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Researching Community

The focus of my current work is community. In particular, I am interested in the role that technology and social media play in our understanding of and participation in communities. It is important that we increase our understanding of the concept of community and how people live, work, and communicate within and among today's networked and global communities.

Technology and social media have had a tremendous impact on the shape and definition of community. Social networks have made the boundaries separating communities porous and easily crossed as well as made it easier to create our own communities. It is crucial to my roles as a technical communicator, teacher, and researcher that I understand how to work in these spaces. I believe that further study of the "social literacy skills" that Cargile Cook advocates for technical communicators as well as the "civic mechanisms" promoted by Spinuzzi can increase our understanding of working, teaching, and researching in networked environments.

Digital Community and Social Media

Toward this end I am currently engaged in a study of my writing students' dual struggle with digital community and social media. As a teacher, I believe it is important to develop a strong classroom community although doing so in an online class can be challenge. Therefore, I am studying the pedagogical implications of this work and our use of both social media and course management software to create a learning community. I also seek to help my students develop an understanding of the discourse communities they will join. However, as a researcher I am also interested in their struggle to identify and join professional communities using digital and social media tools as I believe their experience can expand our understanding of this issue. This work has led to conference proposals for Computers and Writing, Computer Connection (part of the Conference on College Composition and Communication), and the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing as well as a proposal for the special issue on social media for *Technical Communication Quarterly*.

I see technical communication as a natural bridge between rhetorical tradition and cutting-edge technology. As a result, I am working as a technical communicator to create a digital network to support the work of my National Writing Project site. This work will also inform the article proposed for TCQ. This includes a study of the community and the ways that social media has helped and hindered communication and social capital as well as a self-study of my own growth and development as a technical communicator.

Agency and Writing Self-Efficacy

As I am still interested in agency and writing self-efficacy, I continue to collect data from each group of writers that I teach with the intent of conducting a longitudinal study. This work is the foundation for an upcoming presentation at the Conference on College Composition and Communication as well as the research project I am directing for my undergraduate research assistant. We are currently considering publication venues for her work. In addition, I recently responded to a call from *Business Communication Quarterly* for strategies to teaching writing and used this work to support my recommendations. Finally, I am interested in exploring the intersections and connections among community, social capital, agency, and efficacy.