highlighted that people would not be asked about their social security number because they knew that for immigration populations, concern about legal statuses may be one of the potential barriers in accessing services. In those flyers (see Figure 3), they emphasized that people do not have to make an online appointment with any personal information—the only thing required is to make a phone call for them to estimate the number of the vaccines needed—and that they welcome any adults regardless of their legal status or insurance status. This communication design as triangulated across Helen’s interview and the flyers evidenced my community worker participants’ caring, ecological, and material approaches to the process of the translational and other communicative activities in their grassroots and coalitional vaccine drive projects.

Conclusion and Implications

As shown above, we can see how multilingual transnational community members and workers have used translanguaging, transmodal attunements, translational attunements, and coalitional actions as rhetorical care technologies that are entangled with (im)material caring and emotional, ecological, and affective dimensions beyond discursive practices. These care technologies, that is, translanguaging care, including discursive and nondiscursive practices, provide not only the ways that constitute and create knowledge but also the agentive tools that can dismantle oppressive ideologies in recovery technology design and reassemble resources. However, it should be noted that given that ten participants were interviewed and observed for this study, the findings above are not generalizable. And these categories from the findings need to be viewed within the cognizance of the potential danger of reducing the complexity of COVID-19 communicative activities that took place across different locations and communities. The terms Western and non-Western along with the term Asian in the context of this study should be carefully used because they might reinforce stereotypical understanding of cultures and reduce dynamic and fluid features of cultures on micro levels to static and essential notions of culture (Agboka, 2012, p. 167).

Overall, this study shows how the needs for culturally sensitive and multilingual care in COVID-19 recovery were met by grassroots community work. For community members, this community care work was perceived as agentive and affective recovery processes in the aftermath of COVID-19. For community workers, this community care work provided an empowering moment in which they collectively developed coalitional strategic plans. For both participant groups, translanguaging, transmodal, and translational practices seemed to serve as what Ding et al. (2015) call “strategic entries” (p. 32) where they can effectively and creatively leverage their resources and prior knowledge across language, modalities, and contexts. These “entry points” (p. 44) help them avoid dominant narratives of victimhood that flattens their rhetorical agency and practices into a reductive narrative of “resilience” (Barrios, 2016) and build alternative practices.

My findings suggest that translanguaging and translational care technologies question monolingual paradigms and unequally engineered digital infrastructures. By using a case of Korean-speaking transnational migrant communities, I have demonstrated how they implemented rhetorical agency and built alternative spaces of care that disrupted Western normative disaster recovery systems. Against remote and decontextualized care systems and power structures, they built coalitional networks and justice-oriented grassroots movements with a focus on material, ecological, and discursive care. In their rhetorical care technologies, participants not only negotiate language, culture, and contexts but also change material and ecological systems. Here, care technologies include not only digital devices and platforms such as smartphones, KakaoTalk,

direct messages, and community organization websites participants utilized but also rhetorical labor and care practices such as translingual/transmodal attunements and translational processes that pay attention to the community members' emotion, affect, and environments. As Winance (2010) articulates, "To care is to tinker, i.e. to meticulously explore, 'quibble,' test, touch, adapt, adjust, pay attention to details and change them, until a suitable arrangement (material, emotional, relational) has been reached" (p. 111). Thus, language minority community workers and members included in this study can help professional communicators better understand that crisis or disaster recovery communication needs relational and process-oriented rhetorical care practices among different stakeholders.⁶

This study does not intend to essentialize care ethics and caring attitudes of my community member and worker participants. But it is noted that these practices were based on their awareness of social inequalities embedded in disaster recovery infrastructures and that community worker participants actively took intersectional, sociopolitical, and material-discursive labor through coalitional approaches to advocate for the right to gaining access to resources. As many researchers already noted, it is important to view "community members as collaborators rather than passive audiences" to resist a deficit model, which "may also privilege the goals and needs of public health officials over those of local communities" (Bloom-Pojar & DeVasto, 2019, p. 5). A more adaptive and material understanding of translingual, transmodal, and translational practices in community contexts can help language minority transnational communities facilitate their agency in the aftermath of a health crisis. To promote this facilitation, government officials, practitioners, and researchers in TPC should understand the rhetorical strategies and lived experiences of multilingual transnational populations first. More research should be done to investigate translingual, transmodal, and translational practices, care-oriented relationships, and rhetorical strategies in underrepresented and underserved communities.

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⁶ It should be noted that researchers and scholars should beware of celebratory interpretations of care practices because systemic transformation and infrastructural changes should be prioritized and stressed ultimately. This rhetorical and discursive care labor unequally burdened marginalized communities to find alternative and additional places, times, and strategies, and celebratory approaches to care practices might be complicit in sustaining this discriminatory system.

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The Communicative and Affective Labor of Public Pandemic Diaries: The Case of Fang Fang's Wuhan Diary

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Abstract

This article studies the immaterial labor of Fang Fang's Wuhan diary about the Wuhan COVID-19 lockdown time period, Jan 23 to Apr 8, 2020 (her diary ran from Jan 25 to Mar 24). Guided by social justice-informed, critically contextualized methodology, this analysis examines how the rhetoric of Fang Fang's diary as tactical communication contributed to enacting social justice during the Wuhan lockdown by recognizing, revealing and rejecting oppressions people experienced both due to the challenges of the pandemic outbreak and the government's inadequate and problematic responses. In doing so, Fang Fang uses her own positionality and privilege to challenge problematic ways political, social, economic, and cultural power dynamics temper knowledge production and circulation thus shaping relief efforts during the Wuhan lockdown. I argue that public diaries are an important genre that can serve to enact social justice during crisis contexts and can make salient the ramifications of sociocultural and political forces on individual bodies. I end with a discussion of implications for future research on public pandemic diaries as a tactical communication genre.

Keywords: storytelling; COVID-19; Wuhan lockdown; tactical communication; pandemic diary

“When an era sheds a speck of dust it might not seem like much, but when it falls upon the shoulders of an individual it feels like a mountain.” –Fang Fang (said elsewhere but quoted on p. 37, became popular during the COVID-19 era)

Introduction

Scholars in technical and professional communication have studied the important roles alternative media can play during public health crises, especially in transcultural contexts, and often used by grassroots efforts (Ding & Zhang, 2010; Ding, 2013; Ding, 2014; Ding, 2020a). These communication practices were categorized as “tactical communication” (Ding, 2018) in response to various issues of social injustices during public health crises (Ding, Li, & Haigler, 2015). During COVID-19, we’ve seen a more prevalent form of alternative communication practice using storytelling. Either crowdsourced or shared by individuals, these “pandemic stories” helped bring lived experiences to the forefront of global risk communication sites beyond mere statistics (Baniya & Chen, 2021). In this article, I focus on one storytelling genre: public pandemic diaries. Using one notable example—the *Wuhan Diary* by Fang Fang, a renowned Chinese novelist—a record of Wuhan under lockdown in early 2020 which caught significant national and global attention (Fang, 2020), I argue for the importance of public diaries as a tactical communication genre, especially during public health crises, that perform communicative and affective labor to circumvent institutional barriers and advocate for social justice.

The recent social justice turn in TPC has taken up the term *antenarrative* to emphasize its opening “up a space that invites reinterpretation of the past so as to suggest—and enable—different possibilities for the future” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 212). David Boje (2001) defined “story” as “an account of incidents or events” that may be “ante” to a more coherent, plot-driven narrative. Mobilized by these definitions, I see public diaries as stories “ante” to more coherent narratives of the pandemic. Studying them can also enrich an antenarrative of TPC research that values experiential knowledge and social justice. Similar to anonymous professionals or public whistle-blowers during the SARS crisis mediating “between governmental institutions, experts, and the public”, public pandemic diaries are a new example of “personal narrative rhetoric” entrenched in domestic and global politics (Ding, 2009, p. 332).

Responses to the pandemic, both in the mainstream narrative construction and in its policy development, have reflected the polarized political landscape in many countries and heightened nationalistic sentiments. They have also reinforced the nature of outbreak narratives as defined by Priscilla Wald (2008): one that emphasizes national belonging and marginalizing “others” who are carriers of the transmittable disease. In China, in particular, such sentiments were reflected in its promotion of the sacrificial discourse for the collective good and the praising of heroic actions of medical workers, as well as the framing of western forces as enemies of the state (Mu, 2020; Yan, 2020; Yeophantong & Shih, 2021). Against this backdrop and that of pervasive anti-Asian hate in western countries (Sotgiu & Dobler, 2020), what is lost are the complex lived experiences of people during the pandemic, especially those living on the margins. Public pandemic diaries can serve as an intervention into such injustices.

Given this global political context, the publication of Fang Fang’s diary in English caused much controversy in China and globally. While some might perceive Fang Fang as an unofficial spokesperson for the experiences of the Wuhan lockdown and an activist to advocate for the marginalized, others, especially Chinese nationalists, saw her as a “traitor” who injected much neg-

ativity to the public discourse and “hand[ed] knives to the west” (Lew, 2021; Liu, Ran & Wang, 2021). Studies of Fang Fang’s pandemic diary across disciplines have argued for its role in documenting and mediating the experiences of the Wuhan lockdown, as a rite of passage and digital mourning (Whyke, Lopez-Mugica, & Chen, 2021), as an act of sousveillance (Fedtke, Ibahrine, & Wang, 2020), and as endurance art (Yang, 2022).

For these reasons, I identify Fang Fang’s diary as a key player in transcultural risk/crisis communication about COVID-19 about the Wuhan lockdown time period, Jan 23 to Apr 8, 2020 (the diary ran from Jan 25 to Mar 24). Guided by social justice-informed, critically contextualized methodology, this article examines how the communicative and affective labor of Fang Fang’s diary enacted social justice during the Wuhan lockdown by recognizing, revealing, and rejecting oppressions people experienced both due to the challenges of the pandemic outbreak and the government’s inadequate and problematic responses to the outbreak in its early stages. Through this case study, I illustrate the mediating roles public pandemic diaries can play as tactical communication during public health crises. In the following sections, I begin by reviewing scholarly conversations on narrative and storytelling in crisis communication, tactical communication, and social justice, before presenting my research design and analysis.

Narrative and Storytelling in TPC and Crisis Communication

Both the narrative turn and the cultural rhetoric turn in the field of technical and professional communication have argued for the emphasis on how narratives connect people and produce culture in professional and public spaces (Barton and Barton, 1988; Blyler and Perkins, 1999). They push against the binaries of narrative and analysis; reason and affect; mind and body, etc. In arguing for the values of narratives or stories in TPC, scholars urged us to pay more attention to how knowledge is created and constituted through lived experiences shaped by cultural factors.

In their introduction to the special issue on “The Work of Storytelling in Technical Communication” in *Technical Communication*, Kyle Vealey and Jeff Gerding (2021) elegantly summarized the ways stories and storytelling have contributed to TPC work, using “characters, settings, descriptive language, metaphor, and narrative structure” to communicate complex technical and scientific information as well as “to articulate the complexity of firsthand experience into knowledge that is social, shareable, and lasting” (p. 1). Public diaries do both these things. In a diary, we see the author’s descriptive account of characters and settings of the events being captured, as well as personal commentaries and reflections that help readers also critically reflect on the events, constructing a public memory.

Narratives can construct identities and knowledge of individuals or a discipline or organization. For example, narration in technical communication can constitute master narratives about the industries or fields of technologies and sciences (Barton and Barton 1988). Here, narratives may be seen as a coherent account with a plot (Boje, 2001), yet the danger of such an approach is that one master/official narrative may exclude or marginalize others, such as the one of TPC as “a pragmatic identity that values effectiveness” (Jones, Moore, & Walton, 2016, p. 212). Instead, Boje (2001) proposed the concept of “antenarrative” which was then picked up by TPC scholars as both a method and a methodology and a means to counter the official narrative of the field as pragmatic (Jones, Moore, & Watson, 2016; Small, 2017). In challenging this, Boje (2001) defined antenarrative as coming before a narrative, focusing on “the speculative, the ambiguity of sen-

semaking” and constituting a “collective memory before it becomes reified into the story, the consensual narrative.”

Diaries, as a live storytelling genre, exist in the antenarrative space, reflecting the dynamics of storytelling toward a narrative yet also unpredictable and constantly moving. Diaries, while usually following a chronological structure, aren’t necessarily cohesive and can capture the fragmented and in-the-moment experiences. Thus, the diary is a unique storytelling genre that best captures the lived experiences of the writer. When shared publicly, it can constitute an antenarrative that pushes us to refrain from submitting to grand narratives and “to think dialectically, to embrace alternative interpretations, to (re)consider outliers and silences, and to put potentially competing narratives into conversation with one another” (Smalls, 2017, p. 241). Every diary can be treated as “the data used making sense of the past and predicting the future” that “underpin our individual and group identities through articulating shared experience” (Smalls, 2017, p. 240). In this sense, pandemic diaries can serve as rich “data” for people to understand the experiences of the pandemic, humanizing the numbers and statistics they often see in mainstream media.

Tactical Communication and Social Justice

Diary is not a genre commonly studied in TPC scholarship. But public diaries can be seen as a kind of tactical communication during public health crises that aim to communicate information by circumventing institutional barriers and using alternative media (Ding, 2018; Ding, 2009). Building from de Certeau’s (1984) concept of tactic and Kimball’s (2006) definition of tactical communication, Ding (2009) defined tactical risk communication as extra-institutional, and as an “art of the weak” (referencing de Certeau) that challenges the dominant power. By studying “guerilla media” such as text messaging, Ding (2009) drew our attention to how personal rhetoric “play[ed] the role of mediators between governmental institutions, experts, and the public” during the SARS outbreak (p. 332). Public pandemic diaries could become sites where the personal encounters the public and the political, through documenting experiences and reflecting and commenting on policies.

TPC scholars have argued that narratives can foster critical thinking of social justice (Jones & Walton, 2018) by “encouraging identification, facilitating reflexivity, interrogating historicity, and understanding context” (p. 243). Further, Baniya and Chen (2021) theorized how such capacities apply in a crisis communication context by analyzing how transnational digital platforms worked to build an antenarrative of the COVID-19 crisis that enacted social justice by “revealing and rejecting injustices through critical storytelling and reflections; building collective knowledge via storytelling on navigating a crisis; developing solidarity through fostering identification and amplifying the voices of marginalized people, and establishing transnational and transcultural coalitional spaces for intersectional thinking and collective actions.” Pandemic diarists can function like “citizen technical communicators” to advocate for social justice (Chen & Bergholm, 2020). This is why public pandemic diaries have the potential for enacting social justice in the field of TPC. I will now discuss a methodological framework to study how such tactical communication can contribute to social justice.

I adopt the definition of social justice by Jones & Walton (2018) which focuses on investigating “how communication broadly defined can amplify the agency of oppressed people—those who are materially, socially, and politically, and/or economically under-resourced” (p. 242). Expand-

ing on this action-oriented focus, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) later developed a heuristic of positionality, privilege, and power (the 3P heuristic) to help TPC researchers consider issues of social justice and to recognize oppressions before revealing, rejecting, and replacing them with collective, coalitional actions. The 3P heuristic refers to the practice of centering communication around social justice through questioning how the identities of communicators and stakeholders affect subjectivity and perspective; how this subjectivity in conjunction with sets of relative advantages and disadvantages affect assumptions made by the communicators; and how power is distributed among groups of stakeholders.

Enacting such practices in a global public health context requires a critically contextualized approach that Ding (2014) has developed, which involves six dimensions of analysis: “key players, time-space axes, tipping points, interaction analysis, power-knowledge relations, and contexts” (p. 35). To study citizen technical communication during the early outbreak of COVID-19, Chen & Bergholm (2020) combined the 3P heuristic by Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) and Ding’s (2014) critically contextualized methodology to develop a new methodological framework that pays particular attention to social activism during a public health crisis:

- Identify faces of oppression during the pandemic across mediascape, ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, and ideoscape.
- Identify activists as key players who push back on the oppressions along time and space axes.
- Understand how these key players recognize their own positionalities and privileges to challenge problematic ways political, social, economic, and cultural power dynamics temper knowledge production and circulation thus shaping relief efforts.
- Analyze how this social activism recognizes, reveals, and rejects injustices and replaces oppressive practices with intersectional, coalitional practices.

Adopting this framework, I identify Fang Fang and her Wuhan lockdown diary as a key player during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic when Wuhan was under lockdown from Jan 23 to Apr 8, 2020, both within China and in the global mediascape, ethnoscape, technoscape, financescape, and ideoscape (see Appadurai, 1990). This means considering the roles the diary played in global cultural flow, as she observed and discussed COVID-19 relief strategies and policies before and during Wuhan lockdown since the novel coronavirus was discovered. While the data of analysis here don’t include responses to her diary due to limited space, I will nonetheless consider the circulation of her diary as reflected in her own documenting and responding to the responses she received.

As I discussed before, antenarrative accounts for the often-fragmented nature of storytelling as well as its potential to make explicit power dynamics that shape storytelling and narrative constructions in any given situation. In other words, antenarrative emphasizes the political and rhetorical nature of storytelling and the value of lived experience. Thus, to understand diaries as a genre of TPC, we must pay attention to not only their communicative power but also their affective influence, “a social force animated by the powers of knowledge, affect, science, and language” (Hardt & Negri, 2000, p. 357-358). Pandemic diaries document such tensions and forces as “a means of mobilizing personal feelings, energies, and will power to persist and persevere” (Yang, 2022, p. 89). Adopting Sara Ahmed’s (2015) definition of affect as effects created when bodies come in contact with one another, I argue that we examine manifestations of emotions in

stories as affective gestures in terms of how actors and contexts interact to make meaning of the situation.

Therefore, to understand how Fang Fang's diary performed the communicative labor of sharing information as well as the affective labor to construct a public memory of the Wuhan lockdown, my analysis addresses the following research questions:

- How did Fang Fang's diary recognize, reveal, and reject social injustices during the Wuhan lockdown?
- How did Fang Fang recognize her own positionalities and privileges to challenge problematic ways political, social, economic, and cultural power dynamics temper knowledge production and circulation thus shaping relief efforts during the Wuhan lockdown?
- How can we understand the affective labor of Fang Fang's diary as a "public diary" genre in the global mediascape and ideoscape during COVID-19?

Research Method

With these research questions in mind, I conducted a qualitative rhetorical analysis by coding all 60 entries of Fang Fang's Wuhan diary (Jan 25-March 24). Informed by LuMing Mao's (2013) comparative rhetorical lens, the rhetorical analysis examines thematically the roles Fang Fang's diary played in documenting and commenting on the Wuhan lockdown period during the early outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020. The diary was contextualized and recontextualized in the sociopolitical context locally in China (where it was originally posted on social media), but also globally as it caught international attention and was translated and published in English. Such a comparative rhetorical framework requires that I ground my analysis in Fang Fang's own language and how she constructed the experiences under lockdown, with a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2008).

Treating her diary entries as story-based data (Smalls, 2017), I conducted my analysis with two cycles of coding. In the first round of descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2013), I categorized the kinds of information she included in her diary based on the source and genre, resulting in four codes: direct personal experiences (including her lockdown experience and diary writing experience); advice/information from friends in the medical profession (updates on the current situation in Wuhan, why, and what people should do); her own media consumption (posts she saw, articles she read); commentaries and reflections on the overall situation (including about her diary writing experience). Then, in the second cycle of coding, I coded these categories thematically using process coding to connote actions (Saldaña, 2013), identifying moments in her writing where she aimed to enact social justice following the definition and framework of social justice by Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019), as well as moments of affective gestures:

- Recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing injustices
- Invoking positionality, privilege, and power
- Evoking affects

Mapping these coding categories onto the kinds of power of immaterial labor (communicative and affective), I arrived at three themes that reflect how Fang Fang's diary performed immaterial

labor during the Wuhan lockdown as a form of tactical technical communication (see Appendix for my coding samples):

- Revealing injustices by using her positionality and privilege to share information and amplify voices
- Rejecting injustices and calling for accountability and reflection
- Documenting affects

The following findings and analysis section will present the findings and analysis organized into these three themes.

Central to both Mao's comparative rhetorical approach and Charmaz's social constructionist approach to grounded theory is examining the relativity of the researcher's perspectives, positionality and the reflexivity of the researcher. Thus, it is important to discuss my own positionality as a Chinese researcher studying the English version of Fang Fang's diary in the U.S. While I have followed Wuhan's lockdown online from a distance, I have experienced COVID-19 response strategies in the U.S. firsthand. Given the U.S.-China tensions regarding COVID-19 policies, my positionality requires me to discuss explicitly why I have chosen the English version of Fang Fang's diary for my analysis.

This choice is informed by my positionality and my audience for this project. While I saved posts of Fang Fang's diary from Chinese social media as she was actively posting them before I even started the research project, I only consulted the Chinese version rather than using it as my primary object of analysis. But having access to the Chinese version allowed me to verify moments of translation in the English version that were unclear to me and to consider why some elements of the original text were not translated into English. Even though the English version of the book may be considered the "official" version in the U.S., my positionality and privilege gave me access to a comparative lens that informs my analysis, allowing me to address the incongruities of my positionality (Mao, 2013). While my analysis of the content is primarily grounded in the time-space axis of the original publication of the diary, the diary itself also includes meta commentaries about the delivery and circulation of her own diary. Because Fang Fang's diary is both a local and a global artifact of the COVID-19 communication, it must be read as such.

Findings and Analysis

Fang Fang's Wuhan Diary performed multiple functions as immaterial labor that not only documented her personal experiences and Wuhan's collective affective memory of the COVID-19 lockdown, but also provided information for local, national, and global audiences. In particular, Fang Fang's lockdown diary performed communicative labor through her own privileged rhetorical agency (Greene, 2004) as well as amplifying others who were suffering the ramifications of conditions of the Wuhan lockdown. Using her own intellectual capacities and privileged network as a published writer, her diary also advocated for justices through critical reflections to call out those responsible for injustices. Finally, she performed affective labor that documented the collective sentiments of Wuhanese people under lockdown, countering the dominant positive discourse of winning the war against COVID-19 (Zhang, 2020) with a much more nuanced picture that revealed the collective and individual suffering, creating a rhetorical intervention in the affect economy of the pandemic discourse (Ding, 2020b).

Revealing Injustices by Using Her Positionality and Privilege to Share information and Amplify Voices (Communicative Labor)

Walton, Moore, & Jones (2019) defined positionality as “a way of conceiving subjectivity that simultaneously accounts for the constraints and conditions of context while also allowing for an individual’s action and agency” (p. 63). Throughout the diary, Fang Fang (2020) established an honest ethos by stating her subjectivity in relation to the residents of Wuhan under lockdown, as someone who’s a “Wuhan native, through and through” (p. 76) and a writer. She positioned herself as a firsthand witness to the Wuhan lockdown and a concerned citizen who wanted to hold accountable those responsible and to suffer along with the Wuhanese people. This is how she saw her own positionality and privilege in relation to fellow Wuhanese under lockdown:

Sometimes I feel like an old hen assigned to protect those people and things that have been abandoned by history and those lives that have been ignored by society as it advances forward. My job is to spend time with them, give them warmth, and encourage them” (p. 112).

Even as she claimed her purpose as purely personal, she was motivated by a larger civic responsibility, embodying an “intersubjectivity” à la Arendt. In exploring the politics of storytelling, anthropologist Michael Jackson (2013) argued that the “tension between being for oneself and being for another” “informs every intersubjective encounter” (p. 47). Jackson saw storytelling as a potentially empowering tool for people to claim “a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances” (p. 34). When Fang Fang highlighted her purely personal motivation for keeping the diary, she nonetheless transformed her so-called “individual record” into public meanings.

When Fang Fang connected her experiences and feelings with other residents of Wuhan, her personal story became allegorical, even while claiming her own agency in sharing her story while rejecting being treated as a representative voice (Fang, 2020, p. 179). According to Amy Shuman (2005), “entitlement” is linked to “credibility:” who is entitled to tell what story can affect the credibility of the story. While constructing her own agency and credibility for telling stories, Fang Fang recognized her limited positionality and drew attention to other stories of people who were suffering more than she did, such as people with chronic diseases who couldn’t gain access to other medical care (p. 92). When she discussed medical information or coronavirus related statistics or stories or events she heard elsewhere, she took care to verify its accuracy before sharing. As a result, she was able to share helpful information and amplify the voices of residents in Wuhan even as her credibility was challenged and her voice censored.

Here are some of the problems she documented. On Jan 27, she noted that “[o]ne thing that citizens are more concerned about right now is the shortage of face masks” (p. 8). Her accounts revealed problems of price inflation of masks and the shortage of more effective N95 masks, which led to people having to wear disposable masks longer than they should just to ration good masks, or to buy used or poor-quality masks. On Jan 29, she recorded that “it is extremely difficult to get a bed at any hospital” (p. 17). On Feb 8, she called attention to people who “set the heart of this city at ease” but were often overlooked: food delivery people; police officers, and sanitation workers. On Feb 14, she shared concerns for other patients who had been deferring their care when coronavirus patients were prioritized. She also discussed the difficulties medical professionals experienced when the outbreak first began, highlighting how the early negligence from the government led to the loss of several medical experts (see Feb 18; Mar 3). She critiqued the “group-buying model” for food deliveries, which was inconvenient for residents and sometimes

caused “unreasonable burden on the volunteers” (p. 146). Through sharing stories she observed in her personal networks as well as in the media, she revealed the injustices caused by the bureaucratic inadequacies and lack of infrastructural support for people under lockdown.

As a middle-class intellectual and a published author, Fang Fang also used her diary as a space to share important information related to the coronavirus by taking advantage of her personal connections with medical professionals, sometimes to verify information she saw in the media and sometimes to gain guidance on how to better support the management of the pandemic as ordinary citizens (see p. 46, p. 71, p. 100, p. 109, p. 154, p. 188). This was particularly helpful in revealing injustices. From her account, readers could learn how the virus was first discovered and spread in hospitals and the perspectives of medical professionals on the status of medical facilities at the time. For example, in the Feb 17 entry, she summarized the points from a conversation with a doctor friend on the current standing with the outbreak, including clarifying how a “turning point” meant different things for medical professionals and the public; the number of medical professionals who had been infected; whether hospitals in Wuhan were using traditional Chinese medicine to treat COVID-19 patients; and what percentage of patients were considered critical and their recovery rate. Such information provided much needed tactical transparency that the government was lacking in its own communications.

Rejecting Injustices and Calling for Accountability and Reflection (Communicative Labor)

By documenting the problems and challenges people experienced under lockdown and seeking their causes, Fang Fang recognized and revealed injustices caused by the challenges of the scale of the outbreak and the ways the early response was mishandled. In turn, she also pointed out the problems of a rising “pandemic nationalism” (Zhang, 2020; Yeophantong & Shih, 2021) through critical reflection, serving her civic role as a privileged citizen by performing communicative labor to call for accountability from the government for the negligence of the early outbreak. Such labor invited readers to reflect alongside her and to act upon injustices.

Her rejection of injustices was action-oriented. She directly addressed government officials and news media, questioning their problematic actions and asking for clarifications, consequences, and corrections. She was among the critical voices when the whistleblower Dr. Li Wenliang was punished for “spreading rumor” and when local officials still denied person-to-person transmission and organized large gatherings (p. 7). But the critiques and calls for responsibility and consequences became especially vociferous in the second half of her diary when she repeatedly and vehemently requested detailed investigations into what happened during the early stages of the outbreak in Wuhan. Her March 3 entry is titled “You need to give us all an explanation” (p. 205) where she called for answers to what happened in the Wuhan Central Hospital. Addressing administrators and superiors of the hospital, she says:

You can't just write everything off by simply hiding behind the fact that 'this is a new virus so we didn't have enough knowledge about how to respond!' That's not an excuse. . . when so many lives are dangling before you, we need people to stand up and take responsibility: You people, that's right, you! Stand up and repent! (p. 208–209).

Her call for accountability included specific suggestions such as firing responsible officials and even reevaluating the Chinese bureaucratic system. When discussing what happened to Wuhan Central Hospital, she said, “if someone has to take the blame and resign, let's start with the secretary and director of Central Hospital” (p. 244).

These critiques subjected her to online attacks and censorship, an injustice that infringed upon her freedom of speech. Not only were her diary entries repeatedly deleted on Weibo and her account was frozen several times, even her friend's WeChat public account, which was used to share her diary, was repeatedly shut down (Er Xiang, 2020). Coordinated attacks on her diary and her personhood also reflected the affective economy of Chinese digital nationalism, intensified by COVID-19 (Zhang, 2020), which Fang Fang shrewdly pointed out in her responses to these censorship measures. She was keenly aware of the "infodemic" during the pandemic, casting doubts on official statistics of people who were infected or died of the coronavirus (p. 123, p. 132) as well as how this infodemic was embedded in the broader ideological information control system of the government, enacted both through direct censoring and flooding social media with belligerent trolls and "politically correct" dominant discourse (Roberts, 2018; also see Ruan, Knockel, & Crete-Nishihata, 2020). She compared this kind of attack to the Cultural Revolution era by questioning the information control system that allowed the festering of such discourse (p. 118).

Recognizing the flaws of the government bureaucratic system and its tendency to focus on formalities and appearances, she commended any opportunities or incidences when people were able to speak up either online or in person. On March 5, a popular internet video showed people shouting from their apartment windows about the fakeness of the visit by central government leaders to a district in Wuhan. Through a friend, Fang Fang learned that the central government actually had a meeting to address the outcry later that day. She comments:

Take a look, isn't this great? If those people hadn't shouted out from their windows, how would the leaders ever know the difficulties the people are going through? If they just remain silent and go along with the charade, aren't they the ones who will end up suffering? So if they have something to scream about, they should speak up! While it can be very difficult to find your own voice outside the majority, it is still important to foster those individual voices, no? (p. 221)

While Fang Fang recognized the flaws of bureaucracy, she was genuine in her suggestions to correct the mistakes and hold the corrupted individuals accountable, never questioning the sovereignty of the nation state. From the beginning on Jan 29, she proclaimed her allegiance to the government: "I am dedicated to standing side by side with the government and all the people of Wuhan, fully committed to battle this outbreak together. I am also 100 percent committed to accommodating any and all requests made of me by the government" (p. 20). She repeatedly praised the lockdown strategies and government actions in controlling the pandemic when progress began to be made. On Feb 13, she noted "the government actions taken to control the outbreak are proving to be increasingly effective. Over time, they are also gradually finding methods that are more humanistic" (p. 87). However, such positivity was less seen in later entries as the lockdown dragged on, as her affective trajectory reflects.

Documenting Affect (Affective Labor)

By calling for accountability and actions to address injustices, Fang Fang also intervened in the dominant affective economy of "positive energy" by performing affective labor. We can hear the frustration and anger in her questioning such as the passage that I quoted above. Here, I understand "affect" as employed by Sara Ahmed (2015) in terms of "affective economy" which connotes "the circulation between objects and signs (=the accumulation of affective value)" (p. 45). Therefore, affect is understood not as emotions residing in individuals but as effects created when bodies (human or nonhuman) come in contact with one another that generate a circulatory power which is shaped by and also shapes the politics of social discourse and culture. As is typi-

cal in the personal diary genre, Fang Fang often discussed her emotional journeys throughout the lockdown. One might thus understand such emotions as residing in her person. But when read in the context of this public diary, such understanding is limited. Instead, when publicized, Fang Fang’s emotions were thrust into the broader affective economy of Wuhan during the COVID-19 lockdown when cultural, social, economic, and political forces came together to interact with the lived experiences of residents under lockdown.

Ding (2014) argued that it is important to understand the spatial and temporal development of a public health crisis when understanding the rhetorics of crisis communication, identifying tipping points that are significant moments during the crisis. To analyze the affective labor of Fang Fang’s diary, I identified tipping points documented in her diary that reflected not only the development of the lockdown policies but also significant moments that influenced her storytelling. In so doing, I construct a timeline (see Table 1) that illustrates how Fang Fang used affective labor to produce a collective subjectivity of the Wuhanese people under lockdown (Hardt, 1999). In this affective timeline, I highlight particularly the “negative” feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anger, and frustration, because these feelings challenged and intervened with the national discourse of “positive energy”, epitomized by the broad and simplistic narrative of empathy, resilience, solidarity, and national pride (Yeophantong & Shih, 2021). But it is important to note that we must not just see these emotions as negative, but also as (potentially) action-inspiring affects.

Table 1. The Affective Timeline of Fang Fang’s Diary

Tipping points	Affective gestures
Beginning of lockdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeling pathetic when having to reuse disposable masks (Jan. 27) ● Feeling like a community when people helped each other out (Jan. 28) ● “The cruelty of reality” (Jan. 30, p. 20) ● Feeling guilty for feeling scared and anxious while others are working hard (Jan. 31) ● Nostalgic for the usual excitement of Chinese New Year (Feb. 1) ● Hope: when military entered Wuhan and temporary hospitals were built (Feb. 5)

Tipping points	Affective gestures
Death of Dr. Li Wenliang (Feb. 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feb. 6–7: “heartbroken” (p. 56); “depression, sadness, and anger” (p. 57) ● “living in a daze” (Feb. 12, p. 78) ● “the people of Wuhan are starting to grow more depressed about the overall situation” (Feb. 12, p. 81) ● Anger: “shouting political slogans is not going to ease the pain that the people of Wuhan are going through” (Feb. 12, p. 81–82)
Fang Fang’s Weibo account suspended (Feb. 15) Order No. 2 for a complete lockdown (Feb. 15) Strictest order on quarantine (Feb. 17)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hopelessness: when attacked and censored online: “You are left shocked, saddened, and angry, and eventually you get used to it” (Feb. 15, p. 95) ● “Besides helplessness there is only helplessness” (Feb. 17, p. 113)
Fang Fang’s Weibo account unfrozen (Feb. 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exacerbated pain, no tears left (Feb. 24) ● “weary and depressed” (Feb. 28, p. 183) ● “bitter sadness” (Mar. 2, p. 199) ● Anger and frustration: Critiques of “positive energy” and “gratitude” (Mar. 5, Mar 7)
Zero new case (Mar. 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “Anxiety, fragile state of mind” (Mar. 20, p. 320) ● No need to panic anymore (Mar. 21)

One can see the rollercoaster of emotions here. While at the beginning her feelings were more mixed, the rest of the time was filled with depression, sadness, hopelessness, anger, and anxiety. Meanwhile, the official discourse from the Chinese state was dominated by the emotional pedagogy of “fighting the pandemic battle” (The State Council Information Office of the Republic of China, 2020). Debra Gould (2012) defined “emotional pedagogy” as “a template for what and how to feel” (p. 103). This dominant national discourse on fighting the pandemic focused on emphasizing the resilience of and the solidarity with the Wuhan people, and national pride (Yeophantong & Shih, 2021). But this emotional pedagogy was not only indoctrinated through top-down control (such as the censorship of Fang Fang’s posts) but also the mobilization of the nationalist discourse of solidarity and collective sacrifice (such as shouting political slogans). This emotional pedagogy of positive energy has its roots in earlier CCP ideologies but has particularly flourished since Xi Jinping took power in 2012, permeating political discourse and people’s everyday life, with its essence being that “people should act positively, speak positively, and, ... think positively” and that sacrifice is both good for the collective benefit and for individuals (Chen & Wang, 2019, p. 208). Per this logic, staying under lockdown at all costs during the pandemic and still singing praises for this

measure could heighten psychological strains on people in Wuhan, as Fang Fang pointed out after 40 days into quarantine:

However, the label ‘positive energy’ keeps getting periodically thrust on those individuals who are just trying to find an outlet for release. It is a label that sounds completely appropriate and proper, the kind of label that a lot of people are eager to champion. But if you cry and make all your complaints public, they will claim that you are creating a panic, you are sabotaging the war against the coronavirus, and you’ve become part of the ‘negative energy’ (p. 201–202).

Therefore, Fang Fang was determined to use her diary to document the “negative energy,” not only for her own psychological needs but for other Wuhanese people as well, thus constructing what Gould (2012) called an “emotional habitus” to which people in Wuhan were disposed collectively. Gould defined emotional habitus as “operating beneath conscious awareness, [providing] members with an emotional disposition, with a sense of what and how to feel, with labels for their feelings, with schemas about what feelings are and what they mean, with ways of figuring out and understanding what they are feeling” (p. 103). The lockdown period saw people in Wuhan developing an emotional habitus full of diverse feelings, humanizing individual experiences. The affective labor that Fang Fang’s diary performed focused on making apparent these emotional struggles people experienced, between the emotional habitus of pain, despair, anger and the emotional pedagogy of positive energy and gratitude.

Both the political ideologies of “positive energy” and “gratitude” in the national discourse are premised in the name of love. Ahmed (2015) described a “national love” that is “bound up with how bodies inhabit the nation in relation to an ideal” (p. 133). Just like the dominant citizenship discourse in Hong Kong in Yam’s (2018) book that “encouraged a binary emotional response toward mainlanders” (p. 179), mainland China’s “positive energy” discursive emphasis also promotes a binary response. When the Wuhan political leaders requested people express their gratitude toward the Chinese Communist Party and the nation, it embodied a kind of “kitsch propaganda” (Bandurski, 2020) that highlighted heroic sentiments of sacrifice to preclude the cruel reality that people experienced under lockdown. Fang Fang called out this ill-conceived logic by arguing that it was the government who should express their gratitude toward the citizens who had to sacrifice during the lockdown to keep the pandemic under control (Mar 7, p. 234).

While I highlighted more “negative” emotions, it is important to note that she had moments of hope, even if they were crushed repeatedly. For example, the hope of reaching zero cases started on Mar 7 but didn’t actually materialize until Mar 19. It’s also important to note that for as much as she was frustrated and angry at incompetent government officials and information control, she was also confident in the government’s abilities to ultimately combat the virus.

Discussion

Public Pandemic Diaries Contributing to Social Justice

Fang Fang’s Wuhan diary caught international attention even as it was repeatedly deleted and attacked online in China. Performing communicative and affective labor, Fang Fang portrayed firsthand the lived experiences of people in Wuhan under the lockdown during the early outbreak of the COVID-19. By using her positionality as a civically responsible writer and taking advantage of her relative privilege, she shared insights from her friends in the medical and public

health professions about the development of the pandemic and the virus, as well as stories of people who were marginalized by the strict lockdown measures. In so doing, she revealed, recognized, and rejected the injustices befallen on the people of Wuhan, in localized ways (see Moore, Jones, & Walton, 2021), and evoked critical reflections on ways the local and national government responded to the outbreak as well as the weaknesses of the government's bureaucratic structures. By using the personal diary as a genre yet publishing it publicly, her diary contributed to the affective economy of the pandemic outbreak in China during the Wuhan lockdown, presenting the collective despair, frustration, hope, anger, a cacophony of emotions, while pushing against the emotional pedagogy of the nationalistic discourse of positive energy and gratitude.

As I discussed before, technical and professional communication scholars have increasingly recognized the values of storytelling in enacting social justice, such as in localizing injustices (Moore, Jones, & Walton, 2021) but also in shifting epistemic power back in the hands of marginalized communities (Baniya & Chen, 2021). In doing this work, interdisciplinary perspectives from rhetorical studies (Yam, 2018) and anthropology (Jackson, 2013; Shuman, 2006) can help us better unpack the power of storytelling in knowledge construction and facilitating civic actions. Fang Fang's Wuhan diary, when contextualized and recontextualized in local and global contexts, reveals that pandemic diaries can act as tactical communication to speak to the multiple domains of power to enact social justice.

In theorizing power dynamics in TPC work, Walton, Moore, and Jones (2019) used Patricia Hill Collins' (2008) conceptualization of domains of power that are contextualized and relational: structural; disciplinary; hegemonic; and interpersonal. In the structural domains of power, Collins focused on how the organization of social institutions would marginalize certain groups, such as Black women. In her diary, Fang Fang identified the inadequacies and failures of the institutional responses to COVID-19 during its early stages and their roots in the bureaucratic system of the Chinese government. Closely related, the disciplinary domain for power corresponds with procedural justice that determines how individuals might participate in society. By questioning the emotional pedagogy of "positive energy," Fang Fang pushed back against the informational control of the Chinese nation state, which didn't allow people to feel and express their true suffering because of the need to submit to the hegemonic domain of power that shaped accepted narratives of the "battle against the pandemic." Finally, by amplifying individual sufferings, she illustrated how draconian and harsh quarantine techniques did not take into consideration the varying challenges faced by Wuhanese of different walks of life, especially those less privileged.

My analysis of Fang Fang's diary shows that publicized personal diaries can contribute to the collective storytelling in a social context and its affective economy, making salient the ramifications of sociocultural and political forces on individual bodies. By listening and amplifying these as antenarratives, we can better challenge the dominant, more unified linear narrative of battling a crisis. To contribute to social justice, I argue that pandemic diaries need to have the following qualities:

- Increasing access for less privileged people, especially access to information, using the writer's power and privilege
- Not only documenting one's own experiences but also amplifying others, especially those who are less privileged than the writer

- Humanizing the pandemic experiences by highlighting their affective dimensions, especially the “negative” ones, to push back against the militaristic rhetoric of “winning” the “war against the pandemic” and the blind praise of collective sacrifice

Overall, it must address the power imbalances that contributed to the oppressive experiences.

Implications for Future Research

Above, I explained the important qualities public pandemic diaries should have in order to enact social justice, but what can TCP researchers and practitioners do to help facilitate and maximize effects of such immaterial labor? While Fang Fang shared stories of suffering of other Wuhanese people under lockdown, these were not systematically collected or presented. What we need is a combination of the immaterial labor performed by community members like Fang Fang as well as a coordinated civic network of support (Schoch-Spana et al., 2007), which we’ve seen in the form of community residents working together using social network sites to coordinate deliveries of daily essentials such as groceries and medicine. Further, we need infrastructure that can both support informational production (Hardt & Negri, 2000) of the experiential knowledge of these important civic actors to support continuous circulation and amplification of the voices so that diaries can remain public and that more diaries can be heard. This is where technical and professional communication researchers and practitioners can come in to play a role in supporting the mediating role of civic actors. For example, Fang Fang (2020) herself mentioned the importance of creating a searchable digital archive that would document testimonials of investigation of the early outbreak at the beginning of Jan 2020, creating a collective memory (p. 250). As technical communication practitioners, designing and contributing to the civic networks of support that allow communities to voice their concerns and providing effective channels of communication can enhance informational infrastructure, contributing to procedural justice (Ding, Li, & Haigler, 2015).

For future studies, more systematic and broader research on public diaries in both historical and contemporary public health crises can recover and reveal the immaterial labor they have been performing (Smalls, 2017). As my analysis of Fang Fang’s diary shows, these accounts often reveal the incongruities between official crisis communication and response strategies and people’s lived experiences. For TPC researchers who are interested in crisis communication, examinations and development of policies and strategies must happen in tandem with analysis of lived experiences and civic actions. To study how pandemic diaries can enact social justice expands Bhatia’s (2016) argument on interdiscursivity - the traditionally more private genre of the personal diary pushes its conventions so as to inform, reflect, and critique in public spaces. How might this genre interact with other crisis communication genres such as government briefs or official instructional content on websites like the CDC? In what ways can these official venues center experiential accounts in a non-reactive way, in contrast to the Chinese government (see Yang’s discussion of responsive authoritarianism on p. 217–218, 2022)? These are questions future researchers might consider.

While Fang Fang challenged and critiqued the government’s actions and even (dangerously) connected some of them to the political taboo of the Cultural Revolution, she was careful in constructing her own love for the nation by positioning herself as a loving critic, balancing a kind of “authoritarian resilience” by calling local officials to resign, as if that would solve the problem (Zhang, 2020), and lamenting the hopelessness of the CCP bureaucracy (Fang, 2020, p. 245). My analysis reveals the importance of critically examining the circulatory power of the diaries across

contexts, and taking into account the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of such texts and their genre performances.

Further, researching public diaries requires a careful consideration of the researcher's own positionalities interacting with the diarist's positionalities. As a Chinese immigrant living in the U.S. researching Fang Fang's diary, I'm moved by her bravery for continuing to speak up but also recognize her limited positionality as a middle-class, published author living in China and as someone who has benefited from its political system. Because they are framed as individual accounts, pandemic diaries like Fang Fang's can embody complex positionalities and perspectives, challenging the simplistic binary and bellicose understanding of Chinese nationalism in the West, as well as drawing global attention to the lived experiences of Chinese people living under lockdown. Thus, it both challenges domestic nationalist affective economy as well as the international discourse on Chinese people as puppets controlled by the state government.

When I was finishing the first draft of the manuscript in December 2021, China was experiencing its second biggest COVID-19 lockdown in Xi'an. When I was revising the manuscript the following spring, Shanghai, an international metropolis, had seen incredible atrocities under lockdown, with many people dying as collateral damage of the government's insistent "dynamic zeroing" policy. Once again, we've seen across social media sites stories of people searching for food, medical care, or even an exit out of Shanghai. While these are not all sustained, long forms of diary entries like Fang Fang's Wuhan diary, they are still constituting an antenarrative that pushes against the government's empty promises of victory. Combined with the widespread civic networks across neighborhoods, people are surviving in their own ways. Heeding these stories and efforts will help professional communicators and policymakers develop better and more equitable strategies and infrastructures to respond to pandemic outbreaks. But we must pay attention now to prevent future calamities, rather than reactively patching holes after the damage is done.

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Appendix: Coding Samples

	Recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing injustices	Invoking positionality, privilege, and power	Evoking affects
Direct personal experiences (including her lockdown experience and diary writing experience)	"Yesterday's post on WeChat was deleted again" (p. 113).	"Even though I am locked down at home, I continue to write and record what I am seeing" (p. 61).	"Right now everyone in this city is crying for him [Dr. Li]. And I am heartbroken" (p. 56).
Advice/information from her doctor friends (updates on the current situation in Wuhan, why, and what people should do)	"Yesterday's statistics revealed a dramatic drop in the number of new infections. . . But my doctor friend already told me that it was actually a shift in the way they calculated their statistics. . ." (p. 132).	"Today I also reached out to one of my doctor friends to get a sense of where things currently stand with the outbreak" (p. 109).	
Her own media consumption (posts she saw, articles she read)	"But what about these other patients with other chronic medical conditions here in Wuhan?" (p. 92)	"Compared to her, I've got it much easier" (p. 16).	"There are a few videos online that I can no longer bear to watch; they are just too heart-breaking."
Commentaries and reflections on the overall situation (including about her diary writing experience)	"If someone has to take the blame and resign, let's start with the secretary and director of Central Hospital" (p. 244).	"I actually had absolutely no intention of criticizing anyone during this outbreak" (p. 20).	"And now, although we are no longer living in terror and the sadness has dissipated a bit, we must face an indescribable boredom and restlessness, along with endless waiting" (p. 161).

About the Author

Chen Chen is an Assistant Professor of English at Utah State University, teaching in the technical communication and rhetoric program. Her research focuses on advocacy and resistant rhetorical practices by marginalized communities as civic and tactical technical communication in transnational contexts. In particular, she has been working on how networked technologies mediate disaster response communications in Chinese and Chinese diasporic communities during COVID-19 and other natural crises as well as the feminist activism of transnational Chinese communities. Her work has been published in *Enculturation*, *Technical Communication*, *SIGDOC Proceedings*, and several edited collections. She has also published on pedagogical research and has done work examining professionalization processes of graduate students and early career faculty in extra-institutional disciplinary spaces.

Manufactured Scarcity: Countering Artificial Information Vacuums through Grassroot Risk Communications during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only revealed medical disparities between countries in terms of access to vaccines but has also unveiled huge rifts in knowledge and information flow regarding the pandemic and vaccination amongst the general public. With this in view, we will interrogate how grassroot communicators and social networking sites have worked alongside each other to disseminate information about the pandemic that counters the narratives provided by the state. As scholars of rhetoric, we intend to trace the ways in which professional communication and state disinformation produce information vacuums amongst citizens while also illuminating how localized resistance and social justice activism taking place through coalition building on social media, can disrupt and dismantle deficiency narratives and furthermore provide grassroot material support to those in dire need. In other words, drawing upon Ding's Critical Contextualized Methodology, the proposed chapter will present a case study on Nepal by incorporating the petite narratives--after Lyotard--of "non-western cultural actors" (Ding, 2014, p. 30) in order to study the process and impact of alternative information flows during the time of risk and disaster, especially during the ongoing global pandemic.

Keywords: digital rhetoric; grassroots communication; professional communication

Introduction

In a world capsized by the COVID-19 pandemic, the development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines as early as December 2020 brought a shimmer of hope that we could return to normal. Unlike in natural disasters where the immediate aftermath necessitates regional and local responses, the pandemic had an unprecedented global effect. Citizens worldwide realized the need for effective leadership and governance for public health and information justice. Not only did the pandemic expose the fragility of nation-state governments, but it also exposed the World Health Organization's (WHO) lack of "preparedness and response" (Velásquez, 2021, p. 2) to the pandemic. The pandemic generated a sense of urgency to create a united global response to disaster and build collective public health measures that would mitigate the harm caused by the pandemic. While national governments' reactions to the pandemic "have been based on improvisation" (de Soto, 2021, p. 2), collective actions taking place locally at the community level also began to sprout up to provide resources during the pandemic. Local responses to the pandemic were critical when bureaucratic labyrinths and geopolitical relations created delays in delivering timely responses—including providing accurate information in real-time. In crises, access to an authentic and timely flow of information to the public becomes crucial in "shaping people's behavior in emergency situations" (Abbas, 2021, p. 551). This was highlighted during the pandemic when the United Nations argued that the pandemic was "accompanied by an 'infodemic,' which has created mistrust, stigmatization and increased the spread of misinformation" (United Nations Office, 2020). When most of the globe went into lockdown, online social media platforms provided space for community members to assemble and utilize communication tactics to address the vacuum of information and resources.

By drawing on two distinct examples from Nepal, this article demonstrates how online community members assembled to form a coalition to deliver timely information about resources. Written during the winter of 2021, after vaccine rollouts¹, we also explore various strategies grassroots communicators have adopted to mitigate the challenges posed by pandemic and vaccine injustice, specifically in Nepal. This article will begin by analyzing how global political power remains under the influence and control of a few Western players who put forth deficiency narratives against non-Western cultures, referring to them as "incapable" of taking charge in a crisis. We first explain how Western countries create vaccine scarcity through claims about Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) to contextualize that the disasters grassroots communicators are responding to are man-made. We then use data from newspaper articles and social media platforms to weave stories about pockets of resistance born out of grassroots communities to tackle Nepal's global pandemic and infodemic. Our analysis of this data is not systematic or generalizable; we want to be clear that this is not a case study but rather a collection of different examples that we have compiled to trace the influence of social media on disaster response undertaken by grassroots communicators. This article highlights the necessity of examining social media tools' agentic possibilities to construct and shape disaster responses alongside grassroots communicators and offers alternative avenues for community-oriented resistance and collaboration.

¹As we were finishing this piece, the Omicron COVID-19 variant exploded around the world invigorating calls to remove intellectual property rights on vaccine know-how blueprints. COVID-19 variants, and recurring COVID-19 surge outbreaks speak to the necessity of ending TRIPs (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) agreements around life-saving medicines and the importance of recognizing the neoliberal and capitalistic ideological underpinnings of risk and professional communication during a global pandemic. The first wave of COVID-19 occurred in March 2020 during the first round of global lockdowns. The April 2021 delta variant of COVID-19 constituted the second wave of COVID-19 and lockdowns across the world. The third wave occurred when the Omicron COVID-19 variant in November and January of 2021-2022 caused a spike in cases globally. As we finish revising this article, we are experiencing an apparent fourth wave of COVID-19 cases spiking around the world.

With this in view, we not only explore the effects of the politics of IPRs and patent rights of COVID-19 life-saving vaccines but also rhetorically analyze the stance of Bill Gates. His octopus-like tentacles' grip on Western countries' institutions continues to pose challenges for acquiring vaccine justice, especially in the developing world. In addition to addressing social justice approaches to technical communication (Walton, Moore, Jones, 2019; Walton and Agboka, 2021), we interrogate transnational grassroots online communication to underscore the necessity of further study in technical and professional communication (TPC) of transnational rhetorics in a globalized world to better realize the differences between social justice rhetoric from the ground-up and the intentional circulation of myths that reinforce colonial tropes about racial "Others." Specifically, we discuss Nepali citizens' use of Twitter and Viber to obtain and allocate COVID-19 resources as an example of immaterial labor in the face of circulating deficiency narratives about knowledge production in non-Western countries. We propose that analyzing sites of immaterial labor located in non-Western countries—in this case, Nepal—can teach the TPC field additional approaches for utilizing a social justice² framework as well as demonstrate grassroots and crowdsourced resistance to deficiency narratives created by the West about the ineptitude of non-Western countries to combat the virus.

Bill Gates' Rhetoric

In April 2021, while the second wave of COVID-19 cases in India stunned the world, Bill Gates—the co-chair and trustee of the Gates Foundation, which has invested in the research and development of the COVID-19 vaccine—was asked if he was up for removing intellectual property rights (IPRs) restrictions on COVID-19 vaccines in order to increase production and access to the vaccine outside the US and the EU. In response to this question, during an interview with Sky News (2021), Bill Gates replied that he did not support sharing vaccine development blueprints with other countries. To explain his reasoning, Gates said, "Well, there's only so many vaccine factories in the world, and people are very serious about the safety of vaccines. And so moving something that had never been done—moving a vaccine, say, from a [Johnson & Johnson] factory into a factory in India—it's novel—it's only because of our grants and expertise that can happen at all" (Sky News, 2021). Gates' rhetoric reflects larger claims about non-Western knowledge production and intellectual property. Gates' claim positions safe vaccines as antithetical to vaccine production in India, with the presumed assumption being, by extension, most non-Western countries. Gates' attempt at pointing to the novelty of expanding the development of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine from factories in America to factories in India is not only false, but it also works rhetorically to question progress, development, and knowledge production in India and again, by extension non-Western countries. In other words, Gates' rhetoric perpetuates deficiency narratives about non-Western countries (Agboka, 2012; Ding and Savage, 2013; Sun, 2012).

Bill Gates' assertion that the non-West is "incapable" of manufacturing vaccines describes them as the racialized "Other" in a manner that claims not only Gates' authority over them but also delegitimizes their resources claiming that a paternal presence/guidance is needed to rescue them, giving credence to exceptionalist arguments about Western countries and Western knowledge production. As a form of epistemic violence (Spivak, 2003), Gates' rhetorical maneuvers reconjure tropes about the racialized "Other" and knowledge production in non-Western countries. Edward Said (1978) describes this reconjuring in terms of Orientalism and The Orient. Homi

² We use plural forms of social justice to include vaccine justice, information justice, medical and health-care justice, food justice and many more.

Bhabha (1985) critiques how Western knowledge functions as a signifier of authority that reinscribes colonial differences and power hierarchies through archaic images or identity associations. It is critical to grapple with how Gates positions American private corporations as exceptional compared to non-Western countries and corporations to understand the colonial legacies that influence contemporary professional communication that function as a form of disinformation.

Resonances about non-Western countries that paint them as barbaric and primitive are heard strongly, and they shape and orient how human beings perceive their position in the world, distinguish other human beings' position in the world, and the position of the nation-state in the world. These sentiments function as ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1990) that create social narratives about development and progress in non-Western countries through the rhetoric of American exceptionalism; they are also observed in the rhetoric of "saving" Islamic women from Muslim men—like Spivak once poignantly presented as "white men are saving brown women from brown men" (p. 93)—and in the rhetoric of vaccine development. Ideoscapes are "concatenations of images... directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements... composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview" (Appadurai, 1990, p. 331). These narratives about progress and development, heroism, safety, and knowledge all rely on deeply racialized discourses that uphold the capitalist system. They are carried through time and space to reinforce ideas about the "Other," to continually reinforce Western countries' exceptionalism and intellect.

If Gates can continue to push the untrue belief that countries in the non-West are incapable of producing their own knowledge or contributing to the scientific community while performatively arguing—as a philanthropist—for vaccine equity, Gates can defend his wealth, which he accumulates through intellectual property while gaining cultural wealth through his ability to position himself as a philanthropist. This is critical for discerning how neoliberal ideologies about the free marketplace that underpin patent agreements like TRIPs create the conditions for vaccine inequities. The same patent agreements that allowed Gates to trademark the computer software that Gates' empire was built on are the same patent agreements that "bar African governments from buying AIDs, malaria, and tuberculosis medicine at cheap market prices" (Ahn quoting Palast, 2017, p. 72). Gates uses these patent agreement arguments to build wealth off of computer software. Then, in turn, when those patent agreements cause inequities in other parts of the world, Gates can donate to mitigating the inequities he directly contributes to producing³ through the organizations he invests in.

Assetization and Intellectual Property Rights

Gates uses IPRs to situate intellectual property as an element of assetization. Specifically, he uses intellectual property to justify why vaccine know-how cannot be provided to individual countries and companies in the developing world. As discussed above, this justification only convinces others that intellectual property may be a legitimate barrier to vaccine justice because of underlying assumptions about non-Western knowledge. As vaccines were developed, the underlying belief was that global citizens would have equal access to vaccination regardless of the sites and sources of their production. However, in an era featuring an economy tarnished by the pandemic, the production of the vaccine emerged as a hot new market product with high global demand. The capitalistic urge to exploit life-saving vaccines by turning them into assets combined with

³For more on this, please see Didier Fassin's "Humanitarianism as a Politics of Life" and Linsey McGoey's *No Such Thing as a Free Gift: The Gates Foundation and The Price of Philanthropy*.

TRIPs trade agreements resulted in blocked vaccine distribution to non-Western countries and the hoarding of vaccine doses by the West.

Things become assets when they are in demand and producers/manufacturers have a monopoly in the market or are protected by a patent and IPRs; “knowledge, creative, or data assets (e.g., intellectual property rights or IPRs) have been legally instituted to give owners both exclusion rights to the use of the asset itself and to the use of any copies derived from the asset” (Birch & Muniesa, 2020, p. 17). Assetization becomes “something whose control” may warrant “future economic benefits” (Birch & Muniesa, 2020). Thus, access to the vaccine and its IPR/blueprint holds much power over those also interested in producing the vaccines in other parts of the world. This process of assetization does not exist in a vacuum. It entails analysis of “cultural metaphors and political-economic trends” (Birch & Muniesa, 2020, p. 18), as well as the development of techno-industries and advancements made by technocrats such as Bill Gates’ contributions to fields like biomedicine. An understanding of IPRs and assetization as a way of producing a monoculture of knowledge speaks to neoliberal ideologies like hyper-individualism and the necessity of a free market (Shiva, 2001). These ideologies operate as ideoscapes that frame how Western citizens understand the primacy and necessity of IPRs, informing why Gates’ justifications for withholding IPRs work effectively. These neoliberal ideoscapes affirm colonial legacies and argue for a hyper-individualistic worldview asserted through calls for intellectual property protection, recalling tropes of the solitary genius and narratives about American paternalism (Holmes, 2010).

Up to this point, we have recognized that deficiency narratives (Ding, 2020), like the one articulated above in our analysis of Bill Gates’ rhetoric, limit attempts for transnational responses to global issues through policies like the TRIPS agreement that bears material consequences for human bodies. These material consequences include manufactured vaccine scarcity that puts millions of people’s lives at risk of exposure to a deadly virus. Given COVID-19’s material impact on the body, we stress the importance of a materialist approach to analyzing the immaterial labor produced by grassroots communicators during the pandemic. Moreover, we emphasize the necessity of countering deficiency narratives through alternative/unofficial narratives that highlight local resistance movements and responses to neoliberal capitalism. As technical and professional communication has become increasingly concerned with social justice-oriented rhetorics (Walton, 2016; Sun, 2020; Rose and Walton, 2015), our article maintains that a social justice-oriented approach to TPC research is necessary and pertinent. Taking this point further, we highlight the necessity of examining grassroots communication, community-oriented mutual aid, and local resistance and response to disasters, especially given the increasing failure of the state and governmental agencies to respond effectively and efficiently to disasters. Examining disaster responses on social media offers a generative site of analysis to understand how social media networks enable participants to communicate and collaborate quickly during disasters and crises through a network of various social media tools.

Research Design and Methodology

Taking up Ding’s (2014) critical contextualized methodology, we explore tipping points during the COVID-19 pandemic to discern the petite narratives (or subjugated knowledge) that emerge to counter the grand narratives or ideologies propagated by Western countries. We analyze these specific tipping points to better comprehend risk communication and responses to the global pandemic in non-Western countries, especially as they function in direct response to deficiency narratives propagated by Western mediascapes and ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1990). Like Ding, we

insist on the importance of looking into alternative/unofficial narratives to explore global events and transnational communication among grassroots communicators. Ding (2014) writes,

Critical contextualized methodology gives equal voice to Western and non-Western countries through the acknowledgment of the multifaceted, complicated, and interactive nature of global events. In addition, it promotes a multivocal listening game, as advocated by Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard, and pays as much attention to petite narratives and subjugated knowledge as to grand narratives. (p. 30)

With this in view, we used the critical contextualized methodology to identify and examine how grassroots communicators used social media networks and texting apps to gather material supplies and resources. We located two tipping points based on the time-space axis and key players we identified (Ding, 2014). The first tipping point occurred on April 25, 2021, when Bill Gates interviewed with Sky News, arguing that changing IPR law would not help increase vaccine access across the world. The second tipping point began on April 29, 2021, when the second round of lockdowns began in Nepal during the Delta variant surge. These tipping points were identified after examining various other key players simultaneously involved in discussions around vaccine justice and COVID-19 in non-Western countries, including the Biden administration, COVAX, Nepali media organizations, the WTO, and signatories of the “TRIPS COVID-19 Solution” presented to the WTO by the South African and Indian government. We also considered various events taking place during the second round of COVID-19 lockdowns due to the variant, including discussions about TRIPs, the safety of vaccines like AstraZeneca and Johnson and Johnson, and vaccine hoarding and access. These conversations and discussions were collected from various sources, news media, and social media sites. Table 1 provides a few examples of key players we identified during the second round of lockdown.

Table 1. Contextualizing Our Tipping Points

Levels	Key Players and Actions	Spatial Axis	Temporal Axis
National	U.S.: Biden Administration announces Americans have received 200 million vaccines	North America	Late April 2021
International	Bill Gates opposes sharing IPRs	Global	Late April 2021
National	Nepal: Nationwide Second Lockdown	Regional	Late April 2021
National	Nepal: Social Media Grassroot risk communication	Regional/Transnational	
International	WTO: revised TRIPs waiver originally presented to WTO by the South African and Indian government and later signed by other governments	Global	Late May 2021

Moving beyond an overview of the key players involved in the event and an analysis of time-space axis, Ding (2014) argues for the importance of studies that “examine not only key texts and local contexts of events but also the ways primary actors negotiate with one another to solve problems” (p. 41). With this in mind, we moved to answer the following questions:

- “How did the key players interact with one another? Through what means? What media?” (Ding, 2014, p. 38).

- “What kind of official and unofficial knowledges were created during the event? By whom? For what purpose?” (Ding, 2014, p. 38).
- “How did the contexts influence the way the event under discussion was constructed in various cultural and institutional sites?” (Ding, 2014, p. 38).

Much of the data we considered was borrowed from social media platforms like Twitter and Viber group chat. We identified various actors on Twitter who were using the platform to talk against Gates’ rhetoric of deficiency narratives about non-Western countries. We identified various organizations and coalitions that were formed to procure supplies and medical care for Nepali citizens, such as COVIDNepal, COVID Alliance for Nepal, and NepalCOVIDInfoX. Given the difference in power that Gates wields compared to grassroots organizations, utilizing a power-knowledge framework allowed us to expand our analysis further (Ding, 2014). It provided us with the space to interrogate the power dynamic between interactions among key players, digital social networks, and different news media organizations to understand how ideoscapes about Western countries and non-Western countries circulate and with what content. A power-knowledge framework that looks beyond the nation-state and technocratic actors allowed for unofficial and alternative labor produced by grassroots communicators to emerge within our tipping point analysis. Examining how differences in power and agentic possibility influenced the event provides us with a frame for thinking through local-level resistance movements and organizations and grassroots communication.

We adopted Ding’s approach to immaterial labor to examine the labor produced by grassroots responses to the pandemic. Ding (2019) argues that combining social justice and immaterial labor theories allows the creation of a heuristic to

help marginalized groups explore possible strategic entry points to challenge unjust practices and policies: by using language and rhetoric to organize communicative labor and affective labor, disenfranchised groups can build ad hoc alliances and mobilize collective intervention to improve process control and to promote international justice (p. 272).

We apply this definition of immaterial labor to detect, recover, and rhetorically listen to the works of grassroots communicators in Nepal during the pandemic, specifically during the second wave—beginning in late April 2021. By examining immaterial labor, we demonstrate how grassroots communicators utilized the entry points created and assembled by the interactions between human users and social media tools to circulate and distribute information in response to the immediacy required after a disaster or crisis takes place, especially when state and governmental agencies refuse to respond effectively to the needs of local communities.

Ding (2019) defines immaterial labor through three types of social justice “distributive, procedural, and interactional” (p. 264). For the purposes of our case study, we are interested in interactional justice, which “highlights the quality of communication practices by emphasizing the need for adequate and truthful information (information justice) as well as respectful sharing of such information (interpersonal justice)” (Ding, 2019, p. 264). Interactional justice elucidates how grassroots communicators worked against deficiency narratives about non-Western countries. In an attempt to counter an absence of information about the pandemic and vaccines, grassroots communicators crowdsourced, distributed, and circulated information that had material consequences for sick patients. Utilizing an interactional justice framework through which social media participants collected data, validated data, and circulated information, it becomes clear that

grassroots communicators were effectively able to leverage their power to “develop collective rhetorical agency” that allowed them to “launch their alternative political projects to push for collaborative intervention, social coordination, and policy change” (Ding, 2019, p. 267). Interactional justice looks at what information is being spread and how that information is being spread. Ding’s theorization of interactional justice provides a framework for considering the various connections and multiple technologies employed within Potts’ (2013) analytical framework. Importantly, it allows for an understanding of how alliances and organizations formed in response to a disaster were able to “build ad hoc alliances and mobilize collective intervention to improve process control and to promote interactional justice” (Ding, 2019, p. 272) through the distribution and circulation of life-saving information. Importantly, born from neoliberal vaccine scarcity and state and government failure, these ad hoc alliances and organizations collaborated and crowdsourced information using various social media networks and tools. Through hashtags, collaborative documents, and infographics, organizations could crowdsource and distribute information about COVID-19 resources and data on available hospital beds and oxygen tanks.

In crises like these, actor-network theory offers a way of considering the vast number of actors involved in collaborative engagement with social media technologies. Actor-network theory considers the actors at work in distributing and validating information on social media networks. In particular, actor-network theory allows us to consider how these various actors, including hashtags, external sites, retweets, social media and messaging apps, and users come together to “creat[e] assemblages of relations specific to an individual act or broader event and forming a collective, referred to as an ‘actant’” (Potts quoting Latour, 2013, p. 25). Like Potts, we argue that actor-network theory provides a framework for understanding the material effects of each actor within a given assemblage: “tracing how actors form networks to exchange content is an important part of this framework. Being able to pinpoint the many stages of that process is essential to understanding how this work takes place” (Potts, 2013, p. 26). Our analysis clarifies the importance of considering how humans circulate information in online spaces and how nonhuman technological tools like retweeting influence the circulation of that information. Especially during a disaster when actors need to disperse life-saving information quickly and efficiently, understanding each of the actors’ influence and effect in an assemblage enables participants to work alongside nonhuman technological tools.

An Analysis of Two Examples from Nepal

Tucked between two giant nations, China and India, Nepal shut its southern borders as early as March 2020, the year the country was celebrating the “Visit Nepal 2020” tourism campaign to boost the tourism industry⁴. With a population of 30 million, the tourism industry and remittance⁵ contribute a big chunk to the country’s economy (Sah et. al 2020, p. 2). The country imposed a nationwide lockdown that lasted for four months. A year later, when COVID cases were at their highest in India and vaccine equity seemed like a distant dream for the majority of Nepal⁶, the Nepal government proposed another lockdown in late April 2021. As the demands

⁴The campaign that started in January 2020 was projected to attract 2 million tourists in the country. Nepal’s Tourism industry in 2018 accounted for 7.9% of the GDP.

⁵Remittance accounts for a quarter of the country’s GDP.

⁶Till mid-May 2021, it was reported that only one percent of the population received the double doses of vaccine. Comparatively, in the U.S by April’s end, at least 200 million vaccines had been administered. As of Dec 22, 2021,

for ICU beds, ventilators, and oxygen tanks surged⁷, accessing timely information about these critical medical needs became indispensable, pushing proactive Nepali netizens to network and disseminate information online for achieving information and health justice. In contrast, the Nepali government was occupied with its internal political affairs⁸ and concerned about its survival. In the meantime, Nepali netizens utilized social media technologies and messaging apps to connect and distribute information about medical necessities and COVID-19 resources. Nepali netizens, working alongside the affordances of these technologies, effectively collaborated and crowdsourced information for those experiencing COVID-19 emergencies and for those searching for information about COVID-19.

During a disaster and post-disaster, mobility of people and response and rescue networks are impacted. Grassroots interventions for tactical risk communications can fill in the gaps created within official strategies. As Ding (2009) posits, although social media and guerrilla media are considered alternative media, they still are crucial tools in facilitating “tactical extra-institutional risk communication” (p. 330), circumventing official silence, and decentralizing information sharing. Amidst the information drought created by officials⁹, a few groups of like-minded youth groups and activists—whom we have identified as grassroots risk communicators—started collaborating online to build risk communication portals and information sources. As tweets asking for medical information support—similar to Figures 1 and 2—became more rampant, grassroots risk communicators started mobilizing available resources to provide help. The following sections will grapple with two examples to understand how grassroots communicators collaborated alongside social media technologies to connect and crowdsource life-saving information. Communicated through social media and messaging apps, specifically Viber and Twitter, these grassroots interventions established risk communication assemblages that enabled transnational connections, which provided information to Nepali citizens seeking help. Moreover, the affordances of these technologies allowed grassroots communicators to set up platforms to distribute information about COVID-19 cases, hospital patient numbers, and resources about medical facilities.

Example I: Viber Group Chat and Immaterial Labor

Since the onset of the 2020 outbreak of the virus and subsequent first lockdown March 24 to July 21, 2020, the rhetoric of personal narratives and struggles about living during the pandemic spread across Nepali social media. A year later, after going into a nationwide second lockdown, the grassroots risk communicators co-opted and transformed the same space for providing more than personal narratives. Employing readily available means of communication such as social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, chatting apps like Viber, and creating specific hashtags proved to be efficient ways to reach a targeted audience to crowdsource and distribute life-saving information. A Viber group chat dubbed as “COVID-19 Emergency Group” was created on the same day as the second lockdown kicked off. One of the creators tweeted (as seen in Figure 3) the news about the launching of the Viber group chat. The intention behind this was to provide a

32.81% have been fully vaccinated in Nepal with no plan for booster doses whereas in the US, 30 percent of the population have received a booster dose.

⁷Compared to 200 new cases at the start of April, there were 8,600 new cases by month’s end. It is also crucial to note that positive cases were much higher, but unreported.

⁸In May, the president of Nepal dissolved the House of Representatives, the second instance in five months, throwing the country into political disarray. The house had been dissolved in December 2020 by the Prime Minister who called for snap polls to be held in April and May the following year.

⁹The Nepal government and public health and clinical experts including the Ministry of Health and Population.

comprehensive platform for service seekers to assist them in accumulating information pertaining to COVID-19 emergencies. Within a month, the group was able to draw 21,000 members (as seen in Figure 4). Co-founded by public health graduates¹⁰, the platform functioned in a collaborative way with 2,000 active members constantly answering public queries about oxygen tanks, IUC beds, and hospitals admitting COVID patients (Chaudhary, 2021). The group's co-creators shared the common concern that while COVID-19 cases were surging in the neighboring country¹¹, the Nepal government was hard-pressed about its own inter-governmental squabble (Pattison, 2021). In those desperate times, the public resorted to social media to seek help and answers to survive. Prashikchhya Parajuli—one of the co-creators of the group who at the time also worked as a data assistant to WHO-Nepal—recalled the desperation and stories of resilience: “everyone is doing their best from their own side. Even those who have lost loved ones are still trying to help. It’s heart-wrenching” (Pattison, 2021). This alternative route for risk communication reveals how “ad hoc coalitions of opposites of parties, regions, organizations, rebels, classes, and individuals shape society from below” (Ding, 2013, p.134). Employing their “immaterial labor,” Nepali online communities and members actively participated in grassroots risk communication and management activities.

Example 2: Twitter and Crowdsourcing

Luna Ranjit from COVID Alliance for Nepal¹², another volunteer-run crisis-response group expressed similar sentiments to Parajuli, arguing that, “[...] but if the government is not doing enough, we have to step-up” (Pattison, 2021). Ranjit brandished their urge to take initiative and dispense their labor for a social cause. Other than locating much-needed help and information about medical equipment via sites like Twitter, the COVID Alliance for Nepal was involved in vaccine justice and procurement campaigns¹³, launching a massive lobbying effort at the level of the US embassy in Nepal (Figure 5). It is critical to note here that the campaign came at a time when Bill Gates and other powerful pharma companies were vehemently lobbying to conceal vaccine recipes from factories in the developing world. Where capitalism and neoliberalism fail to deliver basic necessities in a timely fashion during a crisis, immaterial labor, as Ding posits, creates space to address the information vacuum through creative collaboration and intervention to create accountability, transparency, and collective rhetorical agency. Volunteer groups and Twitter participants disseminated information about various campaigns, and social media users (the public) started tagging and tweeting at the US Embassy¹⁴ in Nepal and other concerned government offices, retweeting critical information shared on the platform about the need and supply of medical care. Oftentimes these groups were channeling and disseminating information gathered from personal contacts and networking with health care providers and ministries through decentralized and dispersed communication platforms. This process can be called crowdsourcing, which Ding (2020) defines as involving monodirectional, bidirectional, or multidirectional communication involving collective efforts of online communities to solve certain problems (p. 144).

Crowdsourcing and online activism came as a boon during the pandemic, where social distancing and lockdowns were the new normal. One example of this immaterial labor in action is

¹⁰ The graduate students work at the Department of Health Services.

¹¹ India and Nepal share an open border system.

¹² <https://alliance4nep.github.io/>

¹³ <https://www.change.org/p/ambassador-randy-berry-get-COVID-vaccines-to-nepal-asap-and-prevent-a-humanitarian-disaster>

¹⁴ For more info: <https://np.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-u-s-COVID-19-assistance-to-nepal-to-date/>

demonstrated in the tweet by Abhinash Pandey, a member of COVID Connect (Figure 6). Pandey calls for others to crowdsource information that could provide life-saving equipment to those in need. Tagging @COVID_nepal, Pandey leads users to a database of collected information on the COVID-19 crisis in Nepal (Pandey, 2021b). Through the immaterial labor dispersed through social media networking, Nepali citizens collaborated on social media sites and shared information, in turn practicing crowdsourcing¹⁵ and both tenets of interactional justice— informational justice and interpersonal justice.

We would like to close this section by revisiting our examples and exploring the dimensions of immaterial labor and interactional justice manifested in the social media rhetorics of Nepali Twitter participants during April 2021. As we move through this analysis, it is paramount to remember that the information we are suggesting that is being countered has more to do with the ideoscapes and hegemonic beliefs that proliferate about American exceptionalism and the intelligence of non-Western countries than what Bill Gates explicitly proclaims. The grassroots communication that we discuss/discussed has evolved out of the information and resource vacuum created by manufactured vaccine scarcity as a result of the ideoscapes propagated by Gates about IPRs. Thus, we are interested in knowing how Nepali netizens use immaterial labor and interactional justice to counter deficiency narratives about non-Western countries. In the analysis below, we apply Liza Potts' (2013) social media analytical framework to illustrate the generative potential that social media tools offer grassroots communicators during a disaster. We combine our use of Ding's analysis of immaterial labor and Potts' social media analytic to better highlight how the immaterial labor produced by grassroots communicators circulated and was disseminated online through nonhuman agents.

Understanding Social Media Assemblages

In the post-H5N1 avian flu virus world, “many governments have some kind of pandemic plan in place [...However,] during a severe pandemic, there is only so much they can do. Much of the response will depend on local communities taking action for themselves” (“Between a Virus,” 2009). This leaves community members to take the initiative during a crisis. Official interventions and support mechanisms take time to reach the community because of bureaucratic hurdles and unforeseen causes. Communal responsibility and a shared sense of urgency at the community level have been displayed during crises. Quoting a CDC report, Ding (2013) argues for “shared responsibility” at not only policy and official levels but also at “local and individual levels” (p. 135). While in Western societies’ “individualist culture” (Margison, 2020) took primacy over communal needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically post-vaccine roll-out, in non-Western countries like Nepal, community members came together to form coalitions to address local needs.

¹⁵ However there is a limitation to what extent these crowdsourcing, risk communication and communication networks can function during a health crisis. Also dubbed as “the first Post-truth Pandemic” (Parmet & Paul, 2020), COVID-19 has exposed the intricate effects of misinformation on public health. Erupting from various volcanic misinformation sources, the flow of misinformation is not linear, but rather this post-truth phenomenon, as Parmet (2020) points out, is both top-down (political leaders/policy makers to public) and bottom up (public to political leaders/policy makers). While social media may function as sites of networking and community building in times of crisis, they also become breeding grounds for spreading viral misinformation and creating “a climate of distrust” (Parmet & Paul, 2020, p. 945). While this article explores how grassroots communicators utilize social media to dispel post-truth myths and crowdsource information to aid Nepali citizens, we want to be clear that we understand how disinformation, misinformation, and fake news has exacerbated the public health crisis we are still currently living with. Even more specifically, we understand how misinformation has stalled vaccination rates in the US.

Delanda (2016) argues that communities can form alliances or coalitions, and they emerge with both limitations and opportunities capable of providing resources to their members. Adopting DIY (Do It Yourself) approaches for online communication, grassroots communication initiators contributed to inviting and forming alliances to create and curate databases to fill in the information deficiency vacancy left by the official leaders. For instance, The COVID Alliance for Nepal, referenced above, engaged in a public health campaign to appeal to the US embassy for vaccines for Nepal. The alliance created the hashtag #vaccines4Nepal, thus amplifying their message through the use of hashtagging and social media. The tweet in Figure 5 particularly demonstrates that the public health campaign was effective in reaching the US (The COVID Alliance, 2021b). Importantly, as an example of immaterial labor, specifically communicative and affective labor, the alliance not only strives to practice information and interpersonal justice by sharing truthful information but also endeavors to engage in affective labor through a call for Nepali users to share their personal stories with COVID to “show the public face of the COVID crisis in Nepal.” The alliance asks that users who choose to share their personal stories tag the appropriate governing bodies in Nepal and the US to encourage transnational grassroots communication efforts (The COVID Alliance, 2021a). This example of “communicative labor and affective labor, both mediated by language, produce[s] collaborative creativity and intervention, invite[s] social cooperation and coordination, and ultimately influence[s] public opinions and official policies” (Ding, 2019, p. 265). In using the hashtag, the COVID Alliance attempts to accomplish all three tenets of immaterial labor Ding outlines above. They invite social collaboration through the use of a hashtag to amplify their cause. The alliance asks Nepali social media users to share their personal stories and experiences with COVID-19, inviting collaboration and creativity. And, finally, the alliance tries to influence public opinion through their messaging that reaches US policymakers.

As evidenced by the labor produced by the COVID Alliance for Nepal, when faced with the disaster, grassroots communicators in Nepal began transforming from online users to online participants interested in engaging in material responses to the disaster. Potts (2013) critical framing of technical communication during crisis describes how some participants take on leadership roles. With this in view, we demonstrate how some online users in Nepal transformed themselves into active participants during the pandemic, making use of available communication tools and platforms. Unlike professional and official crisis communicators employed by government and institutions, volunteer actors as Potts (2013) recognizes, are unprepared but quickly attempt “to react to participants” (p. 38) within the networks. When a wave of social media users in Nepal started making posts seeking help regarding treatment for COVID-19, numerous users stepped up to provide valuable information. During the height of the second wave, posts like the one showcased in figures 1 and 2 swarmed Twitter and other social media sites, exposing the fragile health care system of the country.

According to Potts (2013), “participants are linking together multiple systems to forage for information and distribute knowledge” (p. 20). For instance, within our examples, while much of the communication and resource gathering occurred on Twitter, tweets frequently included external links to sites like <https://www.instagram.com/COVID.np/?hl=en> (<https://COVIDconnectnp.org>) and <https://COVIDnepal.org/faq>. These sites provided further information on data and statistics about hospitals and COVID-19 cases as well as resources on what to do if you have COVID-19 and where to find testing. Tweets also linked to external google docs that collected information on medical doctors who could volunteer their time and where to find hospital beds and oxygen tanks. @COVID_nepal crowdsourced information to collect and distribute on Twitter and through the website COVIDconnectnp.org. The organization used multiple platforms to

crowdsource and circulate information, including Change.org petitions, links to google docs, and external links to their website that also collected crowdsourced information. Thus, knowledge circulation includes “porous states through which content can move as details change” (Potts, 2013, p. 24), given that each of these systems and social networks relies on the other for the circulation, distribution, and crowdsourcing of information. To fully grapple with the extent of dispersed immaterial labor across various social webs and through multiple technologies, it’s necessary to utilize a framework that considers how participants used social media platforms in ways beyond the original design and the intention of social media platform designers to link to other sites and resources where participants can distribute information, crowdsource information and resources, and collaborate.

Our examples demonstrate that participants leveraged various social web tools to distribute and circulate information about COVID-19 and healthcare resources. These social web tools enabled the circulation of google docs with information about hospital beds and finding oxygen tanks, elicited phone numbers from doctors and other healthcare professionals, and provided resources about what to do if you are exposed to COVID-19. Importantly, the distribution of these resources and information relied on various social web tools. Specifically, we use social web tools to encapsulate the various communicative tools employed in distributing information. Social media sites like Twitter allow users to link and preview external sites and enable the quick dispersal of information to an array of transnational social media users creating assemblages that enable participants to efficiently disperse pertinent information. These nonhuman technologies work alongside human participants to circulate information in ways beyond the original design of social media platforms.

Given the use of multiple technologies discussed above, social web tools like retweeting offer a generative site of analysis to observe how nonhuman actors enable the efficient distribution of life-saving information during a disaster. For instance, COVID Alliance for Nepal engaged in circulating petitions and information about appealing to state representatives at the US embassy in Nepal to solicit information and resources for combatting COVID-19. Posting on Twitter about the circulation of campaigns created on Change.org and encouraging other social media participants to retweet these petitions resulted in over 40,000 signatures. This example demonstrates the necessity of taking an ecological approach to social media assemblages, especially considering the ways that human and nonhuman actors work alongside each other. The alliance created and circulated the petition on social media sites like Twitter. Retweeting enabled the petition to circulate to transnational audiences. The #vaccines4Nepal used by the alliance circulated the petition even further to those interested in achieving vaccine justice. Working alongside technological tools in use on Twitter, participants linked Change.org petitions to their tweets to enable users to easily access petitions. Each actor in the assemblage enabled the distribution and circulation of information that then spread to transnational audiences, as evidenced by the signatories who created the petition and those who then signed the petition via Change.org.

Moreover, hashtags also offer a site of analysis for understanding communicative flows of information circulation online. Hashtagging, in particular, enables “actors to conduct activities that reinforce the network, such as repeatedly sharing information (e.g., hashtags on Twitter) and connecting actors to each other by linking content” Potts (2013, p. 28). Participants analyzed above used #COVIDNepal to seek out resources. #COVIDNepal demonstrates many tweets where users seek out healthcare resources and information. Many of these pleas for help were met with other social media participants supplying information about numbers to call for help or providing external links to the COVIDconnectnp.org page where participants could find additional infor-

mation and resources. Organizations like COVID Connect were able to use hashtags to identify social media users in need of help and distribute information accordingly. Recognizing the vital role and agency that hashtags hold in this given assemblage is important for understanding how disaster organizations like COVID Connect were able to distribute and circulate information to those in need effectively.

Conclusion

Our World in Data¹⁶ has reported that as of May 2022, 60.5% of the world population has been fully vaccinated. From the beginning of the pandemic to the present, the world has watched COVID-19 wreak havoc on global healthcare systems. Similarly, critiques of Gates' rhetoric around intellectual property and vaccines should garner more attention on social media and at international policy-making levels. The rise of the Omicron¹⁷ variant in December of 2021 invigorated calls on social media to waive intellectual property strongholds over vaccine blueprints. But is it enough to address waiving IPRs for vaccines when the next pandemic hits?

A video by Karan Menon (Figure 7), a comedian and an avid social media content creator, points to the absurdity of the US's failure to go against billionaires and waive intellectual property rights over vaccines. In a video that was viewed 2.7 million times, liked 119,800 times, and shared 47,000 times, Menon pokes fun at capitalistic and neoliberal arguments that support upholding intellectual property rights over vaccine equity. Menon emphasizes the absurdity of this logic in his tweet, which insists that the Omicron variant demonstrates what happens when rich nations hoard vaccines and refuse to allow other countries to create and distribute their own vaccines (Menon, 2021). Menon's video points to the necessity and urgency of realizing how national governments and technocrats utilize inaccuracies and falsities about neoliberal practices like intellectual property rights to propagate myths that ultimately increase their net worth. But, more essentially, Menon, and the Nepali netizens and alliances that we discussed above, demonstrate the power social media holds in countering deficiency narratives. While social media has undoubtedly increased the circulation and amplification of certain disinformation tropes like deficiency narratives, we hope that this article demonstrates how grassroots communicators counter these myths by working alongside nonhuman technological actors.

By drawing on grassroots risk communication examples from Nepal, we introduce a perspective in the field of TPC that recognizes the importance of analyzing local resistance and grassroots communication in TPC. More research is still needed to aptly demonstrate the positive impacts of risk communication on social media and the ways in which these practices can teach us about conducting and theorizing social justice practices in communities with limited means and resources. Additionally, we end here by arguing that the West must take accountability and consider how a social justice praxis and pedagogy can call attention to these issues.

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¹⁶ Registered in England and Wales, Our World in Data is a scientific online publication which also documents global data and statistics about COVID-19.

¹⁷ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned that COVID-19 variants are highly expected in future.

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Appendix



Figure 1. A Twitter user seeks information about requiring an ICU bed for a patient arriving in Kathmandu.



Figure 2. Another Twitter user seeks help in locating Remdesivir for treating a COVID-19 patient.

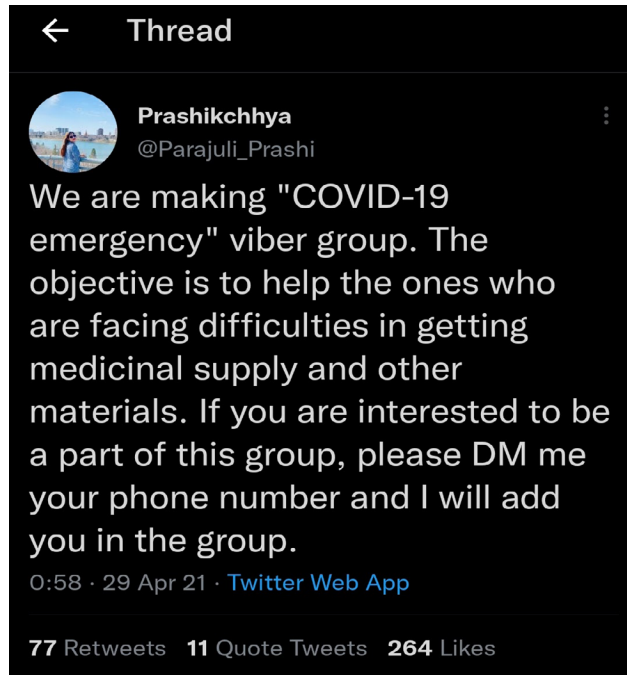


Figure 3. A Twitter user–grassroot risk communicator–announces the creation of Viber group chat: “COVID-19 Emergency” on April 29, 2021, to help the public with accessing information about medical supply.



Figure 4. The same Twitter user, as shown in Figure 3, shares on May 28, 2021, that after a month of creating the group chat, it has garnered 21,000 member participants. The figure also shows that the group chat now has a blue check, which means it is a verified account by Viber. Verification gives more authenticity and amasses public trust.



Figure 5. On May 7, 2021, COVID Alliance for Nepal tweets that the U.S. Embassy Nepal has conveyed the group's request to the decision-makers in Washington, D.C., for providing vaccines in Nepal.

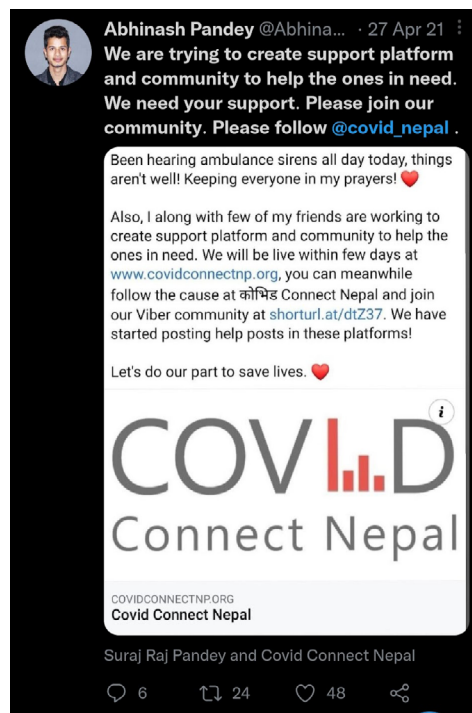


Figure 6. A Twitter user shares that they are creating a support platform called COVID Connect Nepal and asks the public to join the community if they need assistance seeking medical information.

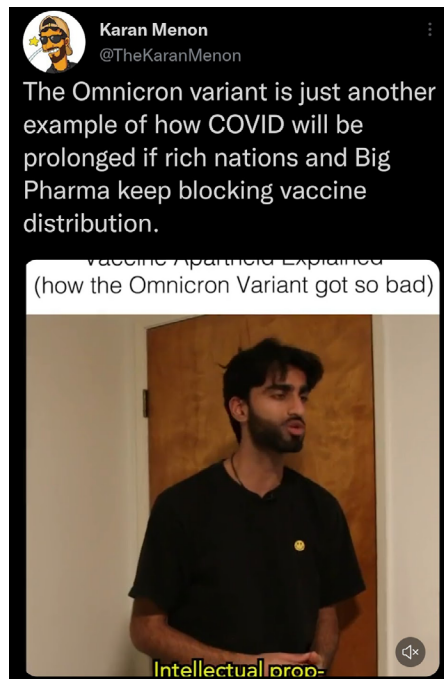


Figure 7. Karan Menon tweets his TikTok in which the creator through his skit show-cases how the global leaders are creating vaccine apartheid in the world.

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Intercultural Content Reuse and Social Justice: Comparing Chinese and U.S. Media Coverage of Anti-Asian Racism During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The outbreak of COVID-19 as a global pandemic has brought human society tremendous pressure and significant changes. Asian Americans suffered from both the COVID-19 pandemic and anti-Asian racism. Organizations were established to fight against anti-Asian hate and related crimes. An organization named Stop AAPI Hate publishes yearly reports regarding anti-Asian hate, and the content is reused by mass and social media worldwide. This study adopts theories of content reuse, intercultural communication, immaterial labor, and social justice to conduct a qualitative content analysis of the content reused by mass and social media in China and the United States. The results show that Chinese and U.S. media have different content reuse strategies. The pattern of content reuse between mass and social media also differs. The findings indicate that the technical communicators need to take the culture and dynamic rhetorical ecology of social media into consideration when adapting content from one culture to another.

Keywords: intercultural communication; social justice; immaterial labor; content reuse

Introduction

Along with the rampaging pandemic, the fast-spreading rumor that coronavirus was leaked from a Chinese laboratory fueled waves of racist attitudes and even hate crimes against people of Asian origin (Vazquez, 2020). Although the World Health Organization (WHO) named this novel virus “COVID-19” on February 11, 2020 (WHO, 2020a) and its Health Emergencies Programme Executive Director, Dr. Michael Ryan, confirmed that the coronavirus was of natural origin rather than a laboratory leak, this rumor continued to spread (WHO, 2020b).

The incorrect and racist terms *Wuhan Virus*, *China Virus*, and *Kung Flu* still spread in the United States (Chandra, 2020; Vazquez, 2020). Even some U.S. politicians aggravated the defamation by using these false and xenophobic terms, which exacerbated the hatred shown toward Asian people (Vazquez, 2020). For instance, Donald Trump, former President of the United States, referred to the coronavirus as the “Chinese Virus” several times, ignoring the criticism that the term was racist (Kurtzman, 2021). Hswen et al. (2021) discovered that Donald Trump’s use of the phrase *Chinese Virus* in his tweets led to an increase in the use of anti-Asian hate hashtags on Twitter. Such hatred eventually led to hate crimes against Asian Americans (Reny & Barreto, 2020). According to data released by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism (CSUSB) at California State University, the number of anti-Asian hate crimes increased by 169% in the first quarter of 2021 compared to the same period in 2020 (Levin, 2021).

The worsened situation and increased number of crimes stimulated the establishment of many organizations to stop anti-Asian hate. Stop AAPI Hate, which was established in 2020, is one of the most influential organizations reporting anti-Asian crimes during the COVID-19 pandemic (Takasaki, 2020). Because of the pandemic, the activities of the organization were mainly carried out online. Through online tracking and reporting of hate crime incidents, Stop AAPI Hate published online reports with first-hand details to build a channel through which the crimes and risks faced by Asian Americans could be conveyed to the public to urge that anti-Asian hate should end and to call for social justice. The content in these reports has been extensively referred to and reused by mass and social media in China and the United States.

Because the “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021) included first-hand data on anti-Asian hate crimes, news media around the world referred to the content in it. By referring to various content genres in the report and reusing the content in different ways, news media worldwide spread awareness of the risks Asian American people encounter in the United States. For instance, the news media *Xinhua* from China and *NBC News* from the United States reused some content from this report to publish news articles about anti-Asian hate. *Xinhua* (2021) published a news article entitled “Asian Americans in U.S. Report Nearly 3,800 Hate-Related Incidents Within a Year: Report” on March 17, 2021. *NBC News* published a news article entitled “Anti-Asian Hate Incident Reports Nearly Doubled in March, New Data Says” on May 11, 2021 (Yam, 2021). Because these two media have different audiences, they reused different content in varying ways to inform Chinese and U.S. readers about the COVID-19–related racial risks met by Asian Americans during the pandemic. Such content reuse not only appeared in mass media but also showed up in social media posts regarding anti-Asian hate. Hence, the current study investigates the following two questions: First, how these mass media articles and social media posts reused content from the “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021); and second, whether there were any differences between the content reuse strategies adopted by Chinese and U.S. mass and social media. To answer these questions and help fight anti-Asian hate, this research employs the theories of content reuse, intercultural communication, immaterial labor, and

social justice to conduct a content analysis of mass media articles and social media posts in China and the United States. The research investigates the different content reuse strategies employed by mass and social media and the influence of culture in shaping their content reuse strategies.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, it reviews previous research on content reuse, intercultural communication, immaterial labor, and social justice in the context of risk communication related to anti-Asian hate against Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, it introduces the selection process of news articles and social media posts, before explaining the research method applied to the content analysis. Third, it presents the case study results of the intercultural content reuse of the “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021). Finally, the study discusses the rhetorical analysis of the results and the implications for technical communicators.

Literature Review

Content Reuse

The development of content reuse is tightly intertwined with the evolution of material and social infrastructures, which contain agency, and is invisible and relational in its nature (Frith, 2020). In the pre-computer era, a carbon copy was used by people as a simple, steady, yet inflexible way to make copies of a given text for different audiences. As infrastructure developed and computers emerged, people were able to edit, copy, and paste chunks of data, expanding the ways in which content could be reused. Since the appearance of the Internet, people have been able to easily and quickly distribute content and data around the globe. Today, given their access to myriad social media, the speed of the Internet, and countless smart devices, it has never been easier for people to share, repost, and adapt content to the entire world (Shin, 2016). In the current Internet era, the World Wide Web is an infrastructure of network-enabled content of different genres that circulates as digital data, which can be easily recycled, modified, and reused (Adami & Jewitt, 2016). As the material infrastructure gradually evolved, the patterns and ecology of content reuse also became more complicated.

Content reuse, as an increasingly heated topic, has been studied by scholars in technical communication for decades, and multiple theories in relation to the topic have been developed. Content reuse means not only writing content once and simply copying and pasting it to another document (Rockley, 2001) but also sophisticated rhetorical action that relocates the content to fit a new rhetorical situation (Harris, 2006; Palermo, 2017; Spinuzzi et al., 2015; Swarts, 2010; Wall & Spinuzzi, 2018). With infrastructural and theoretical developments, content reuse started to appear in increasingly diverse writing environments, where writers need to tailor content to serve new audiences in a more sophisticated rhetorical ecology (Harris, 2006; Palermo, 2017).

With the expansion of theoretical frameworks regarding content reuse, technical communication scholars have explored content reuse strategies from different theoretical perspectives. Drawing on Latour’s (1996) actor–network theory, Swarts (2010) perceived content reuse as an act of establishing actor networks “of articulating social, technological, and cognitive infrastructures to support distributed work” (p.129). Because “fractional texts” (Law, 2004) can be treated as actor networks, reused content chunks can “keep voices mobile and stable and combinable with other chunks” (Swarts, 2010, pp. 131–132). In this way, Swarts (2010) argued that an actor network “stands in as the infrastructure across which work can be both distributed and coordi-

nated” and interpreted the activity of reuse as “the recycling of materials to allow one context of activity to mediate another” (Swarts, 2010, p. 132). Departing from genre theory, Spinuzzi et al. (2015) proposed that “genres represent points of uptake, often manifesting as reuse” (p. 49). Perceiving documentation cycling as “genre assemblages” (Spinuzzi, 2010, p. 367), Spinuzzi et al. (2015) classified content reuse into two categories: verbatim reuse and transformational reuse. While verbatim reuse refers to copying and pasting identical content from the original to the target document without changing the meaning, transformational reuse means modifying the content during the reuse process (Spinuzzi, 2015). Both types of reuse involve rhetorical activities by “borrowing the authority of the original author” (Spinuzzi et al., 2015, p. 49) and incorporate multiple actors’ rhetorical choices of content relocation (Spinuzzi, 2010; Swarts, 2010). Yet content reuse has limitations. Sometimes, writers deliberately reuse content to fit their purposes, ignoring the original context, which may subvert the original meaning (Wright, 2018).

Alongside the infrastructural development of communicative technologies, especially the Internet and social media, the range of content reuse has also expanded from a single or a few closely related authors (Carter, 2003; Hart-Davidson et al., 2008; Robidoux, 2008; Sapienza, 2007) to authors around the entire world, which inevitably brings into question the influence of culture.

Intercultural Communication and Tradition of Thinking

“Heuristic approaches” (Hunsinger, 2006) are often used by intercultural communication scholars to explore cultural differences based on a belief in the stability of culture (Ding & Savage, 2013). Hall’s (1989) classification of low-context and high-context cultures is among representative theories. Low-context cultures emphasize the provision of detailed information in communication (Dong, 2007), while high-context cultures “find the majority of the information in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message” (Hall, 1989, p. 91). The high-context communication style in Chinese culture is derived from the Chinese dialectical thinking tradition (Yama & Zakaria, 2019). Dialectical thinkers tend to have “greater expectation of change in tasks related to explanation and prediction and greater tolerance of contradiction in tasks involving the reconciliation of contradictory information” (Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010, p. 296). Chinese people’s dialectical thinking tradition is rooted in traditional Chinese philosophies, such as Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Nisbett, 2004; Spencer-Rodgers et al., 2010). With the influence of the dialectical thinking tradition, Chinese people prefer indirect and implicit information in communication (Yama & Zakaria, 2019). Therefore, they assume that the audience is “already ‘contextualized’ and so does not need to be given much background information” (Hall & Hall, 1990, p. 184). In contrast, influenced by Aristotle’s formal logic (Lewin, 1951), people in the United States tend to think linearly, which requires explicit and direct information (Yama & Zakaria, 2019).

Appadurai first proposed that culture should be perceived as fluid rather than static (Ding & Savage, 2013). In other words, Appadurai (1996) perceives cultural material as able to “move across national boundaries” (pp. 45–46). Based on the fluidity of culture, he further developed the theory of global cultural flows, in which he perceived culturalism to be “the conscious mobilization of cultural differences” and as “frequently associated with extraterritorial histories and memories, sometimes with refugee status and exile, and almost always with struggles for stronger recognition from existing nation-states or various transnational bodies” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 15). To categorize and highlight “different cultural streams or flows” (p. 45–46), Appadurai (1996) coined five terms: “(a) ethnoscaples, (b) mediascaples, (c) technoscaples, (d) financescaples, and (e)

ideoscapes” (p. 33). Among these terms, mediascape represents the infrastructure through which culture flows transnationally (Jeon, 2021).

As Appadurai (1996) described, a mediascape usually consists of “image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” (p. 35) that come in the form of “distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information” (mainly referring to mass media when Appadurai published the work) and “images of the world created by these media” (p. 35). As Appadurai (1996) mentioned on the eve of the Internet explosion (Coffman & Odlyzko, 2002), the mediascape had been circulating and distributing information through conventional mass media to “a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 35). When the Internet became readily accessible throughout the world and technologies evolved to the stage at which smart devices were affordable for a vast majority, social media proliferated (Gürsimsek, 2016). Such infrastructural development extended the bandwidth and complexity of mediascape significantly (Jeon, 2021). With smart devices in hand, people can easily access countless websites and social media platforms on which millions of people actively create, edit, and reuse content in the form of texts, audio, pictures, and videos (Adami & Jewitt, 2016).

The entire world has been deeply affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since its outbreak in early 2020 (Srinivasan, 2021). People have been forced to change their ways of living to forestall the spread of the pandemic. As a result, more and more people have switched to remote working, and their daily interactions have migrated from the physical world to online spaces (Farboodi et al., 2021). The mediascape has thus assumed a more important role as the predominant infrastructure through which information exchange, communication, and culture flow occur. To fulfill these critical tasks, rapid infrastructural development has taken place in the mediascape. Stimulated by the pandemic, people’s online interactions have become unprecedentedly active and created significantly more content (Jeon, 2021), which has been recycled and reused across multiple platforms.

Labor, Immaterial Labor, and Social Justice

Labor was conceptualized by Marx as “activity through which human beings give form to materials and thus objectify themselves in the world” (Sayers, 2007, p. 432). With the development of the technology, new forms of labor that could not fall into Marx’s definition of labor appeared (Sayers, 2007). Hardt and Negri (2000) defined these forms of labor as “immaterial labor,” which “produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication” (p. 290). Successive studies have examined the immaterial labor from the perspectives of affective labor (Martens, 2011), communicative labor (Ding, 2020), intellectual labor (Kong, 2021), reproductive labor (Jarrett, 2014), and cultural labor (Nakamura, 2014).

Technical communication scholars have also conducted research to associate immaterial labor with social justice. Ding (2020) proposed a materialist–social-justice approach to explain how communicative and affective labor can promote procedural and interactional justice (Jost & Kay, 2010) based on a case study of Zika outbreaks in Latin American countries. Kong (2021) further developed Ding’s (2020) approach by incorporating corrective justice, which focuses on “fairness in the way punishments for lawbreaking are assigned and damages inflicted on individuals and communities are addressed” (Kuehn, 2000, p. 10693), in her extended materialist social justice framework.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has been prolonged, with new virus variants emerging, online

communication may still be the mainstream, and anti-Asian attitudes may continue to exist. Mediascape-based intercultural content reuse has become a growing field that can promote social justice. Though various studies have explored social justice from the perspectives of intercultural communication (Ding et al., 2016) and immaterial labor (Ding, 2020; Kong, 2021), limited research has focused on the role that content reuse can play in intercultural communication to promote social justice in the context of anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this study conducted a content analysis of content reuse strategies used by Chinese and U.S. mass and social media in reporting anti-Asian racism in the United States. Specifically, it focuses on addressing the following research questions:

- 1) What content reuse strategies are used by Chinese and U.S. mass media and social media in reporting anti-Asian racism in the United States?
- 2) What are the differences in content reuse between Chinese and U.S. mass and social media regarding anti-Asian racism?

Methods

Data Collection

The Stop AAPI Hate published the “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021) on March 16, 2021. Because this report includes first-hand data, such as the types and locations of attack incidents related to anti-Asian hate, its content has been widely reused in articles and posts on mass and social media in China and the United States. This study collected and examined data from both Chinese and U.S. mass and social media to explore how such media have reused content to promote the social justice of Asian Americans. The study collected mass media articles and social media posts by conducting a Google search. The search keywords were “anti-Asian hate” for U.S. mass and social media and “反亚裔仇恨” (the Chinese term for *anti-Asian hate*) for their counterparts in China. The study used the first 10 result pages for each keyword. Excluding irrelevant articles and posts and those without content reused from the “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021), this study collected 14 publications from Chinese media (10 news articles and four social media posts from organizational social media accounts) and 12 publications from U.S. media (10 news articles from mass media and two videos from organizational social media accounts) (see Table 1).

Content Analysis

Data Preparation

Because the collected materials included content from multiple genres, this study employed Saldaña’s (2013) “stanzas” to segment the materials into texts, screenshots of videos, figures, and infographics. A stanza was initially defined as a unit break of a poetic-like verse in a poem (Gee et al., 1992). Saldaña (2013) further employed the concept of the stanza to define a unit of analysis in qualitative coding. Multimodal content can be divided into “units or stanzas when a topic or subtopic shift occurs” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 18). By comparing the original “Stop AAPI Hate National Report” (Jeung et al., 2021) and news reports/social media posts, I generated 113 stanzas of content reuse in total, comprising 55 stanzas from Chinese media and 58 stanzas from U.S. media (see Table 1). In terms of media platform, 77 stanzas were collected from mass media, and 36 were collected from social media.

Table 1. Media Information Stanza

Country	Media Category	Media	Number of News Reports/ Social Media Posts	Number of Stanzas
China	Mass Media	<i>People's Daily, China News Service, China Youth Daily, Global Times, XinHua, The Paper</i>	10	30
	Social Media	CCTV Tencent social media official account, CCTV App, Shobserver, Alfred_Lab WeChat official account	4	25
United States	Mass Media	<i>NBC News, The Harvard Gazette, BuzzFeed News, CBS News, CNBC, AXIOS News, Nebraska Today</i>	10	47
	Social Media	WRTV Facebook channel, NBC News NOW YouTube channel	2	11

Coding Scheme

To detect the different patterns of content reuse strategies used by Chinese and U.S. media on different platforms, I conducted a content analysis of the 113 stanzas collected based on Spinuzzi et al.'s (2015) and Swarts' (2010) coding schemes. Because these coding schemes were used in the different rhetorical contexts of pitch deck revision and single-sourcing writing, I used the grounded theory method (Frith, 2020) to generalize new categories of content reuse strategies in the context of cross-cultural communication by conducting open coding of the collected data. I then discovered a new code, "compression," that cannot be categorized within existing codes. Unlike "paraphrase," which reorganizes content without discarding information, "compression" refers to content reuse that compresses a lengthy piece of content into a more concise one with less important information pruned. Finally, I adopted three types of content reuse from Spinuzzi et al.'s (2015) coding scheme ("verbatim," "paraphrase," and "extension"), one type from Swarts' (2010) study ("genre"), and a new category based on observation ("compression"). The operational definitions of these codes are displayed in Table 2. Examples of different content reuse strategies are also given in Table 2, with underlines representing content being reused.

Table 2. Coding Scheme and Examples of Different Content Reuse Strategies

Code	Operational Definition	Example
Verbatim	Reusing identical content from the original material (Spinuzzi et al., 2015)	<p>Xinhua news article: <u>“The number of hate incidents reported to our center represent only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur, but it does show how vulnerable Asian Americans are to discrimination, and the types of discrimination they face,”</u> authors of the report noted.” (Xinhua, 2021)</p> <p>Original report: <u>“The number of hate incidents reported to our center represent only a fraction of the number of hate incidents that actually occur, but it does show how vulnerable Asian Americans are to discrimination, and the types of discrimination they face”</u> (Jeung et al., 2021).</p>
Paraphrase	Reusing content by restructuring the expression of the original content while keeping all information intact (Spinuzzi et al., 2015)	<p>NBC News article: <u>“Verbal harassment and shunning were the most common types of discrimination, making up 68.1 percent and 20.5 percent of the reports respectively”</u> (Yam, 2021).</p> <p>Original report: <u>“Verbal harassment (68.1%) and shunning (20.5%) (i.e., the deliberate avoidance of Asian Americans) make up the two largest proportions of the total incidents reported”</u> (Jeung et al., 2021).</p>
Extension	Reusing content from the original material and developing new claims (Spinuzzi et al., 2015)	<p>NBC News article: <u>“A further examination of the submitted reports showed that in many cases, the verbal harassment that women received reflected the very intersection of racism and sexism”</u> (Yam, 2021).</p> <p>Original report: <u>“Women report hate incidents 2.3 times as often as men”</u> (Jeung et al., 2021).</p>

Code	Operational Definition	Example
Compression	Reusing content by compressing a lengthy piece of content into a more concise one with less important information pruned	CBS News article: <u>“Physical violence accounted for 11%, with over 503 reports of violence in 2021 alone”</u> (Jones, 2021). Original report: <u>“Physical assault (11.1%) comprises the third largest category of the total incidents ... Stop AAPI Hate received reports of 503 incidents that occurred in 2021”</u> (Jeung et al., 2021).
Genre	Reusing content by changing the genre of original content (Swarts, 2010)	Shobserver: An infographic visualizes the data of types and sites of discrimination (Li & Cao, 2021). Original report: Two bar charts illustrate the data of types and sites of discrimination (Jeung et al., 2021).

Data Analysis

I used the five codes above to detect categories of content reuse in news articles/social media posts. Based on the frequency of each content reuse category, I further explored the influence of culture and audience on patterns of content reuse by comparing the results of Chinese and U.S. media and of mass and social media.

Results

Different Content Reuse Strategies in Chinese and U.S. Media

Among the results shown in Table 3, the “compression” strategy shows the largest and second-largest positive percentage difference between Chinese and U.S. mass and social media, respectively, meaning that “compression” is more frequently used by Chinese media. The strategy of “verbatim” shows the largest and the second-largest negative percentage difference between Chinese and U.S. mass and social media, respectively, showing its more frequent use by U.S. media.

The “extension” strategy is more frequently used by Chinese social media with a positive percentage difference (44%) than by U.S. social media. However, the difference is not obvious in mass media, with a small percentage difference of 1.5%. The “genre” strategy is less frequently used by Chinese social media than by their U.S. counterparts, as shown by the percentage difference of -60.7%. Moreover, the use of “genre” in the mass media of the two countries has a minimal difference, namely of 0.3%. In addition, the “paraphrase” strategy has a negative difference for mass media and a positive difference for social media.

Table 3. Content Reuse in Chinese and American Media

Category	China		United States		Percentage Difference (China-U.S.)	
	Mass Media	Social Media	Mass Media	Social Media	Mass Media	Social Media
Verbatim	8 (26.7%)	0 (0%)	22 (46.8%)	1 (9.1%)	-20.1%	-9.1%
Paraphrase	4 (13.3%)	7 (28%)	9 (19.1%)	2 (18.2%)	-5.8%	9.8%
Extension	3 (10%)	11 (44%)	4 (8.5%)	0 (0%)	1.5%	44%
Compression	13 (43.3%)	4 (16%)	9 (19.1%)	0 (0%)	24.2%	16%
Genre	2 (6.7%)	3 (12%)	3 (6.4%)	8 (72.7%)	0.3%	-60.7%

Different Content Reuse Strategies in Mass and Social Media

As Table 4 shows, of the 77 stanzas in mass media, the most commonly used content reuse strategy was “verbatim” (39.0%), followed by “compression” (28.6%), “paraphrase” (16.9%), “extension” (9.1%), and “genre” (6.5%). Regarding 36 stanzas in social media, the most common content reuse strategies were “genre” (30.6%) and “extension” (30.6%), followed by “verbatim” (19.4%), “paraphrase” (13.9%), and “compression” (5.6%) (see Table 4). According to the percentage difference shown in Table 4, the “genre” strategy has the largest negative percentage difference (-24.1%), meaning that “genre” is more used in social media than in mass media.

Table 4. Content Reuse in Mass and Social Media

Category/Media	Mass Media	Social Media	Percentage Difference (Mass Media-Social Media)
Verbatim	30 (39.0%)	7 (19.4%)	19.6%
Paraphrase	13 (16.9%)	5 (13.9%)	3%
Extension	7 (9.1%)	11 (30.6%)	-21.5%
Compression	22 (28.6%)	2 (5.6%)	23%
Genre	5 (6.5%)	11 (30.6%)	-24.1%

According to the results, the “genre” strategy was used more frequently in social media than in mass media, which can be explained by social media’s more dynamic rhetorical ecology (Matwysyn, 2012). According to Lomborg (2011), social media can be perceived as “particularly dynamic genres, subject to continuous disruption and uncertainty, owing to their deinstitutionalized and participatory character, and the shifting roles of producers and recipients in the networks and conversations that make up social media content” (p. 55). Social media blurs “the line between producers and audiences” (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016, p. 811), which facilitates the participatory communication of audiences. To engage a larger audience, multimodal digital content is widely used in social media production (Gürsimsek, 2016). Because “digital technologies afford text creation through ‘copy-and-paste’ across media” (Adami & Jewitt, 2016, p. 266), visual content can be easily reused across media platforms. Thus, genre changes often occur in the reuse of content from texts when transferred to multimodal content on social media. For instance, an article from Shobserver created an infographic to visualize the data of

types and sites of anti-Asian discrimination in a more engaging way than the two bar charts in the original report.

Discussion

Intercultural Content Reuse

As shown in Table 3 of the Results section, the “compression” strategy appeared more frequently in Chinese than in U.S. media, influenced by different cultural contexts. The context was defined by Hall (1992) as “information that surrounds an event” (p. 229). Hall (1992) further categorized cultures into low- and high-context according to their communication styles (Hall, 1989). U.S. culture is classified as a low-context culture (Hall & Hall, 1990), on the assumption that the audience has very little background knowledge, thus requiring a writer to provide explicit and detailed information (Korac-Kakabadse et al., 2001). Therefore, U.S. mass and social media employ the “verbatim” strategy more frequently than their Chinese counterparts.

In contrast, Chinese culture can be classified as high-context (Li et al., 2020). As Hall and Hall (1990) argued, “in high-context communication, the listener is already ‘contextualized’ and so does not need to be given much background information” (p. 184). Because “interlocutors share sufficient common knowledge” in high-context cultures, “much of the meaning in communications can be inferred from the context itself” (Ou et al., 2016, p. 146). Therefore, instead of communicating “in precise detail” (Ou et al., 2016, p. 146), people tend to omit common knowledge in high-context communication (Li et al., 2020). However, it should be noted that “the degree of context considered normal and necessary” is different in “every type of discourse” (Ou et al., 2016, p. 147). Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that Chinese culture is high-context-predominant (Ou et al., 2016). Thus, Chinese writers may compress the content of the original report by omitting some information that they assume the audience already knows. To make a news article more concise, Chinese journalists may also compress a range of content from the original report into one sentence in the target news report to help localize and adapt the content of a report written in a foreign language to Chinese high-context culture (Dong, 2007).

Content Reuse, Immaterial Labor, and Social Justice

At the beginning of the pandemic, the lack of first-hand data on anti-Asian hate crimes hindered scholars from examining the severity of such crimes, which led them to look at news articles reporting anti-Asian racism to determine the degree and type of racial discrimination endured by Asian Americans in the United States (Takasaki, 2020). A group of researchers from the Stop AAPI Hate collected data from victims of anti-Asian hate crimes and compiled a report to reveal the severity of anti-Asian racism in the United States (Yam, 2021). The content of this report was extensively reused by journalists from news media to disseminate the information about anti-Asian hate crimes and call for action to promote social justice for Asian Americans.

Throughout this process, though journalists were paid to reuse content from the original report and write news reports on anti-Asian hate crimes, they also conducted unpaid affective labor (Greene, 2004) by employing emotional appeals in such reports to advocate social justice for Asian Americans. In this way, the journalists’ immaterial labor, namely reusing the content in news reports, eventually promoted informational justice.

Implications for Technical Communicators

While many technical communication scholars have proposed theoretical frameworks to address intercultural communication (Ding, 2020; Ding et al., 2016) and content reuse (Spinuzzi et al., 2015; Swarts, 2010) issues, limited research has focused on intercultural content reuse in the global context. The findings of this study reveal that culture plays a vital role in shaping writers' content reuse strategies. According to the results, Chinese journalists employed the "compression" strategy most frequently in reusing the content from the "Stop AAPI Hate National Report," while U.S. journalists most often used the "verbatim" strategy. The different types of content reuse strategies reflected the divide between low-context and high-context cultures (Li et al., 2020). Because the United States has a low-context culture (Hall, 1989), it is not surprising that U.S. journalists preferred to use the exact data given in the original report to provide sufficient information for readers without background knowledge of anti-Asian hate. In contrast, in the high-context Chinese culture (Hall & Hall, 1990), Chinese journalists frequently used the "compression" strategy in reusing content from the "Stop AAPI Hate National Report." Through "compressed" content reuse, journalists can tailor the original content into a context level that matches that of a specific audience. In this way, the information can be digested and disseminated more easily by the audience, potentially improving public awareness and facilitating the promotion of social justice. Therefore, when technical communicators adapt a piece of content to a different culture, they need to familiarize themselves with writing habits, conventions, and the level of context (i.e., low- or high-context) of the target culture (Li et al., 2020).

Another interesting finding is the high frequency of genre changes from textual content to multimodal content on social media. Because of the dynamic rhetorical ecology of social media (Lomborg, 2011), the boundary between the writer and audience on social media is blurred (Wahl-Jorgensen et al., 2016). To engage audiences from diverse backgrounds, multimodal content is widely used to produce more interactive content on social media (Gürsimsek, 2016). As "'copy-and-paste' across media" became more common for digital content reuse (Adami & Jewitt, 2016, p. 266), the versatility of visual content facilitates its reuse. The high versatility of visual content ensures that it be delivered to a diverse population of users in a timely manner, possibly leading to massive public attention that may help promote social justice. Therefore, technical communicators should adopt visual content that is flexible to genre change.

Limitations and Future Directions

This research has limitations regarding the scope, sample size, and methods. First, this study focused on intercultural content reuse regarding anti-Asian hate during the COVID-19 pandemic and chose China and the United States as the countries of interest because of time limitations. More Asian countries can be included in future studies, and the international communication between Asian countries can be examined. Second, the sample size of this study is limited. The study collected 26 mass media articles and social media posts from the two countries of interest. The sample size can be expanded in future studies to enhance the reliability of the results. Finally, this study conducted a qualitative content analysis. Quantitative content analysis may be undertaken in future studies with more data available. In terms of research directions, as this study explores the role of intercultural content reuse as a form of communicative labor in promoting social justice, future studies can contextualize content reuse with more forms of immaterial labor, such as intellectual and affective labor, in more sophisticated global cultural flows.

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