Writing Across Layers of Precarity: Professionals' Digital Social Media Labor in Mental

Health Advocacy

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And finally, alongside the incredible support I've received, I want to thank myself for persevering despite any hardships or difficulties I've faced (there have been so many, both real and imagined). Earning this PhD and completing my dissertation means the world to me. At so many points, I questioned if I was intelligent enough to do this. This process has shown me that, even without finishing, I know I am worthy and capable of so much. To that end and in recognition of all the times I have not shown myself enough love and confidence, I want to include this quote from a Snoop Dogg speech: "Last but not least, I want to thank me. I want to thank me for believing in me. I want to thank me for doing all this hard work. I want to thank me for having no days off. I want to thank me for never quitting." I am so grateful to have achieved this and am looking forward to all that comes next.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how professionals' routine social media and advocacy writing work is performed as digital labor within a national mental health nonprofit organization. As a conceptual focus, digital labor asks how types of work, such as social media writing, are ascribed value by workers and by the organizations they work for. Within the field of technical and professional communication (TPC), scholars have explored how social media facilitate workplace writing, and how individuals use digital technologies to advocate for the experiences of those with mental illness. Consisting of two case studies, this dissertation seeks to bridge these areas of focus by exploring how four social media professionals engage in the digital labor of creating mental health advocacy content for two state affiliate organizations of a mental health nonprofit.

Through a modified grounded theory qualitative analysis, this study emphasizes how professionals' social media and advocacy writing labor involved navigating different layers of precarity; professionals faced unique challenges as they were working within a nonprofit environment, as they communicated about mental health advocacy, and as they were using social media platforms to do so. Additionally, within these layers of precarity, social media professionals balanced different dimensions of advocacy, sought out social media tactics to support organizational strategies, and thoughtfully communicated to connect, disconnect, and express care. In considering the field of TPC, this project suggests that precarity can be a useful lens for studying digital, social TPC labor, or teaching TPC courses, because it can highlight how individuals perform the work of communicating against injustices or oppression.

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Chapter 1: Taking Social Media Writing Work Seriously

My dissertation journey began in the Spring semester of my first year in the

Rhetoric and Scientific & Technical Communication PhD program. At that point, I was

excited to attend the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) conference in

Kansas City, KS, which was also the first academic conference I had ever attended and

been accepted to. Even with the buzz of excitement around being a presenter, I

remember feeling absolutely terrified to discuss my research in front of scholars in the

field. The proposal I submitted was focused on a rhetorical analysis of how United

Airlines and Pepsi both tweeted terrible tone-deaf responses to different public crises. I

argued that each company failed to consider their audiences, and that technical

communicators needed to use a rhetorical listening framework to create ethical social

media messaging. When it was my turn to present, I remember fighting off nervous

shakes at the front of what felt like an uncomfortably small room in the hotel convention

center, wondering if people found anything I was saying interesting or thoughtful. I was

hoping that my first public foray into the field of technical and professional

communication (TPC) would not be a disaster.

Afterwards, I was breathing a sigh of relief and eyeing up a table of cookies and

coffee in the social space downstairs when two people walked up to introduce

themselves. I recognized their faces as audience members in the session I had just

presented in. Before I could make a break for it and avoid what I thought would most

certainly be negative criticism about my analysis, we were shaking hands. I discovered

that one of my new acquaintances actually worked at United Airlines, the company I had

just criticized for disregarding audience concerns. I could feel the nervous shakes slowly

starting up again. Though he didn't work with social media, he explained, he did

remember how awful everyone felt when learning that a man had been violently dragged

off of a United Airlines flight, which ultimately led to the company's CEO releasing a

poorly written apology on Twitter. My acquaintance insisted that many weren't happy with the incident or the apology. Things were different *inside* of the company, he remarked. I kept returning to this interaction during the car ride home from the conference, mulling over what the man had said about the climate *inside* of the company. Eventually, that short exchange pushed me to ask questions about social media communication that weren't answerable through analyses of social media messages or public content. I wanted to know what the work of creating social media content looked like -- how were professionals performing this work? How were they making decisions about how to create content for public audiences? And how did they engage their own expertise along with organizational standards or knowledge in creating content? The makings of a dissertation were born.

A few years later, I had begun the planning for my dissertation and decided that it would consist of two case studies of professionals' social media work. There! My nervous self could take another sigh of relief. It felt great to have something nailed down, to see the project start to take shape. But I still needed to figure out what organizations, and what professionals within those organizations, would be the focus for my cases. I threw out all kinds of ideas, wrestling with all of the methodological problems of conducting a case study with multiple cases -- should they be similar organizations? Different? For-profit? Nonprofit? A local government group? Either way, how would I justify my choices? What if nobody was interested in participating? For a while, I was stuck generating question after question without finding anything that felt like an answer.

Apparently, it would take what was arguably the most unexpected event in the last century to pull me out of this cycle of questioning. I found myself developing my dissertation project in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic. But with all the massive changes brought about, the pandemic became a time of reflection and realignment. I began realizing that for years, I had been working alongside colleagues

who were doing amazing research on communities and issues that they cared about, like a local community's development of a climate change charter (Ciulla, 2020) or how young people living with HIV resisted digital technologies (Green, 2021) or the experiences of those enrolled in an employee wellness program (Stambler, forthcoming). It took some time, but I finally realized – I hadn't stopped to ask myself what issues I personally cared about or what communities were important to me, or how those things might play a role in my research. My realization came into focus even clearer as I read Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) work on technical communication and social justice where they articulate how oppression is a central "technical communication problem" and that the field should not "maintain [...] its distance" from that oppression (p. 17-18). I wanted my research to take on the responsibility of addressing injustice in the world, injustices I personally cared about or had close ties to. This concern about my research was undoubtedly exacerbated by the pandemic, which had increased the visibility of inequities in access to healthcare, public education, and safe workplaces. While I cared about social media writing work more broadly and found it interesting, I couldn't say that I was invested in studying professionals' work within a for-profit organization. Instead, I wanted to find a context for this study that could close the distance between my research and my interests in addressing injustices.

Needless to say, I undertook some soul-searching and reassessed what I wanted to center in my research. After some reflection, it became clear to me that I wanted mental health to become a more significant part of my project. As Reynolds (2018) explains, most of the research on mental health in Writing Studies fields has been motivated by personal experiences with mental illnesses, or those of friends and families; many scholars mention this in their publications on mental health. Mental illness and stigma have been familiar to me first through my mother's experiences, and then later through my own experiences. My mother has been managing depression and

Bipolar II disorder for the past 15 years. When she first experienced severe symptoms, she had been working in a local factory in my hometown. Her symptoms became so serious that it interfered with her work, and she ultimately had to quit her job. Leaving her job behind was hard enough, but she was in part driven to do so because of ridicule and derision she was receiving from co-workers related to her diagnoses. It was an incredibly emotional time for her, and for the rest of my family. Over time, she was able to receive consistent treatment and learned how to identify effective strategies for managing her symptoms. One of those strategies was attending support meetings hosted by a local chapter of a nonprofit organization advocating for those with mental illness. I remember her leaving home on days that were tough to later return with just a small, quiet smile. Though different, I have my own experiences with generalized anxiety and depression. For a long time, I avoided seeking out professional help, thinking I could learn how to manage on my own. Eventually I realized that treatment was only going to help improve how I felt. I soon started feeling happier and lighter. In addition to professional help, one of the things that had helped me was to share my experiences and hear about how others grappled with difficulties similar to mine. Not unlike my mother, I can remember finding solace in community, both through in-person networks but also in digital, social spaces. Seeing others' stories was essential in beginning a mindset shift, where I was able to see my mental illness not as a personal failing, but as an illness that could be treated to keep myself healthy.

Reflecting on my interactions with issues surrounding mental health gave shape to this study. My dissertation is the culmination of my experiences, academic and personal, woven together. I believe that research is connected to our professional interests and personal experiences, and that research is a reflective practice. In their work on research methodologies, Sullivan and Porter (1997) write that research calls for a "reflectiveness and critical awareness to be done well" (p. 21). The process of

reflection that I narrate above was part of my research practice, as I constructed the boundaries and shape of my study. The two case studies at the center of this dissertation are focused on the digital labor of professionals' social media writing, and are situated in the nonprofit mental health organization, I call MHAC or the Mental Health Advocacy Center – this is the same organization that my mother sought support from years ago. In short, this project was quite literally built through my critical reflection on experiences that were most important and influential in my life, as well as through an attention to spaces where my research might intervene against injustices, such as those facing individuals with mental illness.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of this study, its significance to the field of TPC, its guiding research questions, and its structure as presented in this dissertation. I first review the exigencies for research that examines professionals' social media writing as it takes place within the context of mental health advocacy. I then describe the details of this study, including the research questions that anchor the project. Lastly, I preview the remaining chapters of the dissertation and the topics they cover.

Study Purpose and Significance: Researching Professional Social Media Writing Work in TPC

The purpose of the study at the center of this dissertation is to explore how professionals perform social media writing as digital labor in their day-to-day work practices within a nonprofit mental health advocacy organization, which I refer to as MHAC. While I have already described some of the origins for this project, I was struck by two questions posed by William Hart-Davidson (2017) in the foreword to *Social Writing / Social Media*. After considering the ways social and networked technologies have allowed writing to evolve, he asks: "What if we took social media writing seriously? What if we don't?" Though simple, these questions were powerful for me as I considered the exigencies for this project. I was motivated to ask – what if we took social media

writing seriously as TPC work? And what if we don't? Studies of social media can be found across many academic disciplines, yet social media are still not taken seriously, especially in discussions of work and labor. Marwick and boyd (2010) discuss how, through context collapse, social media platforms flatten multiple audiences into a large group, melding together personal and professional networks. This collapse between the personal and the professional has affected how social media are perceived, or how seriously they're taken. Verzosa Hurley and Kimme Hea (2014) explained that they encountered skepticism from students who saw social media as inappropriate or even detrimental if used for professional goals. The status of social media as sites of professional work has been further blurred by the digital "gig economy" where employment is often temporary and contingent. As Duffy (2017) writes, aspirational social media labor holds out the promise of attaining career and financial success, yet very few are able to achieve this success. Additionally, those working as social media content moderators engage in the grueling, and in some cases, psychologically harmful tasks of assessing content, often with low pay (Roberts, 2019). Considering these examples, it is clear that social media work is often not valued, fairly compensated, or seen as a serious profession.

In the context of TPC, social media writing has been established as a fairly new form of TPC, with job ads increasingly asking for skills and experience related to social media (Blythe, Lauer, & Curran, 2014; Brumberger & Lauer, 2015). Even with its growing appearances in industry work and scholarly research (Kimme Hea, 2014), the field has not thoroughly articulated how professional social media writing and communication is a form of TPC work. Scholars have studied social media communication as knowledge work, or work that emphasizes information and knowledge over products (Ferro & Zachry, 2014; Pigg, 2014). Social media are seen as being essential for knowledge work as they are channels through which technical communicators can create networks and

share specialized knowledge. However, these studies of social media as knowledge work approach these platforms as facilitators of information that support other forms of TPC, rather than viewing them as requiring their own professional, specialized work. This approach to studying social media platforms as support for TPC work diminishes the work of social media managers, content creators, and influencers whose professions are grounded in managing a presence on these platforms.

Further, it is important to examine social media writing work in context. With this study, I analyze social media writing work as it is performed by professionals within a mental health advocacy nonprofit. Many TPC scholars argue for viewing TPC through the lens of advocacy, where technical communicators leverage their positions to support those in vulnerable, marginalized groups (Jones, 2016; Agboka & Matveeva, 2018). Instead of focusing on creating efficient products that garner the most profit, technical communicators should ask how their work can intervene to empower others. Despite the significance of advocacy in the field, more research is needed to understand what practices are involved in the professional work of social media advocacy writing, specifically in regards to mental health advocacy. Scholars have shown how TPC texts, such as the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM) or electronic health records, act rhetorically to fix cultural and social understandings of mental illness that have significant impacts on individuals' lived realities (Emmons, 2010; Popham, 2014), including perpetuating stigma surrounding mental illness. In TPC and media studies, scholars have found that digital spaces offer those with mental illnesses access to communities where they can build meaningful relationships and find support in the face of stigma (McCosker, 2018; Holladay, 2017). If social media contain texts that can influence how mental illnesses are viewed publicly, and if these platforms can benefit those living with mental illness in providing access to valuable peer-support networks, scholars should interrogate how social media messages and spaces are constructed in

ways that best serve individuals' needs. Part of this inquiry should involve studies of social media advocacy writing work, where professionals aim to foster welcoming, inclusive communities. In essence, this means taking social media work seriously for advocacy and support it can offer those with mental illness.

This study seeks to critically engage with social media writing for mental health as a serious, legitimate, professional, and valuable form of TPC work. But while scholars in the field have constructed a sturdy foundation for my research, areas of study in other disciplines offer rich insight on social media writing as professional work, and on social media writing in nonprofit or advocacy organizations. I draw from theories of digital labor in media studies scholarship to center my focus on how professionals' social media work practices are seen as valid and legitimate. Though represented in different ways across media studies and related disciplines, digital labor zeroes in on the ways that certain work activities or professions are "invisible, unpaid, or forgotten" (Pilsch & Ross, 2019, p. 4). Digital labor has not been taken up in TPC, despite the field's focus on knowledge work, its history of dependency on shifting technology development, and its dismissal as an overly practical profession (Kimball, 2017; Connors, 1982). Theories of digital labor are useful for understanding how TPC work has expanded to include social media communication, and how that work can become legitimized or devalued. My study contributes to scholarship in the field by applying digital labor to the context of social media writing for mental health advocacy. Nonprofit advocacy organizations use social media regularly to share information, to build community, and to urge others to take action (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Yet nonprofit advocacy work is marked by specific difficulties, such as overwork, low pay, and burnout (Timm, 2016). Understanding how these difficulties alter the ways social media writing is performed is key for my study's focus on digital labor. By attending to the constraints and affordances available within

nonprofit work, I aim to expand the field's knowledge of contexts where TPC takes place and to solidify its connection to advocacy communication.

Description of Cases: MHAC Minnesota & MHAC Wisconsin

This project adheres to a multiple-case study research design (Yin, 2014) that consists of two cases within the national mental health advocacy nonprofit, MHAC. MHAC is a large organization with hundreds of state and city affiliates. These cases are centered on professionals working with social media at two state affiliates of MHAC – Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota, and Emily and Samantha at MHAC Wisconsin. Interestingly, I discovered that after beginning this study, groups in both Minnesota and Wisconsin helped to found the larger MHAC organization in the late 1970s. As I discuss in more depth in Chapter 3, I began recruiting participants for this study in Fall of 2020. I confirmed that Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota would be participating by early January of 2021. My second case with Emily and Samantha at MHAC Wisconsin was solidified by late Spring, and I completed data collection by Summer of 2021. For each case, I collected data in three phases. The first phase was designed to gather general, introductory information about professionals' typical work tasks. I asked professionals to complete an initial survey, which then helped me create questions for first-round interviews. In the second phase, professionals completed a log of their daily social media writing tasks for two work weeks. During those two work weeks, I observed and collected social media content they published on Twitter and Facebook. I also collected publicly available organizational texts, such as style or writing guides, at that time. In the last phase, participants completed a final interview with me where we discussed their logs and the activity I observed on the affiliates' social media accounts. Both Jennifer and Emily were able to participate in all phases of the study. Though they were interested in finishing the remaining study phases, I did not hear back from Lisa after reaching out multiple times, and Samantha's work responsibilities had shifted so that she

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was doing very little social media work. Still, Lisa and Samantha's perspectives were useful for capturing a holistic view of social media writing work at the MHAC affiliates.

At both affiliates, professionals inhabited similar positions, but the ways that their social media writing tasks were shared, or not shared, differed. Jennifer, at MHAC Minnesota, was the affiliate's marketing director, and as such, she handled a variety of communications tasks, such as managing social media accounts, writing a bimonthly email newsletter, updating the website, and creating marketing materials. Jennifer was matter-of-fact and businesslike in her discussions of her work with social media, a possible tie to her time earning her Master's degree in business administration. Her co-worker Lisa, a special events coordinator, used social media primarily in the context of fundraising events. Lisa had the most experience working with social media out of all the professionals that participated in this study, a fact that became clear in our interviews as she shared many potential ideas for social media event promotion and fundraising. Many of the day-to-day social media tasks were managed by Jennifer, while Lisa's engagement with social media mainly took place around significant events, such as MHAC's annual fundraising event, the MHAC United Walk, where individuals gathered to walk and spread awareness about mental health. As Jennifer worked part-time and Lisa's work was event-focused, Anna, MHAC Minnesota's executive director sporadically helped out with social media. She was not able to participate in this study due to her busy schedule, but I learned that she worked with social media mainly to post updates related to real-time, legislative issues.

At MHAC Wisconsin, social media writing work was not spread out across multiple individuals as it was at MHAC Minnesota. Instead, Emily, the communications and events director, was largely responsible for social media writing in addition to many other tasks, such as planning events and fundraisers, creating marketing materials, and maintaining the website as well as the affiliate's email newsletter. Overall, Emily's

position encompassed the work that both Jennifer and Lisa were performing at MHAC Minnesota. With a background in advertising, Emily was interested in using social media ads and generating new, organic content to expand MHAC Wisconsin's audiences. After Emily had confirmed that she would be participating in the study, she informed me that she would be supervising an intern through the summer and fall. Samantha joined MHAC Wisconsin as a communications and events intern, and had been working at the affiliate for about two weeks when we connected. Her role was to assist with social media by conducting research on issues or policies related to mental illness, or by helping to organize events that might be streamed through social media. One main task that Samantha was brought on to complete included creating a grant-funded campaign to spread awareness about a specific side effect of antipsychotic medications, a project that she was especially excited about as she was working towards degrees in psychology and a humanities-focused study of health. However, after our first interview, Samantha's responsibilities had changed, and so she only had limited interactions with social media writing work.

In addition to these four main participants, I was able to reach Brianna, a social media manager at the national MHAC organization. Like many of the professionals I contacted for this study, Brianna was unable to participate, but did have time to provide written responses to interview questions that asked about how the national organization approached social media writing work, and how it supported that work for its affiliates. Brianna was not a main participant or the focus of a case, but her insight demonstrated how professionals work was situated within discourses and attitudes about social media communication and mental illness.

Study Research Questions

The research questions that ground this study are exploratory in nature, aiming to reveal how professionals engage in social media writing work as digital labor in their

specific contexts. Considering that studies of professionals' social media writing work, where creating social media content and managing a social media presence are primary work responsibilities, are not common in the field of TPC, these questions were designed to render visible digital work that is usually concealed. My study seeks to respond to an overarching question: **How do professionals engage in the technical and professional digital labor of social media writing in the context of mental health advocacy?** In order to develop a reply to this question, I identified the following three sub-questions:

- **RQ1:** What types of digital labor do professionals perform in their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media content that advocates for mental health support?
- **RQ2:** How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?
- **RQ3:** What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?

As digital labor has not been thoroughly discussed in TPC research, it was important to include the first sub-question, which asks about the types of digital labor that are common in day-to-day social media writing practices. Identifying digital labor "types" can assist in mapping out the landscape of social media writing work. The second sub-research question acknowledges the influence that organizational discourses can have on professionals' decision-making and overall approaches to their work, as well as considering the ways professionals might choose to engage with any organizational discourses. Professional work does not happen in a vacuum. The final sub-research question connects this study back to the field by asking how professionals' digital labor

might contribute to how we understand social media writing and mental health advocacy as forms of TPC.

Overview of Dissertation Chapters

My dissertation is composed of five chapters. In this chapter, I articulated the beginnings and significance of this project. I argued that social media advocacy writing is understudied as a type of TPC profession, and that theories of digital labor can contribute to what we know about this type of work, particularly within the context of mental health advocacy where social spaces can provide individuals with peer support and community. In Chapter 2, I expand on these claims by situating them in literature from the field of TPC, and by complementing this work with research from media studies and organizational communication fields. I position social media writing and mental health advocacy as significant areas of inquiry for the field of TPC, demonstrating how the lens of digital labor encourages scholars to critically assess how work in the field is valued, compensated, and made visible.

In Chapter 3 I review my methodological approaches to this study. I discuss my use of a multiple-case study research design (Yin, 2014) that consists of two case studies. These cases are focused on professionals' social media writing work at two affiliate organizations of a larger mental health advocacy nonprofit. I discuss how I collected data from five different sources, which include 1) a brief introductory survey, 2) semistructured interviews, 3) participant-completed logs of daily social media writing tasks, 4) organizational texts and resources, and 5) public social media content published by participants. Informed by a modified grounded theory approach that recognizes the influence of theoretical frameworks on data analysis, I use two cycles of qualitative coding to identify themes from multiple data sources.

Chapter 4 details the main findings that I developed through data analysis. I argue that these themes are evidence of a layered precarity that structures

professionals' social media labor as it works to uphold mental health advocacy goals. Professionals navigate precarity as it is connected to social media writing as professional work, their status as nonprofit workers, and their focus on mental health advocacy. These layers of precarity are evident in three main themes: Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy; Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics and Strategies; and Care Work, Connection, and Emotional Labor. For each theme, I share scenarios and pieces of evidence from the data to illustrate how professionals' digital labor must respond to various complex and shifting situations.

Lastly, in Chapter 5, I conclude by briefly reviewing how the study's main themes offer insight in regards to my research questions. I then discuss the implications of this research for TPC scholarship, which I argue can be strengthened by attending to theories of precarity, care work, emotional labor, and disconnection. This research also offers insight related to methodology, as I encourage scholars to articulate the messiness of their research processes, specifically around building relationships with potential participants and data analysis procedures. For TPC pedagogy, I argue that instructors can consider ways to operationalize attention to precarity, care, emotional labor, and disconnection in assignments and activities.

Chapter 2: Social Media Writing for Mental Health Advocacy as Technical and

Professional Digital Labor

When we think about technical and professional communication (TPC), social media and mental health advocacy are perhaps not the first subjects that come to mind. Yet, as I argue and as professionals' digital labor shows, both subjects are significant areas of concern for the field. This became even clearer to me through an interview with one of my participants, Jennifer, who worked as the marketing director at MHAC Minnesota. As I asked about how she would describe her relationship with MHAC Minnesota's audiences, Jennifer explained that she was an information curator for them, aiming to spread awareness and build community for those living with mental illness. She then recalled an incident where Anna, MHAC Minnesota's executive director Anna, and the MHAC Minnesota social media community responded to a Facebook comment left by a man who stated he was feeling suicidal:

> [Anna] actually was able to track him down and get someone to his house to help, like a crisis response team. And also the community at [MHAC] was incredible. I mean, there were probably 70, 80 comments back saying, you know, "You're going to get through this, we're here for you! Call [MHAC]'s helpline." You just had like this flood of people trying to support this man.

Jennifer's anecdote suggests that her day-to-day work activities, such as sharing links to mental health information or promoting organization events, had helped foster a strong community of MHAC Minnesota followers. Along with Anna, who helped monitor the affiliate's accounts, this community advocated and supported this individual in a very direct way. Jennifer noted that situations like this did not happen frequently, yet this does not diminish how crucial the MHAC social media community was to responding to a crisis situation. In making information and resources accessible via social media content, Jennifer was not only acting as a technical communicator, she was doing so to build a

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supportive community that could have powerful implications for those living with mental illness.

Jennifer's story suggests that the field consider the work of social media writing and mental health advocacy more closely. The purpose of this chapter is to explain how I position this study among interconnected dimensions of TPC scholarship, which includes discussions on 1) defining social media writing as TPC advocacy, 2) mental health communication in social media spaces, and 3) social media communication as knowledge work. Additionally, I draw from related disciplines in order to build and extend the field's understanding of social media advocacy writing as technical and professional digital labor. The field of TPC, in which my questions are situated, provides useful insight related to social media writing work, advocacy, and mental health communication, but not as related topics. I bring these areas of interest together by drawing from research on digital labor in media studies, organizational studies of nonprofit social media use, and discussions of mental health communication from rhetoric of health and medicine scholars. As discussed in Chapter 1, my project is grounded by an overarching research question: **How do professionals engage in the technical and professional digital labor of social media writing in the context of mental health advocacy?** The following sub-questions also guide my work:

- **RQ1:** What types of digital labor do professionals perform in their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media content that advocates for mental health support?
- **RQ2:** How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?
- **RQ3:** What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?

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Answering my research questions about professional social media writers' work for mental health advocacy organizations means examining social media writing through three overlapping and interconnected lenses. First, it means clearly and explicitly articulating an understanding of social media writing as a key area of technical and professional communication design. As I argue, social media are more than facilitators of technical and professional work -- in many cases, they are the central focus of this work, despite being dismissed as too informal or personal, or existing outside the scope of the field. Those writing for social media might not always bear a "technical writer" job title, but they perform similar work, shaping complex information into content that spurs understanding and action for audiences. Consider the work of "mommy bloggers" who offer strategies for navigating the struggles of motherhood (Petersen, 2016), or the work beauty YouTubers do to share their expertise on makeup products and techniques (Ledbetter, 2018). However, the field lacks knowledge about what this work looks like in context, specifically for those working within organizations. Social media are described as a "fundamental competency" for how they allow technical communicators to connect with one another and manage their reputations, and in turn, are a primary focus of technical communication pedagogy (Friess & Lam, 2018, p. 2). Still, we must ask what kind of work social media communicators do *in context* in order to specify what these competencies are or why and how we should teach them. Drawing from Kimball (2017), I argue for viewing social media writing work and labor as a form of "tactical technical communication," which highlights the ways that individuals create technical communication to "cut across" institutional expectations (p. 342). Although I study professionals within an organizational context, Kimball's goal of expanding what we view as technical communication and interrogating the interplay of individual and institutional agencies in creating technical communication is important for fully understanding the work of social media writing.

Second, responding to my research questions means viewing social media advocacy writing as *professional* work that requires specific types of digital labor. It also means asking how social media writers, as workers, are positioned in organizational systems of knowledge and power when performing this labor, and how they are able to draw from organizational conventions that govern their work. Digital labor calls attention to work, paid and unpaid, that has been created to address the growth of the Internet and digital platforms and technologies, like social media (Terranova, 2000; Scholz, 2013). Scholars often speak about digital labor as the exploitation of digital workers and audiences, and these discussions often fall along themes of "exploitation and empowerment" (Bucher & Fieseler, 2017, p. 1869). While nonprofit or advocacy groups are not inherently exploitative, their missions of empowerment are not disconnected from exploitative systems; many nonprofits rely on financial support from government sources, and when these funds become threatened, nonprofit workers are negatively affected, having to work long hours to make up for a lack of financial resources (Timm, 2016). As a form of digital labor, social media work is not always valued or prioritized within organizations, continuing to struggle against assumptions that it is "unprofessional or illegitimate" to be a social media communicator (Versoza Hurley & Kimme Hea, 2014, p. 60). Within the specific context of a mental health nonprofit, social media writers must balance specific types of concerns, such as fundraising, stakeholder needs, and alignment with a guiding mission of advocacy, all while fostering relationships with social media audiences. In viewing social media writing work from the vantage point of digital labor, I hope to elucidate how professionals form their communication design practices in conjunction with the larger organizational, institutional, and financial contexts that they work within. Understanding how professionals' communication choices are affected by work conditions can offer insight into the decision-making behind social media advocacy messaging for mental health.

Third, in addressing my research questions, I acknowledge the ways that digital, social spaces and texts can affect how mental illness is discussed, experienced, and treated. Some spaces or texts can perpetuate stigma surrounding mental health. To consider the responsibility communicators have when working in these spaces, I argue, along with other scholars, that we must acknowledge how TPC, and in turn, social media writing, can advocate for those who are disempowered, marginalized, or under-resourced. While my study does not explore how social media users experience mental health texts or communities on these platforms, it is important to recognize that professionals' social media labor has the power to contribute to public discourses on mental health, either positively or negatively, as Jennifer's story about the crisis situation reveals. Social media might be admonished for contributing to mental illnesses, yet these platforms can paradoxically be used to foster community and provide access to supportive resources or discourse (Fergie et al., 2015). If stigma persists as a real harm against those living with mental illness, and if social media may present spaces to combat stigma, it is then critical to ask how social media messages are crafted as part of advocacy efforts to promote positive narratives about mental health. Mental health advocacy organizations like MHAC are sites where using the reach and speed of social media to fight against stigma is key. But even though organizations have been successful in challenging derision and fear of mental illness, stigma is tenacious, and as Molloy writes, has "staying power" (p. 40). In studying the digital labor that professionals' perform as they engage in social media advocacy writing, I hope to identify the everyday practices that are part of managing and maintaining social media advocacy spaces. Doing so illuminates the field's understanding of how professionals' social media writing can advocate for those living with mental illness.

I begin by reviewing how social media communication has increasingly become a form of TPC, a development that I argue means we must set aside restrictive definitions

of TPC for those that are more inclusive. In doing so, I discuss how social media writing and communication design should be more explicitly defined as TPC. From there, I discuss how, as a response to oppression and inequity, scholars should explicitly articulate that the overarching purpose of TPC is to engage in advocacy, with the goal of improving the lives of marginalized groups. Codified in certain TPC texts like the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the *DSM*) or in public discourse on social media, mental health stigma is harmful for those with mental illness and disabilities. I argue that focusing on professionals' social media advocacy writing as TPC work can not only extend what we consider work and labor in our field, but most importantly, can offer critical detail about the constraints, affordances, and agencies in crafting mental health advocacy messaging. Finally, I articulate how the work behind social media advocacy writing functions as a form of digital labor, a concept often employed within media studies and journalism, but not mentioned explicitly in TPC. Though TPC scholars have carved out space for studying social media communication by articulating it as knowledge work, I contend that digital labor is an appropriate lens for examining social media writing practices because it emphasizes how work in digital spaces is influenced by power structures in and outside of organizations. Professionals' writing practices can both work in service of or against these power structures. After establishing social communication design as digital labor, I turn to examining how social media writing is practiced as a form of digital labor in nonprofit organizations, specifically those that produce messaging on mental health support and advocacy.

Social Media Writing as Technical and Professional Communication (TPC)

Within the last 10 years, researchers have pointed to the increase in professional social media work within the larger realm of TPC jobs. This research demonstrates that organizations have clearly recognized the significance of using social media in order to connect with public audiences, and this is evident through the creation of professional

positions at which many TPC program alumni work (Blythe, Lauer, & Curran, 2014; Brumberger & Lauer, 2015). More recently, Lauer and Brumberger (2019) explore the workplace writing of nine participants, ranging from social media strategists to technical writers and UX designers. They argue that social media platforms and other composing technologies have spurred the creation of "responsive workplaces," in which writers become "multimodal editors" who must participate in meaning making "not just through writing, but across a range of modes, technologies, channels, and constraints" (p. 635; 637). Whether involving the management or hands-on creation of posts, replies, and multimedia content, social media work has thus become a much more prominent feature of TPC work responsibilities. Even so, scholars have not necessarily been clear about how social media and social media writing work can be defined as TPC or how it falls under the purview of TPC study. In fact, when presenting related research at professional conferences, I have been personally asked to articulate why studying organizations' social media content and writing practices is a specific concern for our field. I argue that social media writing is a form of TPC, though perhaps not always treated as such, because it aligns with the purpose and goals of TPC work: to make specialized information accessible and understandable for all audiences, and to enable audiences to accomplish certain actions. Further, I posit that making this argument is important because it promotes a more flexible and inclusive definition of TPC.

Debates about how to conceptualize TPC resurface at different points throughout the field's history. While I will not recount all definitions or all debates about definitions, I do want to briefly explore how these definitions have shifted, and how they connect to the study of social media in TPC. Dobrin's 1983 claim that technical writing is "writing that accommodates technology to users" is often brought up in discussions of definitions. However, this definition requires us to further define "technical" and "technology," a task which proves tricky because it asks us to consider what kind of technical knowledge or

technologies belong inside or outside of the field (Allen, 1990). Scholars later moved

away from definitions like Dobrin's that involved explicit mention of technologies.

Instead, they focused on what technical communicators do. Slack, Doak, & Miller (1993)

argued that technical communicators should claim authorship and be viewed as

articulators, or contributors, to meaning, regardless of the projects that they work on.

They claim that other perspectives, such as translation or transmission perspectives,

relegate technical communicators to the background where they remain "invisible"

throughout communication processes (p. 165). Understanding technical communicators

as authors directly involved in meaning-making looks past the type of writing or

documents that are produced and towards technical communicators' involvement in

communication processes, or the actual work they accomplish. For those working within

organizations, social media writing can often be invisible to public audiences who might

only see the content being produced, and not those producing it. This invisibility may

mean that social media writers are seen more as transmitters or translators rather than

articulators of meaning.

Focusing on what technical communicators do and how those activities are

connected to power is a key component of more recent conversations around definitions

of the field. In developing a cohesive set of research questions for TPC, Rude (2009)

acknowledges that the difficulty in defining TPC research is, in many ways, related to its

boundary-crossing tendencies. She writes that because TPC is accused of "dabbling" in

academia and industry, and because of the field's marginalization within English

departments, we have come to be seen as "intruders as well as newcomers both in

academic and corporate settings" (p. 177). Despite these issues, many agree that

creating a common view of TPC is important for establishing power and legitimacy for

the field. Henning and Bemer (2016) review the inclusion of "technical communicator" as

a job title within the Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (OOH),

arguing that such a definition "grants the field power in presenting a united front in the workplace and in explaining work responsibilities" (p. 314). Those in the field may not always agree on what a definition should include, but as Henning and Bremer note, they do see a common definition as a way to enact power and legitimacy through practical and conceptual skills, and the ability to remain flexible (p. 325). To account for these skills and flexibility, Henning and Bremer revise the OOH's definition with the goal of empowering technical communicators. One of the advantages of their revisions is to keep the definition flexible by focusing more on what technical communicators accomplish through their work rather than the types of documents they create or technologies they use (p. 332). Doing so empowers the field by keeping its definition adaptable and sustainable to future activities (p. 332). Henning and Bremer's work is critical for thinking about how scholars and practitioners in the field can exert the legitimacy and credibility of their work.

But within the field's much-needed turn to social justice, scholars argue that we must question where we're placing boundaries around the field. As I discuss in a later section in this chapter on advocacy, Jones, Moore, & Walton (2016) ask scholars and practitioners to destabilize dominant narratives of TPC by considering conflicting narratives that center around Rude's (2009) classification of TPC research as "social action." These antenarratives, which consist of areas of study and groups that have historically been marginalized in the academy, help enlarge the field's scope and attention to issues of power dynamics (Jones et al., 2016, p. 214). In this case, how we understand what TPC is should be an act of inclusion rather than exclusion. Scholars may disagree as to the specifics of a TPC definition, but many agree that we can empower the field through a common definition and empower those who are included in the field by keeping that definition flexible rather than immutable. Jones et al.'s claims about inclusion invoke Kimball's (2006) concept of "tactical technical communication,"

which seeks to expand the fields boundaries through a "broader conception of technical communication as a human activity happening both within institutions [...] and in the gaps between them" (p. 68). I describe tactical technical communication in more detail further on, but this concept is useful to examine social media writing as TPC, as Kimball explains how individuals have used digital technologies to support their individual and institutional activities.

Reviewing these moves to delineate what our work is and does is useful for envisioning how social media communication fits within TPC. I do not mean to suggest that social media's relevance to TPC has not been discussed at all; several scholars, many of whom I cite in this dissertation, have explained why studying social media is important for the field. Instead, my aim is to build from this research to more directly articulate how social media communication is a form of TPC that requires further study. Doing so means that scholars and practitioners can continue to expand the types of work they perform and sites of inquiry they explore, such as studying nonprofit organizations as workplaces or analyzing social media practices specific to certain fields. In her introduction to *Technical Communication Quarterly's* 2014 special issue on social media, Kimme Hea argues that TPC scholars are especially invested in studying social media because of interests in the "relationships among technologies, users, communication, and culture," especially as it relates to "issues of agency, access, knowledge, and praxis" (p. 2). She urges scholars to examine how social media are more than specific platforms, but are "cultural practices that shape and are shaped by political, social, and cultural conditions" in different contexts (p. 2). My goal is to extend Kimme Hea's arguments by looking at social media writing as a set of practices constructed through the interplay of positionality, privilege, and power. More specifically, I want to understand those practices as they take place within a mental health advocacy nonprofit. Studying these practices will illuminate how professionals working in this

context experience the writing work of creating mental health messaging on social media as a distinct form of digital labor and what this labor can tell us about how mental health content is created and how professionals' work is valued.

Health & Mental Health Communication: Advocacy & Resistance in Social Media Spaces

While social media writing is a legitimate and powerful form of TPC, it is also important to ask how social media writing is connected to advocacy and mental health communication. With the turn to social justice issues, scholars and practitioners have been pushing the field to explicitly embrace advocacy as an object of study, an overarching framework, and a habitual practice across TPC research and pedagogy. This push is largely motivated by voices calling attention to dominant narratives in the field that have historically ignored inclusion, social justice, and diversity. Reviewing the research trajectory of the field demonstrates that much of this work has been framed through pragmatic "narratives of efficiency, technological expertise, and innovative infrastructure" (Jones et al., 2016; p. 213). These narratives often monopolize TPC work, positioning it as neutral or above reproach when issues of oppression are involved (Walton et al., 2019). However, this is hardly the case. Speaking about the interconnects among rhetoric, race, and technology, Haas (2012) argues that the field needs to contend with "the ways in which our work is saturated with white male culture–which has real effects related to privilege and oppression on the lives and work of designers, writers, editors, and audiences of technical communication" (p. 284). Disregarding the ways that white culture has been woven into TPC work means disregarding how nondominant, marginalized groups have been harmed by this work. Scholars have also noted the overly pragmatic focus characterizing TPC research. Discussing pedagogy, Scott (2004) explains how the field has been marked by hyperpragmatist approaches that construct TPC as instrumental, or only as a means for obtaining employment or

conforming to workplace conventions. If taken to an extreme, this hyperpragmatism becomes similar to Katz's ethic of expediency, "where expediency becomes a virtue that subsumes other ethical considerations" (p. 292). Such a focus on efficiency over critical thinking can end up reinforcing rather than challenging dominant power relations.

As many scholars demonstrate, TPC texts like regulatory policies, public memos or statements, and documentation often do participate in upholding oppressive structures. The fact that TPC texts may, at times, be complicit in furthering oppression is the exigency for viewing TPC work as advocacy. I agree with Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) arguments that scholars must be specific about why the field needs to turn to issues of social justice. Technical communicators need to consider what oppression is and how it manifests in different, yet overlapping dimensions. Oppression, as Walton et al. (2019) write, is the reason that social justice efforts are needed in the first place, and thus needs to be the origin of this work (p. 17). Walton, Moore, and Jones point to Williams' (2010) research on Black Codes as a form of TPC that reinscribed discrimination and violence against Black people. Similarly, the requerimiento, a formal statement read to indigenous people by the Spanish, also facilitated oppression by legitimizing (in the mind of the Spanish) their right to govern indigenous land and people. Digital texts such as terms of service (Hope, 2021) or corporate statements condemning racism (Hamilton, 2020), and the design of platforms and technologies (Noble, 2018; Ruha, 2019), can contribute to structures that subjugate marginalized groups.

To understand how oppression manifests in and through TPC, Walton et al. (2019) amplify Young's (1990) explication of the five faces of oppression – marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, violence, and exploitation. These faces provide a way of specifically identifying how individuals are oppressed and how different people experience oppression differently. As I explain in later sections, digital

labor, and my project's focus on mental health advocacy writing and communication, can

span across these faces; for example, digital labor may most clearly be a form of

exploitation, but laborers might also be marginalized and experience cultural

imperialism, powerlessness, and violence. Additionally, Walton, Moore, and Jones

(2019) advocate for analyzing oppression as intersectional to recognize "the problems

of focusing on one form of oppression while excluding another" (p. 28). We can't study

exploitation without also recognizing exploitation's connection to marginalization and

violence, and to race or gender. Further, identifying the specifics of oppression can be a

first step towards advocacy; if we can reveal what shape oppression has taken and how

individuals have been affected, we are better poised to advocate for them. Jones (2016)

argues that TPC scholars should view their work as a matter of advocacy that is innately

connected to the human experience, and that "investigates how communication broadly

defined can amplify the agency of oppressed people" (Jones & Walton, p. 242). Overall,

as Jones and others argue, TPC cannot be separated from the unjust dominant systems

it has historically been entangled with. Scholars and teachers can locate opportunities to

acknowledge the field's concern for lived experience by directly engaging in advocacy

work.

As my study attends to mental health advocacy on social media, it is critical to

note that there are several ways TPC texts have authorized inequitable, oppressive

conceptions of mental illness. These texts shape how those with mental illnesses are

treated and received by doctors, public institutions, and those close to them. One

profoundly influential text in establishing the boundaries around mental illness and

mental health treatment is the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (the

DSM), a "charter document" for psychiatrists (McCarthy, 1991). Yet many scholars have

concluded that "while the *DSM* is considered authoritative medicine to many healthcare

professionals and scientists, it's a *house of cards* from a rhetorician's point of view--a

biased social construction fraught with validity and reliability issues" (Reynolds, 2018, p. 3). Texts like the *DSM* can perpetuate stigma surrounding those with mental illness, which is informed by a historical tradition of degradation and violence. Viewing mental illness as a threat or something to be fearful of motivated the development of seemingly scientific "technologies of control" in modern psychiatry, including procedures like lobotomies (Johnson, 2014, p. 22). Mental illness was dangerous for what was seen as an overflow of emotion, an aberration from science and medicine's "norms of universalism and disinterestedness" that needed to be regulated (2010, p. 21). More recently, medications used to treat depression, anxiety, and other illnesses may be seen as new technologies intended to control, part of the arsenal of control in "biological psychiatry" (Emmons, 2010, p. 8). This control might manifest chemically but also rhetorically, as biological psychiatry fixes how we understand mental health, how individuals experience their illnesses as part of their identities, and how those identities afford certain types of rhetorical action (p. 35).

Stigma can have debilitating effects on individuals' lives. As Johnson, (2010; 2014) illustrates throughout her work, stigma does not remove an individual's ability to act rhetorically, but it does severely blunt how an individual's actions are received by a community. In what is known as the Eagleton affair, senator Thomas Eagleton was asked to resign from running as Democrat George McGovern's vice president in the 1972 presidential race after revealing he had received care for depression; the disclosure of Eagleton's mental disability marked or stigmatized his ethos as a threat to the presidential campaign (p. 466-467). Because they are constructed as "unhealthy," those who are mentally ill do not always have the same rhetorical tools or force available to them. In observing a close friend who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia, Prendergast (2001) describes how her friends' rhetorical power is dulled and perhaps ignored after her diagnosis -- Prendergast writes that "to be disabled mentally is to be

disabled rhetorically" (p. 57). If discourses fix harmful articulations of mental health that discount individuals' rhetorical agency, we must ask how texts can advocate for restoring rhetorical validity to those with mental illnesses.

Mental health stigma contributes to how we view ourselves and how we view groups that are already marginalized. Self-stigma is a process by which an individual internalizes stigma and incorporates it into their self-perceptions (Gaudet, 2019). Self-stigma is harmful in many ways, but specifically for how it highlights individual actions, not institutions, as the key obstruction in choosing to seek treatment for mental illness (Cannon & Walkup, 2021). Placing responsibility on individuals to address their mental health ignores the power that institutions, particularly medical institutions, have in providing supportive care and information about mental illness. If individuals do not take responsibility to seek out treatment, then they risk being characterized as "noncompliant," and in turn, may endure further stigma and reduced quality of treatment (p. 3). In this way, public discourse stigmatizing mental health can instigate an entire cycle of harmful effects. The presence of stigma surfaces by establishing certain bodies as unhealthy, divergent, or "risky" (Scott, 2003). Moreover, these effects are not felt equally across all communities. Bodies of people of color, of women, of trans individuals, of fat people, and people who are addicted have historically been constructed as anomalies, diverging from the concept of normative bodies (Holladay & Price, 2020). In the U.S., Black people in particular are less likely to receive mental health care, with stigma being listed as a top barrier to this care (American Psychiatric Association, 2017). Stigmatized discourse has a deeply entrenched historical and cultural legacy that affects how those with mental illness are able to live their lives and exert rhetorical agency.

Advocacy as a TPC Concern

Considering how TPC texts may participate in furthering stigma, mental health advocacy thus becomes a TPC problem. Scholars, practitioners, and students must

understand how they can intervene to craft TPC that supports rather than stigmatizes those with mental illness. A starting point for connecting TPC and advocacy is to reconsider what the purpose of technical communication should be, and how technical communication work might already lend itself to supporting those who are oppressed. In the foreword to Agboka and Matveeva's (2018) *Citizenship and Advocacy in Technical Communication*, St. Amant links together TPC and advocacy through the concept of information access. Access to information is inherently concerned with both availability – information that is easily available – and comprehensibility – information that is easily understood and can be used to take action. Once individuals can find and understand information, they may also focus on teaching others how to engage in advocacy by creating accessible messages. Technical communicators are particularly conscious of how individuals can find and understand information they need to take action because of their work writing and designing texts. Through this work, practitioners can ensure that individuals have access to information and are empowered and "aware of the forces affecting their lives," forces that may be oppressive (p. xxii). As Jones (2016) points out, "technical communicators are often in positions to explicitly advocate for oppressed groups" (Jones, 2016, p. 357). TPC scholarship and theory has trended towards acknowledging the larger implications of technical communication work and texts, a shift which "legitimizes TPC as a field that fully understands, appreciates, and addresses the social contexts in which it operates" (p. 344). However, as Jones states, the field needs to consider how it can truly align with a "humanistic perspective" that "allows TPC to make a difference in the lived experiences of others" (p. 345). Taking on this humanistic perspective means asking about the purpose, goals, and aims of TPC – they should not only consist of honing marketable skills needed to develop equally marketable and bankable texts, but rather with advancing citizenship, advocacy, and the public good (Agboka & Matveeva, 2018). The goal of research and teaching should be to engage in

this work of improving conditions for those who are negatively affected by certain texts and technologies.

If TPC should be viewed as instances of advocacy for others, then it follows that TPC can also be seen through the lens of user advocacy. Indeed many scholars connect TPC and advocacy through user and human-centered frameworks that underlie user experience (UX) and design work. Johnson (1997) argues for the concept of audience involvement where technical writers loop users in to participate in the writing process, a form of advocating for understanding users' experiences with texts and technologies. Similarly, Salvo (2001) argues for research that participates with users, engages users' humanity, and communicates users' difficulties. The idea of audience inclusion from the start of a text's development is further strengthened by Rose (2016) who argues that designers can "advocate for solutions that promote and value equity" (p. 428). Rose used ethnographic methods to study how homeless and under-resourced individuals' experienced riding the local bus, revealing how scholars can intervene by centering the voices of vulnerable groups. Advocating for these groups means advocating for people and their lived experiences, instead of viewing people only through their uses of technologies (Rose, 2016). Further, in articulating the value of user advocacy to their organizations, technical communicators can advocate for centering user voices in organizational research while also advocating for themselves as integral to the organization's positive social influence (Martin et al., 2017). In this way, advocacy work considers both the value of TPC as workers and the value of individual experience to communication or technology design.

Knowing that advocacy is, as Petersen (2018) describes, a "natural" aspect of TPC (p. 17) and is especially visible in conversations about user advocacy, how should we define what constitutes advocacy? Several scholars offer explicit as well as tacit definitions of advocacy that center social justice for marginalized communities. Though

studying scholars' research practices in TPC, Turner (2018) articulates advocacy as "interventions, individual and institutional, in oppressive communication practices and technological mediations, with the outcome of empowering or validating the equality of marginalized, disenfranchised, or under-resourced peoples" (p. 48). She finds that TPC scholars advocate for others through their research by amplifying and legitimizing "diverse knowledges," practicing reflection, holding themselves and others accountable, and making research findings accessible to those in various fields. Matveeva & Agboka (2018) suggest a similar description of advocacy as joining together "academic and practical skills and knowledge systems to enact social justice with the goal to improve the quality of life for communities" (p. xxix). Cleary then, advocacy involves taking action, whether individual or collectively, to address inequities or injustice and to support communities.

Kimball's (2017) tactical technical communication is not explicitly defined through the lens of advocacy, but is applied in studies of advocacy work. Tactical technical communication is a response to a preponderance of research focusing on TPC within, rather than outside of or in between, organizations. Kimball differentiates between strategies, which are enacted by institutions to "control individual agency through systems of rules, conventions, and expectations" while tactics are performed by individuals as they "recognize institutional strategies and try to find ways to avoid or manipulate those strategies for personal ends" (p. 3). Petersen (2018) applies Kimball's tactics and strategies to uncover how women working as TPC advocate for themselves and others in their organizations. Petersen views organizational actors in her case studies as "privileged groups or individuals" employing strategies, while TPC practitioners use tactics to "disrupt norms" and advocate for better treatment (p. 6). Their tactics included carefully considering their audiences as part of persuasion, using documentation to legitimize and share their concerns, and forming coalitions of

advocates. Though many others have deployed the concept of tactical technical communication, this example shows how it highlights the interplay of institutional and individual forces in advocacy.

In reviewing these conceptions of advocacy, I aim to set a foundation for my study of professionals' social media writing practices, as digital labor, that are part of their work in mental health advocacy. I see advocacy through Jones's (2016), Turner's (2018), Agboka and Matveeva's (2018), and Petersen's (2018) definitions – advocacy is a set of practices that address oppression, inequity, and injustice with the goal of empowering marginalized groups through institutional strategies and/or individual tactics. As I've discussed, those with mental illness have historically been stigmatized or marked as risky, unhealthy, or aberrant. That history persists today, with stigma being a primary reason that many do not seek professional help. While knowledge about and support for those with mental illness and disabilities is increasing, the influence of stigma is tenacious. Thus, it is important to study professionals' social media advocacy writing and the labor involved to detail how this work is performed to generate funding, resources, and professional support for mental health.

Social Media Health Communication: Resistance & Support

Social media have enabled and constrained how individuals in personal and professional contexts communicate about mental health, illness, and well-being. In some respects, social media have fundamentally changed communication and our expectations for what communication should look like, both among individuals and between individuals and organizations. However, as is the case with all technologies, social media take influence from other platforms and forms of media -- assuming that new and old technologies are neatly distinct from one another or that new technologies represent linear advances in progress means overlooking important questions about access and oppression (Haas, 2012; Benjamin, 2019). It is important to recognize that

contemporary social media have been built upon foundations established by other technologies and media, such as television, early online forums, or chat rooms.

Even so, social media have shifted our conceptions of audience and audience agency in digital communication. In TPC research, social media are acknowledged for their promotion of audience participation, including rapid and far-reaching audience connection. McKee & Porter (2017) argue that professional communicators have ignored the rhetorical purpose of social media by adhering to a simplistic one-way communication model. In this model, an encoded message moves linearly from a "knowledgeable transmitter" to an "uninformed receiver" (p. 45). Despite how embedded it is within our own communication practices, one of the main problems with this model is that it envisions communication as the one-way broadcasting of information to a passive audience (p. 80). But as we know, this is not what communication looks like, especially not on social media sites where audiences are able to respond, reply, and react; social media can provide audiences opportunities to become active contributors in public discourse. McKee and Porter advocate for viewing social media as spaces for phatic communication, where the goal is "building communication channels, keeping them open, and establishing ongoing and fruitful relationships" (p. 46). Technologies like social media can be considered phatic because one of their purposes is to form networks that bring together "communities of users" who at a base level want to stay connected with one another (p. 56-57). Similarly, Breuch (2019) traces how audiences should be seen as active rather than passive. Because of the ways social media facilitate audience involvement, organizations must allow for Johnson's (1997) "radical refashioning" of audience that "reverses audience as a construct of authors, rhetors, or speakers" (qtd. in Breuch, p. 47). Breuch's analysis of social media responses to launches of redesigned public websites leads her to develop the concept of "audience-initiated usability," in which audiences spur "ongoing discussions and quite possibly,

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positive change" (p. 148; p. 163). In understanding rhetoric and communication as phatic and audience-initiated, particularly on social platforms, it is clear that audiences are not passive recipients of messages, but instead participate in driving conversations.

It is no surprise, then, that audience agency is a key component of health communication on social media. Audiences seek out digital, social spaces for several reasons related to health concerns, such as accessing resources and information, building communities of support, and initiating conversations about mental health, among others. Health communication scholars have noted the ways that social media allow patients and the general public to participate more actively in learning and accessing information about their mental health (Fergie, Hilton, & Hunt, 2015) and health in general; Moorhead et al. (2013) argue that social media allows for increased interaction between the public and health professionals with the potential for "improving health outcomes" (p. 1). In TPC, scholars across the field reinforce these claims through studies of how digital and social technologies allow the public, particularly groups that are multiply-marginalized and underrepresented, ways of asserting their healthcare experiences in the face of oppressive health systems. Harper (2020) reveals how Black mothers use social media accounts and posts as one form of activist communication in order to fight against oppressive genres of writing related to Black women's reproductive health. Similarly, Wang's (2021) work demonstrates how Chinese mothers leverage a social media app dedicated to sharing pregnancy and parenting experiences to advocate for the reproductive justice they are often denied. The field's move towards patient experience design (Kessler et al., 2021) also highlights the significance of centering embodied human experience in the design of health information and tools. As Harper and Wang both show, these experiences are often shared across social media spaces, and should be included in the design of social and digital healthcare deliverables.

At the same time that individuals communicate about and advocate for improved healthcare via social media, many are engaging in acts of resistance or complaint against oppressive, harmful, or inaccessible health practices and discourse. Further, these acts of resistance and complaint take several forms, such as overtly critiquing the design of digital, social media platforms, refusing to use certain platforms, or transforming social spaces into enclaves of support. Breuch's (2019) rhetorical concept, "audience initiated," reveals how social media audiences in particular exert a level of agency through the conversations they drive; as Breuch finds in analyzing the release of MNsure.org, Minnesota's online healthcare exchange, the public took to social media to voice their frustration in using the website to sign up for health insurance, with MNsure ultimately incorporating many of these complaints into the website redesign. In some cases, audiences may actively resist the use of social platforms for the way those platforms reinscribe dominant health discourses. For example, Green (2021) finds that his participants, gay men living with HIV, resisted using an option to disclose their HIV status on the dating app Grindr. For them, disclosing their HIV status meant being further stigmatized, marginalized or pathologized. It also meant facing danger that might result from Grindr's data policies in which HIV status data was shared with third-party companies. Across their work on trans healthcare and tactical technical communication, Edenfield, Colton, and Holmes (2019) analyze the DIY texts that trans communities create in digital spaces, texts that are "tactics" or "everyday forms of resistance" against prevailing medical and political biases about trans people (p. 439). These cases show that social media audiences do exert agency, with the potential to spur change in healthcare discourse and practice. However, these stories of advocacy, often in the form of resistance and complaint, reflect the persistence of inequities inherent in medical treatment and discourse, and in the design of digital, social platforms. Moreover, understanding audience experiences and audience approaches to digital health

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communication, especially for those who are multiply marginalized, sheds light on how social media as critical spaces for health advocacy and communication design.

The Value of Social Media for Mental Health Communication & Advocacy

As a specific form of digital health communication, mental health communication on social media is surrounded by concerns that social media platforms greatly exacerbate mental illness. Any quick search for information on mental health and social media will consistently surface results about the damage social media use may inflict on mental health. Popular media point to links between a rise in depression as social media use has increased from 2012 onwards, and some state that social media use can be as addictive as smoking cigarettes (Buoygoes, 2021). A *Teen Vogue* article on social media and mental health includes a large, pull-quote stating, "This is a problem probably as big as climate change" (McNamara, 2021). A website attached to the popular documentary, *The Social Dilemma* (2020), seeks to inform audiences about "The Mental Health Dilemma" or the ways that "mental health is being monetized" through platform designs that encourage excessive scrolling and social comparisons.

While, at times, both academic and popular media may overemphasize the technological agency platforms have to affect human behavior, social media have become so tightly woven into everyday life that their influence is undeniable. Several medicine and psychology scholars have found correlations between social media use and negative mental health outcomes (Twenge, & Campbell, 2018) but many are not in agreement that a causal relationship exists (Petropoulas Petalas et al., 2021). Even so, whether or not there is a causal or correlative relationship between social media and poor mental health obscures how users of these platforms actually feel – individuals clearly experience many mental health issues throughout their digital, social lives. Trevisan (2020) found that those with mental, physical, and communication-related disabilities felt that social media were producers of much stress and anxiety in their lives

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during political events, in ways that might keep them from civic participation and developing informed opinions. Additionally, young girls with mental illnesses, such as eating disorders or anxiety and depression, can feel that their illnesses are reinforced by social media content (Ging & Garvey, 2018) and the labor of maintaining a social media presence (Hendry, 2020). In fact, a lack of consensus that social media do definitively cause or trigger mental illness has been weaponized by platforms in order to absolve companies from responsibility to improve these situations. As part of a *Wall Street Journal* exposé on Facebook, journalists reviewed how the company responded to internal research about Instagram's influence on teen mental health. Instagram and Facebook researchers repeatedly found that teens consistently indicated how Instagram exacerbated or instigated feelings of anxiety, depression, and negative body image, especially for young girls (Wells, Horwitz, Seetharaman, 2021). Yet despite this evidence gathered by their own researchers and communicated to company leadership, Facebook refused to share its research publicly. The company instead cited the lack of consensus regarding social media effects and mental health as a reason for not releasing internal research, a rhetorical move which suggests that though *some* may be seriously affected by their time on these platforms, the face that *not all* have these experiences is proof enough to avoid intervention.

In my dissertation, I recognize the serious, detrimental impacts of social media use on mental health. But understanding the relationship between social media and mental health means acknowledging how the complex agencies of both technology and human behavior are woven together. Technologies are things produced by or that produce our social, rhetorical practices (Haas, 2012; Benjamin, 2019). Narratives that privilege either technological progress or disaster can fail to capture how technologies work in both spheres, simultaneously. In the case of social media and mental health, platforms are designed to monopolize users' attention and to encourage social

comparison, but they have also been explored for how they might promote improved mental health outcomes and acts of advocacy. McCosker (2018) writes that social media and other digital technologies alone will not solve mental health problems, but they do work well to facilitate peer and community-led programs that can support those who have mental illnesses or disabilities, a finding that is reiterated in health communication studies (Moorhead et al., 2013). Because of distrust in medical institutions, the persistence of stigma surrounding mental illness, or feelings of isolation that may occur with mental illness, many seek out digital, social media to find help from others who have experiences with mental illness outside of traditional medical settings (McCosker, 2018; Prescott, Hanley, & Ujhelyi, 2017). Analyses of online forums associated with Australian mental health organization Beyond Blue show that members of digital mental health support communities are able to build meaningful relationships with others by pointing to their experience with mental health as a form of expertise, by being open and direct about their experiences, and by expressing empathy with others' struggles (McCosker, 2018; Sindoni, 2020). Some users engage in mental health forums or peer support work specifically to offer help to others (Prescott, Hanley, & Ujhelyi, 2017; Voronka, 2017). For digital, social spaces that are not successful in addressing mental health concerns, platform design processes may ignore the significance of peer or community support to those with mental illness (Byron, 2019). Overall, those seeking or providing community and help on social media often engage in forms of advocacy by resisting mental health stigma and perhaps the failures or oppression that can exist in medical, institutional treatment of mental illness.

Research in TPC extends arguments about the value of digital mental health communities and the ability to access mental health information via social or digital media. Still, this research has not been consistent, highlighting the need to construct a solid body of literature that centers social media writing and mental health advocacy as

TPC concerns. Focusing on mental health generally, TPC scholars explore how healthcare providers and institutions, along with the texts they create, mutually construct mental illness. In an analysis of psychotherapists' notes, Ravotas and Berkenkotter (1998) demonstrate how professionals decontextualize and pathologize patients' experiences through adherence to the DSM's (the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) framework for classifying mental illnesses, meaning that mental illness is seen primarily through a professional, technical lens rather than through the patient's experiences. Similarly, Popham and Graham (2008) find that electronic health records affect how patients' mental illnesses are understood and treated; in their study, electronic records worked to "constrain writers' choices" by prompting for specific information that ultimately did not align with the institution's goals for treating patients (p. 168). Clearly, TPC texts like the DSM, which professionals maintain and regularly use, can reinscribe mental illness as something diagnosed, not experienced.

More recent work on mental health and TPC focuses less on how professionals use specific texts in diagnosing or treating mental illness, and more on patient experiences and avenues for mental health interventions. This trend towards studying patient experience has also meant studying technologies along with advocacy strategies. For example, Holladay (2017) finds that individuals with mental illness use online discussion forums to offer others in the community insight on healthcare systems and diagnoses, and to reconstruct mental illness outside of technical terminology. Drawing from advocacy strategies present in forums could, as Holladay argues, be a starting point for revising medical texts to better include patient experiences. Developing technologies that incorporate patient experiences in their designs to improve mental health outcomes is a central concern for other TPC scholars. Usability testing, specifically with an eye towards those who are marginalized, can possibly create meaningful interventions, as is the case with Cannon, Walkup, and Rea's (2016)

collaborative work to develop a mental health literacy app for women in a drug treatment center. Additionally, Shafer's (2021) close analysis of digital platforms *Loosid* and *Women for Sobriety Online* demonstrate that social spaces can provide access to community support. Those designing digital community platforms targeted for use by people with mental illnesses should understand how "embodied and experiential knowledge circulation in digital spaces "can avoid "one-size-fits-all approaches" to addressing mental illness and drug addiction (p. 252). In these ways, advocacy is taken up digitally and socially to construct mental illness as a lived reality that can't be adequately understood through medicalized lenses. And as people living with mental illness find opportunities to advocate for themselves online, designers of social platforms should ask how they can be advocates for better digital tools and messaging.

This trail of TPC research leads to further questions about digital spaces and the design of mental health communication. If audiences use social platforms for mental health advocacy, often to resist stigma or express their embodied experiences of mental illness, and if social media messaging may potentially create community-centered support that replaces stigma with care and understanding, then it follows that technical communicators need to be asking how social media messaging can engage in mental health advocacy. As I discuss, TPC scholars have studied social media through analyses of public-facing content (Weber, 2014; Shin, Pang, & Kim, 2015; Berry, 2018; Zhang, Gosselt, & de Jong, 2020) and through workplace or classroom studies of social media use (Pigg, 2014; Verzosa Hurley & Kimme Hea, 2014; Ferro & Zachry, 2014; Walls, 2017; Faris, 2017; Lauer & Brumberger, 2019). Though this body of knowledge has certainly cemented the importance of social media to TPC, it has not asked about social media advocacy writing as a specific form of TPC digital labor, nor has it asked these questions about the digital labor of mental health communication within nonprofit contexts.

Some scholars from other disciplines point out the lack of research on professionals who produce communication about mental health (Atanasova, Koteyko, Brown, & Crawford, 2019). Those that have studied social media and mental health advocacy (Smith-Frigerio, 2020) focus more on communication strategies professionals use and less on the decision-making and labor they engage in. As a field, TPC is well-situated to contribute to research in this area because our work inherently involves attention to communication design problems (Swarts, 2012), and communication design problems should, as Spinuzzi (2012) argues, require us to examine the larger "systems, sets, and ecologies" that surround communication use or reception, including how individuals create and use communication (p. 11). Moreover, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has been a concerning example of how social media writing can strengthen mis- or disinformation about health; as Koerber (2021) writes, "...no one can afford to cling to a belief that the communication of scientific knowledge is separate from the production of that knowledge" (p. 26). Technical communicators have a responsibility to understand how health communication is produced for and with social platforms. Though professionals who share mental health information on social media may not always be relaying scientific details, they *are* affecting how audiences perceive mental illness, how they make decisions about receiving professional help, and how they choose to support anti-stigma efforts. As I explain below, studying professionals' digital labor can provide much-needed insight into how TPC scholars and practitioners can support improved mental health messaging.

Designing Social Media Communication for Mental Health Advocacy: Knowledge Work, Technical & Professional Digital Labor, and Nonprofit Organizations

As we consider how digital and social media are used to communicate about mental health, it is important to remember that organizations' public social media messages are produced by professionals who are tasked with communication design

labor, labor that is understudied in mental health advocacy contexts. We may not always

see what this labor involves, how it contributes to public conceptions of mental health, or

how it is often undervalued. And while we can view advocacy communication and writing

on social media as TPC, I argue that we should also see it as a specific type of technical

and professional digital labor, particularly when messaging is centered on mental health.

A concept cultivated in digital media studies, digital labor draws attention to media work

performed by professionals within or outside of organizations. More specifically, it

underscores the ways that this work is paid or unpaid, valued or undervalued, visible or

made invisible. It asks us to consider how work with digital platforms can often be

exploited by organizations. TPC scholars have studied workplaces through the concepts

of symbolic analytic or knowledge work, which have been used to justify the ways that

technical and professional communicators are essential to knowledge development

within organizations. However, using digital labor as a conceptual lens can reveal the

nuances in social media communication design and mental health advocacy – this work

is necessary, yet it requires labor that is invisible to many and, in some cases, may be

neglected or misunderstood. Additionally, relatively little research exists on how

nonprofits, particularly advocacy groups, approach social media communication design

and advocacy messaging. Nonprofit organizations are key to promoting awareness for

mental health support, but these organizations have specific structures and needs that

change how professionals are able to pursue advocacy on social media. I contend that

folding digital labor into the field's vocabulary can enrich how we understand the work of

social media advocacy writing in nonprofits as part of our discipline.

Knowledge Work in TPC

In TPC, conversations related to digital labor become visible through emphasis

on symbolic analytic knowledge work, a concept that explains the changes that ICTs, or

information communication technologies, introduced to the nature of work. Technological

development has deeply affected how symbolic analytic work is performed, as well as the types of knowledge work we privilege. Spinuzzi (2015) explains how the rapid spread of information communication technologies (ICTs) like social media have refigured what work looks like across fields (p. 2). Increasingly, employees who once worked within an organization's "interior" now frequently interact with its "edge," or its "customers, clients, and partners" (p. 2). With professionals regularly communicating with the customers and audiences at an organization's "edge," these activities have, in turn, fundamentally changed how professional writing work is performed. Spinuzzi's statements about ICTs are crucial in carving out a space for technologies like social media in the workplace; social media allow professionals to interface more directly and immediately with those at an organization's edge.

TPC scholars saw symbolic analytic and knowledge work as a means for repositioning and strengthening the value of TPC workers. Spurred by economic developments, Johnson-Eilola (1996) argued that technical communicators must rearticulate the profession as symbolic analytic work, which involves a move from privileging the production of goods to privileging "specialized knowledge" (Ferro & Zachry, 2014, p. 8). Positioning technical communicators as symbolic analytic or knowledge workers means reworking the value of TPC to organizations -- technical communicators themselves perform symbolic analytic work that is valued by organizations. They do not simply act as "support" for that work (p. 8). As Ferro and Zachry explain, knowledge workers are prized by organizations because "instead of merely relying on [the] existing knowledge" of others, they are able to regularly foster their own areas of expertise (p. 8). This shift pushed technical communicators to view their work as an area of expertise by itself while also cementing the exigency to research what knowledge work encompassed in practice.

In taking stock of these fundamental changes, it becomes clear that social media are essential to symbolic analytic knowledge work in that they create the channels through which specialized knowledge can be shared and relationships can be built. For example, Pigg (2014) explains how communication technologies like social media become vital for coordinating professional work by bringing together "people, texts, tasks, and technologies in ways that enable action" (p. 71). Pigg's (2014) observation of technology consultant Dave's work reveals how social media facilitate coordinative and inventive activities, such as creating relationships via social networks, building online presences to interface with these networks, and then using networks strategically—Dave participates in symbolic analytic, knowledge work by accessing "social resources" needed to create projects, foster networks, and support a positive professional identity over time (p. 82; p. 84). Ferro and Zachry (2014) also study the ties between symbolic analytic work and social media by surveying knowledge workers over four years to identify the publicly available online services (PAOSs), such as social media, that they used in their work. Similar to Pigg's findings, the results indicated that various social media were used regularly in knowledge work to develop connections with others, to learn new information, and to work collaboratively with others (p. 18-19). In his study of social media strategist Gina, Walls (2017) brings us even closer to social media communication practices. He writes that researchers should pay attention to the labor of symbolic analytic workers that takes place in "extraorganizational environments" because these activities often support professional work in ways that are typically ignored (p. 394). For Gina, an African American woman working in a mostly white environment, using her own social media account at work allowed her to connect with a group of industry practitioners and to maintain her identity (p. 410). These activities may be categorized as unprofessional by her employer, but they provide her with much-needed support for her professional career. Together, this research not only advocates

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for social media use as a support for symbolic analytic knowledge work in TPC, it also encourages scholars to center their research around workplace practices to better understand how social media continue to impact these practices in meaningful ways.

Although these scholars create a solid foundation for my own project by solidifying the importance of social media to TPC workplaces, they also inadvertently highlight a gap in how the field conceptualizes professional social media communication. This research often constructs social media as ancillary to knowledge work activities, not necessarily as the primary focus of knowledge work itself. Ironically, the argument to see TPC as symbolic analytic work centers around the premise that the specialized knowledge of TPC is integral, not supplementary, to workplace practices. Yet any tasks accomplished using social media are often positioned as secondary to the larger goals of knowledge work. The knowledge workers in Pigg, Ferro and Zachry, and Walls's studies use social media to *facilitate and support* other activities—social media communication design is not the subject or main focus of the symbolic analytic work being studied. With this conceptualization, social media writing, and any professionals engaging in this work, thus become subservient to knowledge work, recalling Johnson-Eilola's (1996) discussion of how technical and professional communicators can be "disempowered" by their status as mere "support for" other employees (p. 248). Further, users or audiences are placed at a disadvantage when TPC work is seen as auxiliary; if TPC work is seen as mere support tacked on to the end of communication, then it is less likely that user needs will be incorporated into texts or platforms being designed. Applied to social media work, this "support model" would view communication not as a larger process of designing audience-centered messages, but as a means to an end, the end being simply spreading a message to audiences where social media are channels for accelerating messages and are disconnected from creating message content. Studying social media communication as mere support runs the risk of diminishing the specialized

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knowledge of social media managers, writers, moderators, or strategists. It is crucial to

ask more questions about what social media writing and communication work involves,

especially as these jobs are so prevalent in TPC. Doing so means examining the internal

activities and decision-making processes that inform professionals' communication

choices, and asking what we might find if we inquire about social media communication

design as a central concern of TPC work.

Social Media as Knowledge Work, Digital Labor, and Exploitation

But even while TPC scholarship recognizes the value technical communicators'

symbolic-analytic knowledge work provides to organizations, it does not fully

acknowledge the way that this work can be highly precarious, contingent, and

emotionally taxing, even more so when it involves social media platforms. The focus on

knowledge or symbolic-analytic work as defining terms elides what this work involves

and how it is configured within ideological systems. Whereas TPC scholars might

mobilize knowledge work to articulate worth, media studies scholars specializing in

digital labor see the ways knowledge work is often exploited. The prevalence of

knowledge work across digital culture and digital industries was born out of a

postindustrial and digital information economy (Terranova, 2000; Fuchs, 2010; Roberts,

2019). In the late 1970s, many economies across the globe shifted away from producing

material commodities and goods, and towards the production of information or

knowledge (Terranova, 2000; Roberts, 2019). This shift in the direction of information-

centered knowledge work was in part precipitated by the proliferation of technologies like

personal computers, the Internet, and more recently, mobile devices. Development of

these technologies meant that individuals could share information more easily across

networks. Castells (2000) describes the information economy as "an economy in which

sources of productivity and competitiveness … depend, more than ever, on the

knowledge, information, and the technology of their processing" (p. 2). For example, the

work of web designers and content creators hinges both on a knowledge of skills and the knowledge conveyed through digital content. But while TPC scholars point to this same shift in which information becomes commodified, they often do not dig deeper into what this means for work and workers in a digital information economy. One of the characteristics of a networked society, as Castells explains, is that work becomes individualized and increasingly temporary, and it can contribute to social inequities by excluding certain publics from substantive participation in a digital information economy. Castells' explanation aligns with what later became known as "on-demand" or "gig" economies in which individuals engage in contracted, temporary, or remote employment often facilitated through apps like Uber, DoorDash, Upwork, Task Rabbit, and others (Duggan et al., 2021). Yet while gig work may seem to allow workers some autonomy and flexibility, that autonomy and flexibility can be undermined by platforms that simultaneously distance themselves from gig workers while also monitoring their activities (Duggan et al., 2021). Workers can choose when to complete work tasks, but ultimately, how that work is algorithmically managed, and in turn, compensated is controlled by the organization.

Questions about exploitation drive studies of knowledge work and digital labor. To further clarify how knowledge work is a sign of both collective power and commercial exploitation, Terranova (2000) argues for viewing this work through the lens of immaterial and free labor, or specific forms of skilled work that may not always be compensated or recognized as work, but are crucial to sustaining digital spaces and defining digital culture. Not all immaterial or free labor is exploited, as is the case with open-source software and publications. Still, this type of labor is particularly susceptible to exploitation through various opportunities for audiences to contribute to digital culture. Specialized knowledge acts as a "true creator of value" and center of labor for maintaining the Internet, but it is also "voluntarily *channeled* and controversially

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structured within capitalist business practices" (p. 44; p. 39). As Terranova writes, the

"big players" in digital spaces are invested in finding "new ways to make the audience

work," and that the Internet, like television, has developed "a reliance on their

audiences/users as providers of the cultural labor … under the label of 'real-life stories'"

(p. 52). Organizations hope to capitalize on the content that audiences produce in digital

spaces to share their stories, experiences, or knowledge.

The idea that audiences and users are commodified by supplying organizations

with free labor, either knowingly or often unknowingly, was fairly well-established prior to

the widespread availability of the Internet (Smythe, 1981; Herbst, 1993). Still, the

Internet has accelerated and thus normalized this type of labor. One of the earlier cases

studied by digital labor researchers is AOL's workforce of nearly 14,000 volunteer

"community leaders" who were tasked with hosting and monitoring chatrooms and

enforcing community or terms of service guidelines (Margonelli, 1999). These workers

only received compensation in the form of free access to an AOL account, which led

some to consider pursuing legal action against AOL to recoup back pay for their work.

Similar in some ways to the piecework completed by AOL's volunteer workforce,

Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is a crowdworking platform where businesses and

individuals hire workers to complete human intelligence tasks (HITs) that automated

artificial intelligence systems are incapable of performing, such as translating or

transcribing text, adding descriptive text to images, or classifying specific objects in

images or videos (Amazon Mechanical Turk, 2022). Though MTurk has been lauded for

providing workers with flexibility and businesses with efficiency, the platform has been

the focus of heavy critique for actually reinforcing worker precarity and exploitation. Irani

(2015) explains how MTurk workers are transformed into "computational resources" that

strengthen profits while also furthering narratives that position technology company

leaders as accomplished innovators and trailblazers rather than as "managers of

information factories" (p. 226). MTurk crowdworkers are distanced from creative innovators through the menial nature of the work they do, work that is broken down to its "smallest reducible parts and to the lowest possible bids," and is purposely made invisible in order to encourage growth and buy-in from investors (Roberts, 2019, p. 56; Irani, 2015). With AOL and MTurk, as with other instances of digital labor, any flexibility offered tends to mask the truth of how digital laborers are treated or acknowledged.

AOL and Amazon are only two of many cases in which the labor of an undervalued, unseen, and sometimes unpaid workforce is harnessed in the name of efficiency. It can be difficult to define exactly what digital labor is, partially because it is taken up differently across disciplines (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018), and is discussed using varying terminology – as knowledge work, invisible labor, media work, free labor, immaterial labor. Even so, scholars of digital labor are tied together through common questions: how is work through or for digital platforms compensated, recognized, and assigned value, and how do digital laborers experience the work that they do? Initial digital labor research settled around binary thinking, suggesting that digital work was either "creative expression" or labor exploited to serve capitalist ends (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018). Fuchs & Sevignani (2013) try to delineate what is digital work and what is digital labor, where digital labor is concerned with how digital work is or isn't ascribed value. On the other hand, digital work encompasses a larger category of work involving the "human brain, digital media, and speech in a way that new products are created" (p. 237). Though setting these boundaries around digital labor is necessary, they fail to consider the nuanced perspectives of digital laborers and why they participate in digital work. It also promotes a narrow view that may overlook the many spaces that digital labor might appear.

As Pilsch and Ross (2019) argue, digital labor should not be viewed as being primarily immaterial labor because doing so glosses over the distinct, diverse, and very

material experiences of digital laborers. In keeping with this claim, I understand digital

labor primarily through Pilsch and Ross's humanist approach that attends to "invisible,

unpaid, or forgotten labors" and the "various practices of laboring bodies that may not

officially count" when the digital is reduced to immaterial work (p. 4; 5). This approach

centers digital laborers as well as their experiences with textual labor, labor that infuses

digital spaces and devices with meaning in ways that have very real material effects on

the world. Centering digital laborers also reveals why many engage in specific types of

work, avoiding the pitfall of viewing those in these industries as "cultural dupes" who are

unaware that their work may be underpaid or overlooked (Duffy, 2017, p. 47). This

humanist perspective as outlined by Pilsch and Ross (2019) and reflected in the work of

other scholars (Duffy, 2017) maps neatly onto my goals in this project to make visible the

technical and professional textual or writing labor that is part of professionals' mental

health advocacy messaging on social media. The work that those in advocacy

organizations or nonprofits do is not always seen as professional, and in general, is not

necessarily meant to be seen. Nor is it clear how mental health advocacy writing or

communication is a specific type of digital labor. My aim is to extend the study of digital

labor into TPC contexts, like the mental health advocacy organization, to enrich what we

know about digital labor.

Bringing awareness of digital labor in TPC research, as I hope to do, would

encourage attention to the ways in which digital labor is often invisible and often not

seen as skilled or professional work, opening up room for exploitation. More specifically,

using digital labor as a lens for TPC research focuses attention on the ways this labor

manifests differently across race, gender, and cultural identities. Because digital labor is

performed by bodies and has material consequences for those bodies, it must also be

seen as raced and gendered (Pilsch & Ross, 2019). Digital labor, as is the case with

most forms of labor, operates within a capitalist system, a system that reinforces

patriarchal and racist structures (Fuchs, 2018). Jarrett (2015) integrates feminist theories of labor into a study of digital work to create the concept of the Digital Housewife, a figure that acknowledges sites of reproduction, sociality, and affect as central to maintaining digital labor and capitalism. Jarrett's work is an influence on others who have explored media work and gender, such as Duffy's (2017) analysis of how social media influencers, content creators, and vloggers function within a gendered system of consumerism that situates social media labor as aspirational, feminine work. Social media roles are feminized and typically seen as women's work (Duffy, & Schwartz, 2017), where women, although they produce social media content for their audiences, are seen as performing consumerist work that is usually unpaid and invisible. Women who create blogs and vlogs review makeup or clothing, or extol the benefits of certain brands in hopes of attaining a career where they'll be paid to do work they're passionate about, yet it can be notoriously difficult to succeed in these precarious, volatile industries.

As is the case with its gendered manifestations, digital labor becomes especially precarious where race is concerned. The racialized and feminized labor of technology industries reflects the gendered and racialized structures that characterize many aspects of society. Benjamin (2019) writes how race itself acts as a technology meant to "reconcile contradictions" about racial equality and inequality by emphasizing the "pursuit of efficiency, neutrality" while downplaying the "social costs of a technology in which global forms of racism, caste, class, sex, and gender exploitation are the nuts and bolts of development" (p. 36; 38-39). Benjamin gives the example of the Declaration of Independence that codifies the ideal that "all men are created equal" while Black and Native peoples were expressly excluded from this group – the same reconciliation applies to the realm of technology and labor where productivity is maintained by the "disposability" and invisibility of labor (p. 38). Digital technologies are literally built from

the labor of those mining gold, cobalt, and other minerals under terrible conditions in the Congo, or from workers who toil for long hours assembling smartphones and other devices in China (Fuchs, 2018). But instead of addressing the exploitation underlying technological production, we reconcile this labor with the sleek, optimized, and efficient features of our smartphones or tablets.

Colonization and racism in the "real world" are not disconnected from the distribution of digital labor that follows racial and ethnic oppression. Racism is responsible for structuring the early Internet or computer use as a high tech "racialized sphere of whiteness" despite the fact that Black people were rapid users of digital technologies during the advent of the Internet (Everett, 2002). Roberts' (2019) study of content moderators covers the prevalence of the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in the Philippines, a country with a history of colonization and oppression by the United States. Usually low-paid and requiring long hours of work, content moderation is largely outsourced to workers in other countries, mainly India and the Philippines, who are often seen as racialized others; the content moderation firm Caleris once located in Ames, Iowa displayed the slogan "Outsource to Iowa–not India" on its website (p. 63). As one example, commercial content moderation firms have monetized the Philippines' connection to American, English-speaking culture, a result of a long history of American colonization in the country. This cultural closeness is an advantage for companies looking to outsource content moderation work where linguistic and cultural knowledge is important for judging the appropriateness of content. No matter how prepared for this work individuals are, being tasked with reviewing harmful content, such as images and video of suicides, murder, or sexual abuse, can be psychologically devastating (Dwoskin, Whalen, & Cabato, 2019). Attuning TPC scholarship to the specific forms of raced and gendered oppression that occur in digital labor is a necessity for studying how social media professionals' work is valued.

Digital Emotional Labor

Whether manufacturing physical devices or creating and monitoring content on social platforms, the work that digital laborers perform carries with it significant emotional expense. With my questions about professionals' writing work as they advocate for those with mental illness on social media, it is expected that some of this work may be emotionally taxing, namely because mental illness is inherently concerned with emotions. Though considered a facet of immaterial labor, emotional labor seriously influences the material world. Emotional labor, also referred to as affective labor, is defined as the labor needed to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7) or as the "creation and manipulation of affects" (Hardt, 1999, p. 96). Historically viewed as women's work (Meyer, 2002; Arcy, 2016), the emotional labor that women are often expected to perform has not always been valued or seen as productive, despite the fact that this work ultimately reproduces and sustains capitalist systems of control (Hardt, 1999). Traditionally, women were tasked with the "relational and care work involved in reproducing the nuclear family–as a key source of capitalist accumulation" (Arcy, 2016). The myth that women are inherent experts at "emotion management" is pervasive (Arcy, 2016), with many women working, or being expected to work, in positions in which emotional labor is a key aspect of their jobs. Hochschild's (1983) influential study reveals how in the context of flight attendants, emotional labor is seen as integral to the ultimate goal of keeping customers content, happy, and satisfied. As Hochschild writes: "Seeming to 'love the job' becomes part of the job; and actually trying to love it, and to enjoy the customers, helps the worker in this effort" (p. 6). Hochschild explains how flight attendants' smiles, as one example, are a display of emotion that contributes to customers' feelings of comfort while also masking any exhaustion or unhappiness. Yet as emotions become part of the professional work

individuals perform, those emotions, usually private and deeply connected to a sense of self, are of increasing concern to employers. Workers thus become alarmingly vulnerable to the whims of organizations as emotions and emotional labor is monetized.

In digital spaces, and particularly on social media, emotional labor is quite literally built into the features of platforms, making it a foundational part of communication work. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter ask users to share emotions by posting, commenting, sharing, and liking content (Arcy, 2016). The goal of posting to social media platforms is often to engender an emotional response from audiences in an effort to build relationships. Yet the "terms of emotional exchange are set by social media corporations "who aim to control and monetize emotions via likes, clicks, or views (p. 367). Social media work is also framed through emotional language and an emphasis on emotional labor. Duffy and Schwartz's (2018) analysis of recruitment ads for social media jobs reveal the emotional and feminized make-up of the "idealized digital laborer": organizations wanted individuals who were fun, highly social, adept at fostering relationships, loyal to the brand, and displayed passion, devotion, and even a measure of obsession for their work with social media. Additionally, presenting this idealized laborer through a "decidedly feminine worker subjectivity," suggests that this type of work may be poorly paid, invisible, precarious, or seen as unskilled (p. 2983). The content that social media workers produce requires emotional labor to craft and it can also set the standards for how others should perform emotional labor. Cummings (2017) discusses how rhetorical moves used in corporate mommy blogs end up reinforcing the "impossible standards of affective management" involved in motherhood by establishing how mothers should feel or respond to parenting situations (p. 43). Mothers writing for corporate mommy blogs may not be compensated for their work, just as they are not compensated for the affective labor of parenting. Yet organizations capitalize on the emotional labor used to produce this content in order to increase readership. Influencers

who seemingly work for themselves also occupy precarious positions where their emotional, digital labor is concerned. Driven by the mantra that they should get paid to do what they love, Duffy (2018) finds that influencers are aspirational laborers who create content with the hopes of attaining a full-time career. Influencers see their social media projects as an outlet for their creativity and passion, but also as a way to potentially further their ambitions to find a stable career. These aspirational laborers highlight how social media careers are conceptualized as a melding together of love and work; influencers express creativity and passion, but must put in long hours for hope of economic stability.

Digital and emotional labor are not studied in depth in TPC scholarship, despite the field's grounding in technical communication work and careers where digital technologies are essential. These concepts would provide critical lenses for further understanding the work technical communicators do while expanding how we might define this work. In many ways, TPC scholars have developed research that can bridge our field with how digital and emotional labor is discussed in media studies. The social justice turn in technical communication research is clear evidence of the importance of empathy, or understanding others' experiences and feelings. Walton et al. (2019) contend that technical communicators must engage with marginalized groups' embodied experiences of rage and anger while not allowing empathy to be an excuse to avoid taking action. Empathy is foundational to design thinking processes, with fostering empathy and understanding for users being the central motivation behind design decisions (Tham, 2021). The design thinking process is also closely aligned with UX research where TPC scholars argue for adopting human-centered design principles that position users as design experts (Walton, 2016; Rose et al., 2018). Peterson (2016) finds that mommy bloggers are expert empathetic user designers for their use of feelings in building connections with their audiences. This act of building connections is

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impossible to do without the ability to navigate and manage emotions; technical communication workplaces require workers to build relationships with others and to locate opportunities for action, both tasks that necessitate emotional awareness (Pickering, 2019).

Writing specifically about social media, McKee and Porter's (2017) emphasis on phatic communication highlights the significance of relationship-building, which ideally involves centering audience needs through listening and embodying feelings of respect and concern. McKee and Porter's work is strongly connected to Baym's (2015) articulation of relational labor, or the type of social media work activities that are meant to create "pleasant, comfortable, or exciting feelings in others" (p. 18). Relational or relationship labor has always existed in care work, but social media has created a "digital shift" of caretaking and community management where relational labor is essential to economic success (Lai, 2021). As I and others have argued, social media work is TPC work. This current research offers pathways to understanding how that work is distinct and necessitates specific types of labor, and the field can develop communication design processes that value communicators as professionals and people.

Social Media Writing in Mental Health Advocacy & Nonprofit Organizations

But what does the digital labor of social media writing and communication work look like in the context of mental health advocacy? My aim with this project is to build from these unexplored connections in TPC scholarship among social media writing, mental health advocacy communication, and digital labor. As a field, TPC is primed to study the digital labor of social media advocacy communication, but how these three areas of inquiry manifest within the context of a mental health nonprofit is not clear. TPC scholars have long argued for connecting their research and teaching with nonprofit or community organizations (Huckin, 1997; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002; Jones, 2017; Gonzales

& Turner, 2017; Agboka & Matveeva, 2018), however, fairly little of this work explores nonprofits as sites of professional social media work, or more specifically, the social media work behind mental health advocacy communication.

It is crucial to acknowledge that nonprofit organizations, and the communication work involved in sustaining them, are situated within various layers of precarity. As I will discuss, nonprofit employees may experience certain kinds of emotional precarity or expectations to perform emotional work, like relationship-building. However, many nonprofit organizations occupy precarious positions simply by virtue of being a *nonprofit* organization. For many, financial issues can be a constant point of uncertainty, and these issues can put a strain on how organizations pay their employees, how often employees are expected to work, or how supportive workplace culture is (Timm, 2016). Nonprofits are often saddled with expectations that they be run like businesses, but they do not receive the same government support that businesses do (Timm, 2016). Further, managing funding in a nonprofit can be more complex than running a business of equal size, yet conversations about funding models are often not clear, leading to confusion about creating financially sustainable organizations (Foster, Kim, & Christiansen, 2009). In what is termed the "nonprofit starvation cycle," funders may attach unrealistic expectations to the money they give to organizations, in turn affecting where that money is allocated, with less being directed towards overhead expenses like salaries (Gregory & Howard, 2009). Many organizations make decisions to assign more work to employees rather than cut programming, or to seek out unpaid volunteer work (Timm, 2016). When employees aren't paid well or are overworked, they are in danger of experiencing burnout or leaving the nonprofit world altogether. In 2019, American museum workers founded the Art + Museum Transparency, a movement that invited others doing this work to share their salaries publicly in hopes of broader recognition of financial precarity in nonprofit spaces (Südkamp and Dempsey, 2021). Cases like this

demonstrate that nonprofit workers might have to take on the work of advocating for themselves while also advocating for others.

Nonprofit workers encounter precarious conditions that are not unlike those experienced by digital laborers. Südkamp and Dempsey (2021) describe a system that recalls Duffy's (2018) concept of aspirational labor, where nonprofit work is seen as inherently valuable and unpaid volunteer work becomes an important stepping stone to a paid career. But for those who are marginalized, taking on unpaid work can be untenable or may add to any paid work they perform in order to support themselves. Even though many nonprofits advocate for those who are marginalized, they may be inadvertently excluding marginalized groups from participating in advocacy work (Südkamp & Dempsey, 2021). Nonprofit leaders may not realize the extent to which they are perpetuating precarity. One nonprofit worker with extensive experience noted that employees' drive to support an organization's cause can be used against them: "Because they are highly motivated by passion, the reasoning goes, they don't need to be motivated by decent salaries or sustainable work hours or overtime pay" (Timm, 2016). The precarities associated with overwork, low pay, and limited funding trickle down to other areas of nonprofit careers. With social media communication work, these precarities are visible through the lack of available funding for training. Though writing about TPC programs' use of social media, Vie's analysis of demonstrates that instructors and program administrators may not engage with these platforms due to their unfamiliarity with them, the time-consuming nature of maintaining accounts, and the lack of resources for training sessions or hiring individuals to manage accounts (p. 347-349). Nonprofit organizations acknowledge the value of using social media to achieve their missions, but admit that they do not have enough time to devote to use and learn more about these platforms (Guidry, Saxton, & Messner, 2014). If nonprofit organizations

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struggle to obtain funding and professionals are overworked and underpaid, social

media work, which is often already within a precarious position, may not be prioritized.

Research from public relations, business, marketing, and nonprofit studies fields

does not refer to digital labor specifically, but it does refer to the significance of certain

forms and manifestations of digital labor, particularly relationship-building on social

media. How nonprofits use social media is not completely dissimilar from how for-profit

or government organizations use these platforms; building relationships and sharing

information with audiences is important for all organizations. However, nonprofit

organizations are specifically concerned with advocating for their respective causes

(Ben-Ner & Ren, 2015), and as such, their approaches to social media communication

can reflect their advocacy goals. Further, how nonprofits engage in one-way, information

sharing approaches or two-way, interactive approaches to achieve advocacy goals is a

common theme in the literature on nonprofit use of social media, especially as

audiences seem to prefer dialogue and interaction (Saxton & Waters, 2014). Lovejoy

and Saxton (2012) find that although nonprofit and for-profit organizations do use social

media primarily for sharing information, most nonprofits engage in dialogic

communication. Those working for nonprofits also indicate that dialogic approaches are

necessary to establish connections with their audiences and communities (Briones et al.,

2011). Yet organizations may not be best served by viewing dialogue as the pinnacle of

social media communication because it obscures the role other elements play in

cultivating relationships – dialogue is only one key piece of the "communication puzzle"

(Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012, p. 349). Lovejoy and Saxton propose that nonprofits in

particular follow an "Information-Community-Action" scheme where each element acts

as a "ladder" in the communication process (p. 350). In examining Tweets from

nonprofits as they responded to the 2014 Ebola outbreak, Tully et al. (2019) build from

the "Information-Community-Action" scheme to show that even if nonprofits do use

information-sharing strategies, they might be contributing to the interaction that is part of community-building or motivating audiences to take action – as organizations share links to information or share positive mentions of the organization, they can also ask for audience feedback or encourage audiences to take action. Overall, advocacy goals are achieved by initiating and maintaining meaningful connections with social media audiences, which involves careful rhetorical considerations about weaving together various communication approaches.

The emotional labor needed to successfully foster relationships and community is also essential to social media advocacy work in nonprofits. Although any career in any workplace will engender emotions, nonprofit organizations have unique ties to emotion. Many working in nonprofit spaces may have an emotional attachment to the issues and people they advocate for, and that attachment may be the reason they have opted to work within this type of organization (Silard, 2018). Outside of academic scholarship, nonprofit employees or leaders view emotional investment as a prerequisite for nonprofit work; writing about the education of future nonprofit leaders, Lott (2021) states that "passion for mission will always be the first and foremost requirement for successful work in our sector." Others warn against "passion exploitation" (Treyz, 2021) or "nonprofit burnout" (Morissette, 2016) where too much emphasis on an organization's mission can lead to extreme exhaustion or severe health issues. Working for a nonprofit may inherently involve emotional labor in that it is similar to many types of service work in which "workers give something of themselves to their clients with whom they likely have no ongoing personal relationship" (Eschenfelder, 2012). Nonprofit workers may also be prone to secondary trauma as a result of their proximity to the individuals or clients who experience trauma firsthand (Silard, 2020). For professionals in charge of a nonprofit's social media presence, managing and inducing audience emotions are central job responsibilities, especially as emotional messages can be powerful tools for

encouraging fundraising (Dean & Wood, 2017). Perhaps unsurprisingly, social media messages using overt emotional language induced more engagement and emotional responses from nonprofit followers, with negative posts generating more engagement than positive emotions (Li et al., 2021).

But in addition to managing emotions of larger public social media audiences, nonprofit professionals may use social media to express thanks to donors, initiate mutually beneficial connections with partners, or to recognize employees' and volunteers' contributions to the organization (Johnston, 2019). Some organizations may use donor management software, like Bloomerang, which can provide engagement metrics and audience data as a way of aggregating audience emotional response (Johnston, 2019). Nonprofit social media work is thus saturated with emotional, digital labor.

While it's safe to say that relationship-building, emotional labor, and additional levels of precarity are most likely part of professionals' social media writing work in mental health advocacy nonprofits, there is concerningly little research that provides details on what digital labor encompasses for these professionals. Mental health advocacy organizations undoubtedly play a critical role in providing visibility and support for those with mental illness. In a document referred to as a "mental health guidance package," The World Health Organization (2003) argues for health organizations to support mental health advocacy groups in order to improve "policy, legislation, and service development." The CDC (2022) connects website visitors to the National Alliance for Suicide Prevention's #BeThere campaign where supporters can share resources and information about suicide prevention across social platforms. And as I discussed previously, social media advocacy, in the name of mental health or Black Lives Matter, can drive forward change that may not happen otherwise.

Despite the apparent adulation of nonprofit advocacy, many scholars do not ask how nonprofit professionals make decisions about social media advocacy. Smith-Frigerio (2020a; 2020b) argues that researchers study the influence of advocacy nonprofits in promoting positive change for mental health issues via social media. Her case studies of grassroots mental health organizations reveal that professionals focused their energies on sharing information about peer support by mentioning services the organization provided or ways audiences could offer or find support. Professional content creators and audience members identified information and resource-sharing as primary goals, yet advocacy messaging strategies were woven into these goals; creators and audiences repeatedly underscored the necessity of sharing stories about the organization, and encouraging others to engage with the organization to support policy change, fundraising, or peer support. These findings amplify the centrality of relationship-building as digital, relational labor in nonprofit advocacy work. Smith-Frigerio offers a much-needed view into the perspectives of social media professionals as they amplify mental health advocacy, but it is one of the very few studies to do so. Related studies of mental health nonprofits have analyzed publicly available data, such as organizational documents or social media content, to ask about social media platforms usefulness for fundraising (Abbott, 2021), while others interviewed nonprofits' social media audiences to pinpoint relationship-building strategies (Johnston, 2019). In the context of rhetoric of health and medicine studies, Sánchez (2020) outlines valuable insight learned from a mental health call center employee to highlight the concept of distributed and mediated ethos where employees must project an "always there" presence, move through their work with dexterity, and provide targeted help. Distributed and mediated ethos could potentially be useful for interpreting the digital labor of social media advocacy writing, however, it is necessary to fill in the unknowns about this work within the context of mental health nonprofits, as this study aims to do.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have mapped out the interconnected areas of inquiry that my study is grounded in. First, I articulate how social media writing is a form of TPC by reviewing definitions of technical communication. Social media writing should be studied further as TPC because both work towards similar goals: ensuring that specialized information is accessible and understandable for all audiences, and enabling audiences to accomplish certain actions. Further, including social media writing within the field's purview supports awareness of how work that is not as visible or is nontraditional can add to the field's knowledge. Second, I explore how TPC is inherently connected to advocacy. Technical communicators have a responsibility to address oppression that might be furthered by TPC texts. In the case of mental health, texts like the *DSM* have helped construct potentially fraught or stigmatized conceptions of mental illness. Technical communicators should study digital contexts and spaces related to mental health and advocacy as users of these spaces can find support and community through them. Lastly, I connect TPC research to theories of digital labor, which focus on how professionals' work activities in digital environments are often invisible, overlooked, or underpaid. Though connected to scholars' discussions of knowledge work in TPC, digital labor focuses attention on how social media writing is ascribed value, either financially or otherwise. This is an exceptionally useful lens for analyzing work within nonprofit and advocacy organizations, as this study does, because of the precarious contexts these workers often find themselves in. Having established this foundation for my study, I describe the details of my methods in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Study Methods

In Chapter 1, I describe how I became aware of my own priorities as a researcher and the types of contexts that I wanted my research to focus on. I realized how important it was for me to center this project on social media writing for mental health advocacy. One of the stories I tell in that chapter is revealing of the methodological exigencies for this study. As I discuss, I attended the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) conference to present on my early research with social media. After presenting, one of the attendees from my session struck up a conversation about how employees *within* his organization had reacted to the social media mishap that had been at the center of my presentation. The wheels started turning. I began thinking that if scholars wanted to know more about why these mishaps occurred, we needed to ask about social media within organizations. It was clear why apologies or tone-deaf social media advertisements were bad and harmful, but what was less clear was *how* that content was made. What were the decisions that led to this content? How did social media writers play a role in these decisions? With those questions in mind, I began developing my dissertation project that would focus on case studies of professionals' social media writing practices as they happened within an organization.

In this chapter, I detail the methodological choices that structure this study. The overall purpose of the study was to address the following research questions about professionals' social media writing work:

How do professionals engage in the technical and professional digital labor of social media writing in the context of mental health advocacy?

- RQ1: What types of digital labor do professionals perform in their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media content that advocates for mental health support?

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- RQ2: How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?

- RQ3: What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?

Together these questions are concerned with identifying the ways professionals engage in and experience their social media writing work as digital labor, and how that labor is connected to their work at a mental health advocacy nonprofit. As I explain in Chapter 2, social media writing work needs to be further explored as a legitimate type of TPC involving specific forms of digital labor, and as an important part of advocacy and mental health communication. These research questions are designed to attend to these areas of focus by asking broadly about types of digital labor present in professionals' social media writing work as well as how their experiences might add to our understanding of social media writing and social media advocacy writing around mental health as TPC.

My project includes two cases, consisting of Jennifer and Lisa's social media writing work at the Minnesota state affiliate of MHAC; and Emily and Samantha's work at the Wisconsin state affiliate of MHAC. I also connected briefly with Brianna, a social media manager at the national MHAC organization, to learn about how MHAC approached social media writing for mental health advocacy. Table X displays all participants in the study, with background information about their formal social media writing responsibilities.

Table 1: Study participants and corresponding background information

Name	Job Title	Job Responsibilities	Time in Current Position	Experience with Social Media (years)	College Degree

Jennifer, MHAC MN	Marketing director	Manage social media; Develop marketing budget and plan; Write e-newsletter; Create ads and marketing collateral; Manage media partners; Update website	7 years	7 years	Yes; B.A. Psychology & Master's of Business Administration
Lisa, MHAC MN	Special events coordinator	Organizing and executing fundraising events	3 years	10 years	No
Emily, MHAC WI	Communications & events director	Plan and schedule social media; Plan events; Design marketing collateral; Create e-newsletter; Plan fundraisers	1.5 years	4 years	Yes; B.A. Advertising, minor in studio art, & certificate in graphic design
Samantha, MHAC WI	Communications & events intern	Assist with current projects (videos, data, newsletters, and social media)	2 months	2 months	In progress; B.A. Psychology; certificate in Health & the Humanities and public policy
Brianna, national MHAC	Social media manager		X	X	X

To introduce this study, I first detail my use of modified grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Breuch, 2019) as an overarching methodological approach that guided study design and data collection and analysis. This framework acknowledges the influence of researchers' theoretical positioning, particularly on data analysis. I then discuss my use of a case study research design, articulating why case study is a fruitful method for examining professionals' social media writing as digital labor in context. Further, I narrate my process of "selecting" cases and

recruiting participants. Seeking out the professionals who would make up the core of this study was time-consuming, frustrating at certain points, and required a lot of perseverance. As I discuss, establishing these cases was a process of negotiation, not only with prospective participants, but also with my own interests and values. I had to reflect on what I wanted this study to address, how to best build mutually beneficial relationships with potential participants, and how to follow leads that arise from ongoing analysis. All of this reflection is crucial for cultivating a qualitative research project, especially when participants are involved. Finally, I describe the procedures I adhered to in collecting data across three main phases, and steps I took in analyzing data across two coding cycles. I also provide the three main themes developing from coding processes.

A Modified Grounded Theory Framework

My study adhered to a modified grounded theory framework, as articulated by scholars including Breuch (2019), Corbin and Strauss (2008), and Charmaz (2006). As part of that framework, I engaged in an extensive review of data that included two cycles of coding and analytic memoing, but with consideration of the theoretical concepts that ground my research. Since the beginning of its development in the 1960s, grounded theory has been continuously discussed for its value as an empirical method in qualitative research. Classic grounded theory, as first conceptualized by Glaser and Strauss in their 1967 book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, evolved in response to social interactionism, or the epistemological assumption that meaning is constructed through social interaction as well as through language and communication (Charmaz, 2006, p. 7). Glaser and Strauss intended that grounded theory would inductively generate "abstract theoretical explanations of social processes" through the following main actions (p.5-6):

- Researchers' involvement in data collection and analysis

- Creating inductive rather than deductive codes from data

- Using constant comparative methods and memo-writing

- Writing a literature review only *after* data analysis

However, Glaser and Strauss diverged in regards to their approaches to grounded theory, with Glaser holding onto a very strict reading of inductive analysis, which holds that *only* data should drive theory, not other theories or scholarship that might have the effect of warping a researcher's analysis. Similarly, writing a literature review before analyzing data was seen as an action that could interfere with how a researcher made sense of empirical data. In sum, a traditional grounded theory approach is rigid in its conceptualization of inductive analysis.

On the other hand, modified grounded theory is more flexible and fluid than its traditional counterpart. It acknowledges that researchers' theoretical orientations or past experience will undoubtedly play a role in the interpretive process. Though Charmaz does not use the term "modified grounded theory," her articulation of the approach deviates from Glaser and Strauss's original approach. She claims that unlike Glaser and Strauss, she does not think that theories are "discovered" in the world external to researchers' analytic processes. She writes: "Rather, we are part of the world we study and the data we collect. We *construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (p. 10). Instead of attempting to control for the influence of previous knowledge or bias that might taint analysis, Charmaz insists that grounded theory should be able to flex with researcher's theoretical background and orientation.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) align with Charmaz, arguing that "techniques and procedures" for analysis should be seen as "tools, not directives" and that researchers should not be overly concerned with adhering to analysis procedures that might remove the "fluid and dynamic nature" of qualitative research from their analyses (p. 12). Breuch

(2019) explicitly articulates her use of a modified grounded theory approach in a study of how social media feedback can inform the development of websites. She contends that traditional grounded theory can be hard for researchers to employ because it is particularly abstract. Even so, Breuch documents how she engaged modified grounded theory through reflective analytic memos and coding cycles. Her explanation is particularly beneficial for this study, as I used both memoing and coding cycles in my analysis process.

A modified grounded theory approach is a suitable fit for my project in that I cannot ignore the influence that theory and scholarship has had on my understanding of social media writing. Though discussed in detail in Chapter 2, these influences are evident in the following three main theoretical perspectives:

- **Theories of digital labor.** As a central part of my research questions, digital labor addresses how to think critically about the type of work professionals are performing in digital environments. Discussed under various terms such as knowledge labor, free labor, immaterial labor, or invisible labor, digital labor is concerned with how waged or unwaged work performed by professionals or audiences across digital platforms is potentially open to exploitation (Terranova, 2000; Scholz, 2013; Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013; Pilsch & Ross, 2019). For example, those providing expertise through crowdworking platforms like Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Irani, 2015) are poorly paid and purposely kept invisible. Content moderators sift through mountains of flagged content to determine what a platform deems appropriate for their sites (Roberts, 2019). Yet this work is also poorly paid and can be emotionally and psychologically taxing for workers. For this study, digital labor assists in attending to how

professionals' individual social media work activities are ascribed value or conducted within potentially exploitative or precarious situations.

- **Tactical technical communication.** Kimball (2006; 2017) forwards the concept of tactical technical communication to address how individuals work with, against, or across organizational constraints to achieve their communication goals. Tactical technical communication broadens how we conceptualize TPC in order to acknowledge "technical communication as a practice extending beyond and between organizations" (Kimball, 2006, p. 69). Drawn from de Certeau (1984) Kimball's discussion of tactics points to the activities individuals engage in to enact their own agency while strategies are attached to institutional goals. While this study does ask about social media writing as it happens within an organization, my focus is on professionals' social media writing work as digital labor. Theories of digital labor highlight how *individuals'* work is recognized, compensated, and valued in general, and the activities, or tactics, they engage in to support or subvert their work. Additionally, social media writing is not often viewed as a form of TPC, and a tactical technical communication lens helps elevate work that is often invisible or seen as unprofessional.

- **Advocacy in TPC & Social Media Writing.** I draw from a number of scholars in the field who argue that the overall purpose of TPC is to advocate for groups that experience oppression. As Jones (2016) explains, "technical communicators are often in positions to explicitly advocate for oppressed groups" (p. 357) in that they can create accessible texts and experiences, and empower individuals to be able to make decisions. I explain in Chapter 2 that I see advocacy through

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Jones's (2016), Turner's (2018), Agboka and Matveeva's (2018), and Petersen's (2018) definitions – advocacy is a set of practices that address oppression, inequity, and injustice with the goal of empowering marginalized groups through institutional strategies and/or individual tactics. Walton et al.'s (2019) 3Ps framework – positionality, privilege, and power – and 4Rs heuristics – recognize, reveal, reject and replace – demonstrate what steps to take in working towards advocacy goals. But beyond being a critical concept, advocacy is often an activity that individuals undertake in social, digital spaces, either for themselves or others. In regards to mental health, message forums (Holladay, 2017), social media groups (McCosker, 2018), and mobile apps (Shafer, 2021) are used to form peer-support networks that can be extremely valuable for those living with mental illness. With my project's focus on social media writing in the context of a mental health advocacy nonprofit, it is critical to understand how advocacy is a key goal that guides professionals' labor.

Case Study Research Design

To understand how professionals perform social media writing as digital labor, my project needed to be designed to examine how this work is done in practice. The day-to-day details of social media communication work are not visible from outside of an organization, and in most cases, those details are not meant to be public. This was a barrier that I faced repeatedly in trying to connect with professionals who would be interested in participating in this study, as I discuss. However, public posts by themselves cannot explain how professionals engage in social media writing work as digital labor, or what factors affect this work. Further, as my study is more exploratory in nature, asking how professionals are engaging in social media advocacy writing as

digital labor and what this work looks like, I wanted to use a research design that would allow me to collect different data types to better understand what factors play a role in professionals' social media writing. To this end, I adhere to a multiple-case study research design (Yin, 2014) centered on professionals within two affiliate organizations of a national mental health advocacy nonprofit.

Yin offers a definition of case studies as a research method, which consists of the following two elements:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident.

2. A case study inquiry copes with the technical, distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (p. 16-17).

Researching professionals' social media writing labor as it happens inside of an organization like MHAC means exploring what this work looks like "within a real-world context." Furthermore, professionals using social media must consider organizational structures, resources, standards, and practices in their work. Additionally, there are many other elements that may impact how social media writing work is a form of digital labor, such as professionals' backgrounds, social media audiences' behavior, the type of content being communicated about, or far-reaching global catastrophes like the COVID-19 pandemic. In short, there is no clear separation between social media work and the larger contexts in which it takes place. A case study research design allowed me to

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explore the connections between professionals' social media work and other contextual factors that had an influence on this work.

In considering the second part of Yin's definition, a case study research design was valuable for my study in that it allowed me to account for "variables of interest" by drawing from different data sources. As I explain in the previous paragraph, professionals' social media writing is not enacted in isolation from the contexts in which it is situated. I do not aim to account for all "variables" that might affect social media writing, but to consider what variables could be prominent in professionals' work. Collecting different types of data was key for understanding professionals' contexts. As the primary, and largest, source of data for this study, interviews with professionals allowed me to determine what daily social media writing work encompassed, how they approached their work, and their attitudes or feelings about this work. I had participants complete logs of their daily social media writing tasks for two work weeks as a form of remote observation, as I was unable to observe their work in person due to the pandemic. This gave me a sense of the types of tasks professionals were doing, but it also was another method of ascertaining how professionals saw their work. Publicly available internal documents or those provided by professionals offered insight into how the organization structured social media writing for mental health advocacy. Each of these types of data represent a perspective of different "variables" or contextual factors at play within professionals' work. A case study method was useful for triangulating these perspectives.

Case Selection & Recruiting Participants

As my research questions ask about professionals' digital labor, the two cases at the center of this project are focused on professionals and their social media writing labor as it happens within two state affiliates – Minnesota and Wisconsin – of the MHAC nonprofit organization. For this project, selecting these two cases, or several participants

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at multiple affiliates, provided a rich amount of detail about how professionals' engaged in social media writing as digital labor. Although a single-case design centered on one professional at one MHAC affiliate would have undoubtedly offered insight into social media work, my study aligns with Yin's discussion of a multiple-case design. Yin explains that multiple-case designs can potentially be viewed as more rigorous, however, their real value is that they are informed by a replication logic (p. 57). Though Yin articulates replication as akin to using "multiple experiments," replication in case study research means selecting cases that help create stronger support for findings (p. 57). Even so, the idea that case study research needs to be replicable and work towards generalizability has been debated by scholars. Flyvberg (2006) interrogates five common "misunderstandings" about case study research, arguing that even one case study can be generalized in useful ways to build scientific knowledge. But more importantly, many types of qualitative research do not view generalizability as a measure of rigor. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue, "the value of qualitative research lies in the particular description and themes developed in the context of a specific site [...] Particularity rather than generalizability is the hallmark of good qualitative research" (p. 202). While the work of MHAC professionals does highlight important themes that can be generalized to social media writing work writ large, my goal in this study was to understand the specific complexities of their social media writing labor as it happens in two cases, consisting of MHAC Minnesota and Wisconsin state affiliates.

Rickly and Cook (2017) write that "research is messy, particularly research involving human subjects" (p. 119). Scholars become skilled at navigating ambiguity and uncertainty through their research. Participants may drop out or be hard to reach. Technology may stop working properly when it's most needed. Analysis may feel overwhelming and confusing. It can become difficult to pinpoint how to approach the "paradox" of research or determining how to navigate the "seeming order and

cleanliness" of what is a disordered process. In working through the process of this study, I encountered the messiness and disorder of research firsthand, specifically in regards to recruiting participants. In an effort to elucidate some of the mess that is often missing in streamlined methods sections, I want to describe the process I navigated in identifying cases and negotiating participation with professionals for this study. Though it affected things far beyond the scope of my individual dissertation project, the COVID-19 pandemic upended many aspects of my research. The most obvious change was that I could no longer observe professionals' social media writing work in person. I had to identify methods that would allow me to observe remotely, ultimately deciding to have professionals log their work tasks. Not being able to observe professionals in person was not too serious of a shift, but it did change how I was able to connect with participants and get to know them. The pandemic began right before I completed my dissertation prospectus, and so I had to approach the process of recruiting participants right in the thick of COVID-19. Recruiting participants proved to be especially difficult for two main reasons. First, the pandemic had unsettled everyone's personal and professional lives. Prospective participants that I reached out to were extremely busy and it was hard for us to find time for a conversation about participating in the study. In many cases, I did not hear back from those that I tried to contact via email or LinkedIn messages. Second, I was only able to communicate with professionals remotely via email, Zoom, or over the phone. This wasn't a huge issue, but being able to invite someone out for coffee or lunch might have been an opportunity to build deeper connections. It also meant that our meetings were now added to the several other emails, Zoom meetings, or phone calls they had to take as a result of most communication taking place remotely. Recruitment required a lot of persistence.

I hesitate to discuss how I secured these two cases as a process of "selection," Yin's (2014) term for identifying appropriate cases. In some situations, the idea that

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researchers "select" a case that best fits with research questions is appropriate, particularly in a situation where the case is an event that is unfolding or has already happened; that event, though it may change, does not have the autonomy to choose to not be part of the study once it's been selected. Yet in situations where cases consist of participants, the act of "selecting" a case becomes more of an act of negotiation with potential participants to determine what is mutually beneficial for participants and the researcher. In short, researchers do not simply "select" professionals to be a part of a study. This was my experience in trying to find professionals who were not only interested, but also had time and were able to participate. Initially, I had been recruiting social media professionals who were working at two different types of organizations – a for-profit and nonprofit – to examine what social media writing looked like in different contexts. At the same time that I was discussing my study with professionals at MHAC Minnesota, I had connected with two individuals at a large Minnesota-based for-profit company who were both interested in participating. After an initial phone call and subsequent email threads, however, one of those individuals had found that the company did not allow its employees to be part of research studies and so I was unable to work with her, despite her interest. The other individual, who led a team of corporate social media writers at this company, had indicated in an initial Zoom call that she would potentially be interested in participating with her team, but did not respond after I followed up multiple times through email and LinkedIn.

I ultimately did not end up working with professionals at a for-profit company, mainly because of the policies these organizations put in place to keep social media communication work private. I decided to shift my dissertation by seeking out social media professionals who worked in organizations that advocated for improved mental healthcare and support. That was a subject that I felt interested in, and that I had firsthand experience with. The first organization that came to mind was MHAC, an

organization my mother had actually sought out for support. As a large grassroots

nonprofit organization advocating for those with mental illness, MHAC had a fairly active

social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. I decided to try my luck in sending out

another email.

My experiences were instructive in figuring out how to best streamline the

recruitment process so that it was clear and accessible for potential participants. The

process of recruitment or "selection" was not as straightforward as simply choosing from

a variety of options of social media writers. In his dissertation study of Ray, a web

developer working with a team of journalists, Lindgren (2017) discloses the difficulties

surrounding case selection, writing that instead of seeing selection as an act of choosing

from a "buffet of options," researchers should view this process as a "reflexive

negotiation" between research goals and interactions with the communities they aim to

study (p. 47). Through his process of negotiation, Lindgren found that researchers

should create "actionable items and clear protocols" when providing potential

participants with details about a study. I drew from Lindgren's discussion to create a

recruitment letter (see Appendix 1) that clearly stated my interest in learning from

professionals' social media writing work within a particular organization. The letter also

included a description of study goals, the time commitment participants could expect to

make if they chose to participate, and measures taken to ensure professionals' privacy

and confidentiality. Much of this information was condensed from the consent form for

the study to make the letter more approachable. I sent this letter to professionals after an

initial conversation so that they could have study details in writing without feeling the

pressure that a consent form might elicit in regards to participation. My hope was that

the letter would be a starting point for professionals to make a decision about

participation, and that it would be a document they could pass on to supervisors or

organizational leadership who might need to approve their involvement.

I was surprised to get a reply to an email I sent to MHAC Minnesota in Fall of 2020. Jennifer, MHAC's marketing director, replied to my message about the study and we scheduled a time to chat. Jennifer had been with MHAC Minnesota for seven years managing the affiliate's social media in addition to other communications tasks. When we spoke over the phone, Jennifer said that she would be interested in participating in the study, recalling how she had received her Master's degree in Business Administration and remembered having to conduct research. Jennifer then kindly forwarded my study information onto Anna, MHAC Minnesota's executive director, and Lisa, the special events coordinator, both of whom used social media for different purposes; Jennifer shared that Anna used social media for updating audiences about events or issues that were taking place as they happened, and Lisa sought out social media when organizing and promoting events. Anna and Lisa responded relatively quickly, and so we set up a time to chat over the phone. Energetic and willing to share her experiences, Lisa was excited tp participate in the study. Even so, Anna was too busy in her role as executive director. Though her participation in the study would have been useful to understand how she approached and valued social media writing as part of MHAC Minnesota's mental health advocacy work, she let me know that she was unable to participate because she did not have time.

Having established one case centered on Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota was exciting, but I felt anxious about identifying a second case. As I started the interview process with Jennifer and Lisa in Spring of 2021, I noticed all of the ways that these professionals were considering how to support MHAC Minnesota's audiences and supporters through their social media writing work. Initial observations of these professionals strengthened my growing interest in digital labor, or the unseen and unnoticed work that professionals were performing. The study was gaining momentum. I decided to pursue my interests by reaching out to the Wisconsin state affiliate of MHAC,

and heard back from Emily soon after. In our initial meeting, Emily was curious about the study, but it was quite some time before she had indicated that she would like to participate. Unlike at MHAC Minnesota, Emily was the only person handling social media communication as well as communications, marketing, and events-related tasks. She was incredibly busy.

After we set a date of July to begin the study with an initial interview, Emily let me know that the intern she had started working with, Samantha, was also curious about participating. I was especially interested in connecting with Samantha as a newcomer to MHAC Wisconsin and social media writing, or as someone who was just beginning to learn about this work within the organization. Soon, I had interviews set up with both Emily and Samantha. Together, they were positive about the potential of social media to connect with MHAC audiences in new, exciting ways, a difference I noted between Jennifer and Lisa, who were concerned that they were not able to do enough with social media, despite the value they saw in their work. Shortly after the interviews concluded, Emily shared that Samantha was going to be doing more public policy and advocacy research that didn't overlap with social media, and so it wouldn't make sense for her to continue participating. Even with that news, I thought it would be helpful to see if I could contact someone at the MHAC national organization who could provide more context about the role of social media in MHAC's advocacy goals. It took some persistence, but Brianna, a social media manager at MHAC, was able to provide some brief answers to interview questions about her work.

As professionals at MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin signed on to participate in the study, I determined that these two cases represented a multiple-case study design focused on two common cases. Yin (2014) states that the intention of common cases is to "capture the circumstances and conditions of an everyday situation [...] because of the lessons it might provide about the social processes related to some

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theoretical interest" (p. 52). My objectives with this study were to determine how professionals performed digital labor as part of their routine social media writing practices for mental health advocacy, and what the field of TPC can learn about social media writing and mental health advocacy from professionals' experiences. As such, I was interested in pinpointing the "circumstances and conditions" of professionals' "everyday" work situations with social media. Digital labor acts as my "theoretical interest" in that understanding routine social media writing tasks and practices is a way of ascertaining the types of digital labor that underlie professionals' work. Choosing to study two similar cases instead of one helps to strengthen and validate findings, or to highlight contextual factors between cases that can explain any differences.

Designing case study research also involves bounding, or setting boundaries around each case, in order to limit the project's focus and scope of data collection. Establishing boundaries for these cases is a way of separating the phenomena being studied from the context it is situated in, according to Yin (p. 34). Additionally, bounding differentiates data that fall under the "phenomenon" being studied and data that are outside of the scope of the case, or fall under "context." Figures 1 and 2 are visual representations of the two cases: MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin. One way that I determined the boundaries of these cases was to distinguish between the phenomenon I was studying and the larger context that phenomenon would be situated in. As my research questions concern digital labor in professionals' social media writing, the phenomena I examined consisted of professionals' social media writing practices including the processes involved in this work and participants' perceptions of their work. My focus on mental health advocacy led me to "selecting" MHAC as an organization. As I couldn't possibly study professionals' social media writing within the entire organization, these phenomena were taking place within two state affiliate organizations nearest to me in location – MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin. This sets boundaries between

what is "in" the case – those who work with social media at these two state affiliates –

and what is "outside" of the case – those working with social media or in other roles in

the larger national MHAC organization. Serving as the larger context for these cases,

MHAC does have an influence on how professionals' performed their work, which is

represented by arrows in Figure 1 and 2. Yin's comments about distinguishing between

phenomenon and context raise an important point for this study – despite the

significance of establishing boundaries around these elements, my study acknowledges

the influence of contextual factors as they impact professionals or the cases.
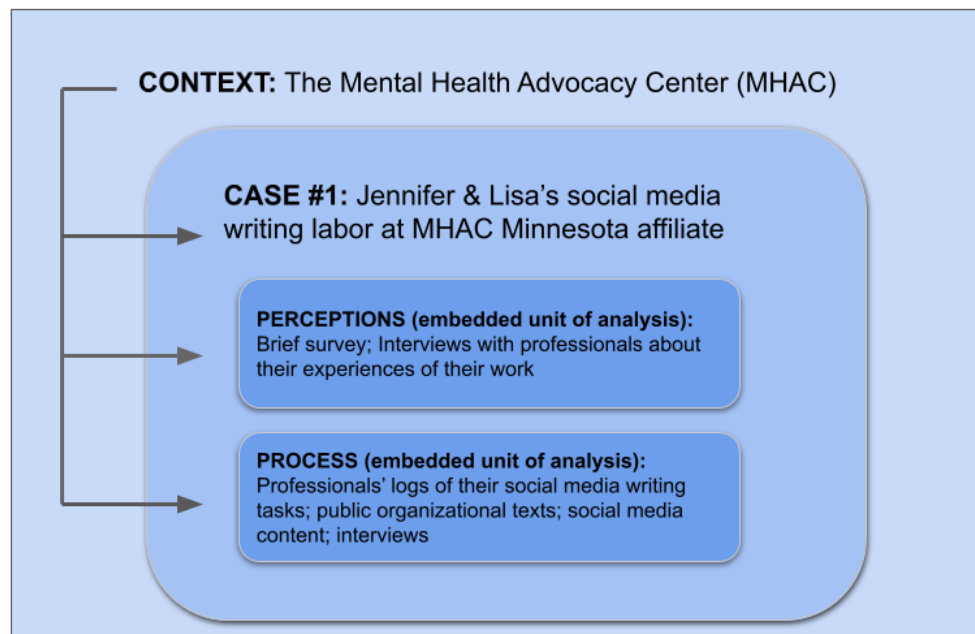
Figure 1. Visualization of MHAC Minnesota Case
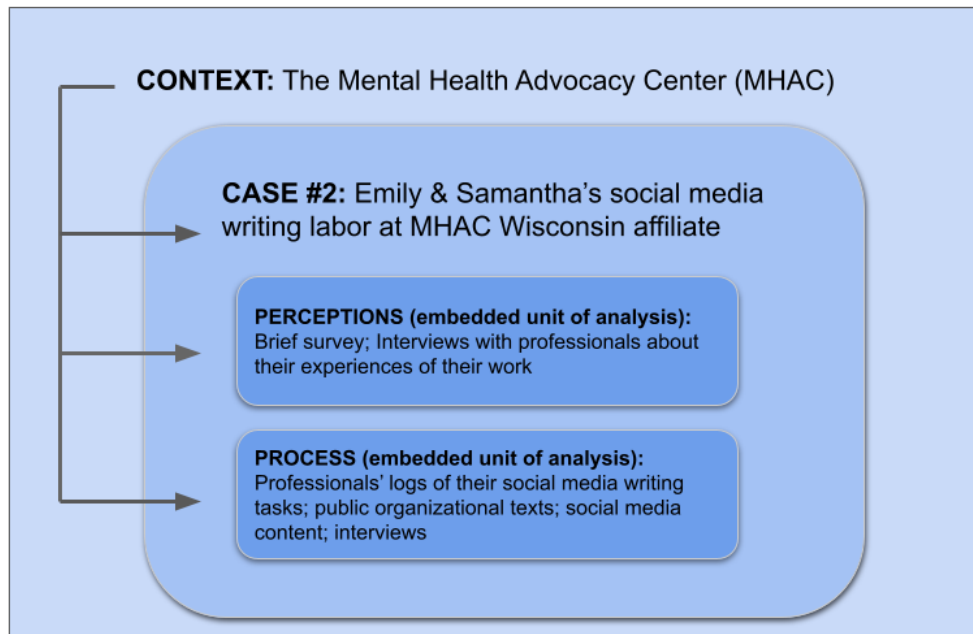
Figure 2. Visualization of MHAC Wisconsin Case

I placed loose temporal boundaries around these cases by establishing a timeframe and three-phase sequence for the study. For each case, data collection and professionals' participation took place over the span of 2-3 months. I began the study with Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota in January 2021, and completed data collection that February. At MHAC Wisconsin, Emily and Samantha began participating in July, 2021, finishing that August. Further, the study was bounded temporally through the sequence I used for data collection. First, professionals would complete a brief survey and an initial interview about their work with me. Second, they would then begin completing logs of their social media writing tasks for two work weeks. Third, we would meet for a final interview to discuss what they had logged and any connections to content they had posted publicly from MHAC accounts. These phases helped keep data collection to a two-month period.

The cases at MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin also consisted of

embedded units of analysis, or subunits of analysis, that further set boundaries around

what is being studied. Here I make a distinction between professionals' perceptions or

attitudes towards their work and the process of the work itself as embedded units of

analysis. While professionals' experiences of their work are interconnected with the

actual tasks and practices involved in this work, examining both aspects offers layered

perspectives of professionals' digital labor. My research questions suggest that both of

these aspects – the perception of social media work and the process of social media

writing work itself – are key for understanding professionals' routine social media writing

tasks and the ways in which they navigate the organizational contexts that affect their

work. These embedded units of analysis are represented in Figures 1 and 2, and are

tied to different data sources. I addressed the "perceptions" unit of analysis through

interviews with professionals about their experiences of everyday social media writing

tasks. Professionals' logs of their social media writing tasks, publicly-available

organizational documents, and public social media posts clarify the "process" unit of

analysis, or the concrete, divisible tasks, resources, and approaches that this work is

composed of. Finally, I placed loose temporal boundaries around the cases by

establishing a timeframe or sequence for the study (I review this sequence in more detail

when discussing the phases of the study). Professionals would complete a brief survey

and an initial interview about their work with me. Afterwards, they would then begin

completing logs of their social media writing tasks for two work weeks. Following the

logs, we would meet for a final interview to discuss what they had logged and any

connections to content they had posted publicly from MHAC accounts.

Study Phases & Data Collection

For this study, it was important for me to use a mixed qualitative methods

approach to data collection. First, as I am interested in understanding social media

professionals' work and experiences of that work, my research adheres to a qualitative worldview that tries to "establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Second, a mixed qualitative methods approach involves using different qualitative data collection methods that allow for triangulation of the data, or analyzing data types that complement one another and provide a more comprehensive interpretation of data (O'Reilly et al., 2020). Collecting a variety of data helped to develop well-rounded responses to my research questions, but it also helped to attend to the two embedded units of analysis within these cases – professionals' perceptions of their social media writing work as well as their work processes. These data types also provide a more complete and holistic view of professional social media work. I organized this study into three main phases of data collection that were aimed at understanding the embedded units of analysis within the two cases:

1. **Phase One:** Professionals' social media writing work in general and their experiences with that work (perceptions and process)
   a. Brief introductory survey
   b. First-round interviews
2. **Phase Two:** Professionals' routine social media work tasks, processes, and organizational resources or guiding texts used in that work (process)
   a. Participant-completed logs
   b. Organizational texts and resources
   c. Social media content
3. **Phase 3:** Professionals' discussions of the decision-making behind their routine social media writing tasks (perceptions and process)
   a. Second-round interviews to discuss logs and social media content

Below I include a visual that represents the main data collection phases of this study (Figure 3). I also list the five main methods I used to collect data, along with details about how I approached each method. Note that protocols for data collection, particularly data gathered from professionals, was shared with my university's IRB (Study #00011652). The IRB concluded that this study did not constitute human research, however, I followed measures to ensure that participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected, such as using pseudonyms to refer to participants and the organization and keeping data secured in a university cloud storage account.

Phase 1 (Perception & Process)	→	Phase 2 (Process)	→	Phase 3 (Perception & Process)
Brief introductory survey Introductory interviews on day-to-day work tasks		Logs of social media writing Public organizational texts Public social media content		Interviews focused on work process and experiences
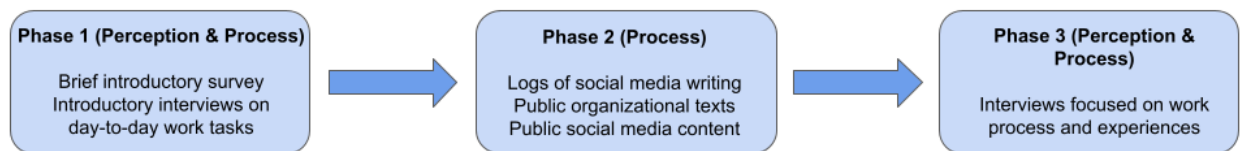
Figure 3. Phases of data collection and data sources

Phase One: Brief Introductory Survey

To gather descriptive information about professionals, I designed a short Qualtrics survey that was intended to take no more than 5-10 minutes to complete. The purpose of this survey was for participants to quickly share background information about themselves and their experience working with social media professionally. The survey

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consisted of 24 questions, many of which were close-ended or multiple choice. Some

questions were not displayed to professionals, depending on their responses.

Professionals were asked to provide information about the following:

- Gender and pronouns (to ensure that I did not misgender them during interviews)

- Current job title and time spent in their current position at MHAC

- Length of time working with social media

- Educational background

- Professional or informal training related to social media

- Primary job responsibilities

- Social media platforms used as part of their work at MHAC

- MHAC's organizational social media policies

- Personal, informal social media policies

- Social media training or support offered by MHAC

- Any resources or materials consulted as part of social media writing work

- Software programs used as part of social media writing work

Asking these questions in a brief survey ahead of interviews allowed us to focus the

interview on key questions about their social media writing work. Professionals' survey

responses also provided me with additional background that I then used to inform my

interview questions.

Phase One & Three: Interviews

Interviews with professionals generated the most data in this study. Overall, I

conducted six synchronous interviews with professionals. All interviews were conducted

remotely over Zoom. I interviewed both Jennifer and Emily twice, as they were able to

participate in all phases of the study. I interviewed Lisa once, but she did not respond to

my emails for completing the next two phases of the study. Samantha also completed

one interview, but this was because her work had shifted so that it did not involve social

media as much as we initially thought it would. I conducted one asynchronous interview with Brianna, a social media manager at the national MHAC organization; she provided short responses to questions I had sent along about MHAC national's approach to social media writing and communication. Added together, I had conducted nearly 8 hours of interviews across all participants, with an average interview length of one hour and 20 minutes.

All interviews were semistructured, with the exception of the asynchronous interview with Brianna. I developed a list of questions ahead of time (refer to Appendix 2), but occasionally we would deviate from this list if relevant points of interest came up. As one example, in her responses to questions, Lisa often deviated from the primary topic to reference social media strategies she noticed other organizations or individuals using. I would direct us back to the set questions, but we would talk through these examples because they were important for me to understand how Lisa approached her social media writing work. I also slightly edited or added questions as the study progressed to reflect important concepts that I saw appearing in our conversations and that I thought would be useful to ask other professionals. This is in keeping with grounded theory, where the research process is iterative and emerges from ongoing analysis (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Professionals were interviewed during the first phase of data collection to get a sense of their day-to-day social media writing tasks and attitudes about their work. During this phase, I asked questions about the following:

- Typical social media work tasks

- Overall purpose of social media writing work at MHAC

- Relationships to others working with social media

- Process of becoming acclimated to social media writing work

- Specific examples of social media writing tasks that were successful, enjoyable, or challenging

- Desire for any training or resources to guide social media work

- Texts, technologies, policies, or resources that influenced social media work

- Relationship to MHAC social media audiences

- View of MHAC's overall approach to social media

Although Lisa and Samantha did not complete the second or third phase interviews, I included our conversations as data for this study because they offered additional perspectives on how social media writing work was performed. Third phase interviews with Jennifer and Emily were much more focused on logs and social media content that they had posted at the time they were completing the logs. These interviews asked about the following:

- How work with social media had been going during the log period

- Days or tasks from the log that stood out as enjoyable or challenging

- Specific instances from logs or social media content that were unique, received a lot of engagement, or reflected patterns

- Perceptions of professionals' processes for working with social media

- Important aspects of social media work not captured in the logs

Phase 2: Logs of Social Media Writing & Work Tasks

I had designed this study to include observations before the pandemic made it unsafe to be in close proximity to others. Having participants complete logs of their social media writing tasks was one way that I could observe professionals' work without needing to be physically near them. Logging activities like this is a method often used in user experience diary studies to understand user behavior over time (Salazar, 2016). In the second phase of the study, participants were asked to use the logs to track their daily social media work tasks for two work weeks. The logs were a valuable tool for learning about daily social media practices, but also for understanding the activities that professionals consider to be key parts of their social media writing. Professionals did not

always work on every weekday; Jennifer worked part-time, and so her log does not include information for every day of the week. Emily worked full-time but did not always work with social media every day of the week. In short, the completed logs looked different for both participants.

In the logs, participants listed out the date, the tasks they completed for each day, and the approximate time spent on each task. They also ranked the priority of each task, with 1 being the most important. The purpose of ranking tasks was to help me understand what activities were considered to be top priority or most important to professionals. Professionals were also given a space to add any notes about their work. I developed the logs so that they were easily usable for professionals. For Jennifer, I created a table in a Word document for her to use (refer to Appendix 3). My goal was to keep the logs simple so that they would take no longer than five to ten minutes to complete each day, as I knew professionals were busy. The logs were created with an in-situ logging approach in mind, where participants log activities as they work or complete them (Salazar, 2016). I ask professionals to log their social media writing tasks as soon as they were able, either after completing them or at the end of their work day. After receiving feedback from Jennifer that the table was tricky for aligning tasks, length of time on each task, and priority, I decided to change this format for Emily, who also completed this phase of the study. I created a Google form that asked for the same information (date, tasks, time, and priority ranking) as Jennifer's table (refer to Appendix 3). This format seemed to work well, but I wondered if using a Google format might have encouraged less detail about tasks as Emily's logs were more concise than what Jennifer had produced.

Phase 2: Organizational Texts & Resources

In addition to observing professionals' social media work through logs, examining organization-specific documents related to social media communication provided a view of how professionals' consulted organizational standards or policies in their work. This was especially helpful for considering my second research question regarding how professionals navigate organizational discourses that might structure social media writing or mental health advocacy. Many of the texts that I collected were publicly available through the national MHAC organization's website. I searched for texts that were focused on social media, communications, or writing for the organization, as well as any relevant examples of materials professionals might use. Those texts included web pages on the following topics:

- Communicating about MHAC's brand and identity

- Editorial guidelines

- Tips for writing for MHAC

- MHAC blog posts about social media and mental health advocacy

In some cases, professionals directed me to these pages. I could not find any texts that specifically spoke about writing for social media on the MHAC website, except for those that included social media content professionals could use around specific events. I asked professionals if they could share any documents or materials relevant to their work with me. They were unable to share many internal documents, but Jennifer did share an MHAC communication style guide with me that contained policies about using appropriate, inclusive language when speaking about mental illness or specific marginalized groups. Brianna's interview responses pointed me to MHAC's Awareness Event Field Guides, or social media toolkits that the national MHAC organization sent out to state affiliates to help them promote specific events throughout the year. I included the guide for 2021 as part of these texts.

Phase 2: Social Media Content

While much of my data for this study are directed at revealing what professionals'

internal social media writing work and labor involves, I wanted to collect social media

content that professionals were publishing as a way of connecting internal practices with

external content. Examining the "end-result" of social media writing was helpful for

determining how professionals might be making decisions about the mental health

advocacy content they share with MHAC audiences. Collecting this content was an

additional form of observation where I could see the public, external dimensions of their

internal approaches. I did not systematically analyze social media content; instead,

these data were largely used to inform the questions asked during second phase

interviews as I could ask about decision-making and development processes behind the

content. I collected and observed Facebook content, and some Twitter content, that

Jennifer and Emily posted from the MHAC affiliate accounts during the two weeks that

they were completing their logs, and for about two weeks after that time. I extended this

data collection outside of the log completion time because our second-round interviews

usually weren't scheduled until weeks later – this gave me more opportunities to see

how professionals were creating content. Much of this content was similar across

platforms – professionals did not make many substantial changes between content

posted to Facebook or Twitter.

Initially, I collected data for Twitter content posted by Jennifer during her log

period using TAGS, or the Twitter Archiving Google Spreadsheet created by Martin

Hawksey. This tool was free and allowed me to capture tweets as they were posted in

real-time. To gather Facebook posts, I used CrowdTangle, a tool developed by Meta to

allow organizations to track publicly available content on the platform. I was able to

access this via a university account. However, after reviewing the tweets and Facebook

content I collected for Jennifer, I noticed that most, if not all, of this content was similar

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across platforms. This was also the case for content that Emily posted and shared. Moreover, in our conversations, professionals spoke continuously about Facebook as a useful tool for communication as well as other activities like fundraising, a finding that I discuss in Chapter 4. Based on the similarities between Facebook and Twitter content, and the fact that professionals were using Facebook far more than Twitter, I decided to focus only on Facebook content in my analysis. Overall, I collected 144 Facebook posts published by MHAC Minnesota, and 29 Facebook posts published by MHAC Wisconsin.

Data Analysis

To analyze the different data types in this study, I used a qualitative approach to analysis that relied heavily on qualitative coding and analytic memoing. Grounded theory and modified grounded theory were especially instructive in guiding my analysis processes. Though I allowed the data to lead me to important themes, these themes were developed with an eye towards the theoretical orientations of interest to this study, which included social justice frameworks (Walton et al.), the concept of tactical technical communication (Kimball, 2006; 2017), and theories of digital labor (Fuchs & Sevignani, 2013; Pilsch & Ross, 2019; Duffy, 2017). I drew from Saldaña (2021), Breuch (2019), and Charmaz (2006) to construct my analysis approach, which consisted of two cycles of coding, which I explain in more detail in the next sections. The data that I coded in these cycles included transcripts of all interviews with professionals, logs, and all organizational texts or resources. I did not code survey data collected from participants as that data helped me gather descriptive background information about participants and their experiences with social media writing. That data also was used to develop first-round interview questions in the first phase of data collection. Additionally, though I did not code social media data from Facebook, I informally analyzed the data to determine what kind of content professionals were posting, and what content was receiving the

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most interaction from audiences. The following sections detail my process of data analysis.

First Cycle Coding

With the first cycle of coding, I followed Saldaña (2021) and Charmaz's (2006) articulation of initial or "open" coding, which "breaks down qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examines them, and compares them for similarities or differences" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 148). I used initial coding as a beginning point for analysis to determine what actions, concepts, or ideas were most prominent in the data. Charmaz's (2006) descriptions of initial coding were helpful as I started my process; she writes that initial coding in grounded theory encourages researchers to "remain open to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities we can discern in the data" (p. 47). As initial coding can also employ other coding methods, I used both in vivo and process coding. In vivo coding prioritizes participants' voices by applying language used by participants as code names or titles. This approach centered professionals' descriptions of and attitude about their work. Process coding, also called "action coding," are ways of labeling actions or activities that appear in the data (Saldaña, 2019). This method is valuable for understanding the "routines and rituals of human life," which for this study meant focusing on routine social media writing tasks and activities professionals were engaging in (p. 144). I developed several process codes when analyzing interview transcripts, however, process coding was particularly useful for analyzing Jennifer and Emily's logs because it identified the common key tasks that both were performing. Table 2 shows examples of in vivo and process codes developed through initial coding.

Table 2. A sample of in vivo and process codes from first cycle coding

In Vivo Codes	Process Codes
"Wearing Different Hats"	Curating Content

"Taught Myself"	Using Social Media to Support Mental Health & DEI
"Social Media Is Not Always the Right Avenue"	Generating Organic Social Media Content
"Safe and Generic Doesn't Work"	Coordinating with Sponsors

With first cycle initial coding, my goal was to closely review all textual data –interviews,
logs, and organizational texts–to develop a clearer picture of any important elements in
professionals' social media writing work. I coded data by focusing on data from
professionals at MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin separately, beginning with
Jennifer and Lisa, moving to Emily and Samantha, and then finishing with Brianna's
short asynchronous interview. Organizational texts were coded last as I wanted to
mostly focus on professionals' tasks and experiences. As I began coding interview and
log data from Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota, I iteratively compared and
contrasted codes with one another to determine how professionals' approaches,
activities, and attitudes were aligned. I took the same approach to coding data from
Emily and Samantha at MHAC Wisconsin. Altogether, this first cycle produced over X
codes.

Analytic Memoing

Memoing was essential to my analysis process for this study. I memoed at every
stage of the dissertation as a low-stakes method for documenting my thoughts and
working through the difficulties and messiness of analysis. As Charmaz (2006) explains,
analytic memoing can "catch your thoughts, capture the comparisons and connections
you make, and crystallize questions and directions for you to pursue" (p. 72). I adhered
to advice that Saldaña (2021) offers regarding memoing: "whenever anything related to
and significant about the coding or analysis of data comes to mind, stop what you are
doing and write a memo about it immediately" (p. 59). I memoed after each interview I

conducted to reflect on initial ideas that seemed significant and to streamline the

interview process, pinpointing questions that needed to be improved or identifying tips to

keep in mind when asking questions. As I worked through coding, memoing assisted in

bridging together these two cycles. I wrote memos after coding each interview, each log,

and organizational texts to identify any key ideas or themes. I reflected on confusing

codes or ideas, the meaning behind specific examples, potential connections to other

research, and my own feelings about the coding process. In many memos, I grappled

with the influence of my bias in how I was interpreting the data. I also used memos to

articulate findings that were unique to a specific professional, and to describe how I saw

those findings being linked or aligned with what I was learning about other professionals

in the study. Appendix 4 contains a sample analytic memo written after coding my first

interview with Emily at MHAC Wisconsin. In this memo, I discuss defining characteristics

of Emily's interview, and then compare that to themes I saw developing in my analysis of

Jennifer and Lisa's data.

Second Cycle Coding

Following first cycle coding, I began the second cycle of coding, which used a

mix of focused and axial coding to condense codes into coherent groups. According to

Saldaña (2021), focused coding establishes the most "frequent or significant" codes into

categories (p. 303). The goal of axial coding is similar, but its purpose is to link

"categories with subcategories" while asking how the two are connected (Charmaz,

2006, p. 61). To transition into the second cycle of coding, I experimented with a few

strategies to make sense of the relationships among the data. One of those strategies

was to map out the codes so that they could be viewed visually and holistically. I

attempted to do so using Google Jamboard, but the high number of codes meant that

they would not all fit in one space easily. Miro, a visual collaborative platform that allows

users to create mind-maps and other visuals, proved to be far more effective for

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displaying and interacting with codes. I labeled sticky notes with the first-cycle codes from each interview and placed them near their corresponding participant and interview number. Figures 4 and 5 show how I mapped codes developed from analysis of Emily's interviews.

Figure 4. Map of initial codes from first interview with Emily

Figure 5. Map of initial codes from second interview with Emily

Mapping out codes in this way spurred along analysis as I was able to piece together relationships among them so that potential themes became literally more visible and less abstract. Mapping or diagramming codes is useful for transitioning into second cycle coding as it encourages researchers to consider how to display "codes, categories, variables, phenomena, processes, and concepts" in ways that make sense (Saldaña, 2021, p. 290). Despite the value of the maps, I felt I needed to use a more traditional method of categorizing data, a strategy that Saldaña calls "code-mapping." Although

code-mapping sounds as if it would be more like the type of mapping I completed in Miro, this approach involves listing out all initial codes and then organizing them into categories that capture phenomena taking place in the data. Once I felt more confident with the relationships among the codes after creating a visual display in Miro, I began code-mapping by collapsing and condensing codes. Through the recursive process of code-mapping, I was able to see the influence of precarity on all aspects of professionals' social media writing at MHAC. Early on, I had identified "precarity" as a category by itself, but through memoing, I realized that precarity was present at every level of professional's work – it informed the ways they conceptualized their contributions to mental health advocacy, how they were able seek out stable support for their work, and how they accounted for emotional, personal connections, or disconnections as part of their work. These levels of precarity and their manifestations in professionals' work at MHAC affiliates are at the core of the findings of this dissertation. Overall, code-mapping informed by focused and axial coding was a method for chipping away at initial codes to reveal larger themes and categories, which are included in Table 3.

Table 3. List of themes & main coding categories developed in second coding cycle

Layered Precarities of Social Media Writing Labor at MHAC Minnesota & Wisconsin

Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy
 	
Multidimensional Advocacy
    ● Social media work consists of several tasks
    ● Hard to make social media writing tasks divisible
 	
Balancing Advocacy Dimensions
    ● Balancing education; advocacy; support
    ● Balancing asking for donations & funding
    ● Balancing audience concerns
        ○ Overlapping audiences

- Coordinating other communications work

Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies

Responding to Organizational Constraints
- MHAC structure dictates social media practices
- Hard to standardize policies and training
- Social media is constantly evolving
- Lack of internal resources

Organizational Resources & Facebook
- Partnering with organizations for social media strategies
- Organizations as resources for social media Strategy
- Facebook as a nonprofit tool
- Information & language resources
- Adapting advertising & marketing resources

Responding to the Pandemic
- Pandemic affected social media work
- Expanding reach to audiences
- Creating content to develop social media campaigns

Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor

Advocacy as Care & Community
- Considering audience emotions & feelings
- Community

Language as Care
- Inclusive mental health language as specialized knowledge
- Using language on social media to normalize mental health
- Decoding language as care

The Emotional Labor of Personal Connection
- Fostering personal connections
- Burnout
- Disconnection

In the next chapter, I detail how I define the three main themes – Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy; Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies; and Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor – and corresponding categories appeared throughout professionals work at MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin. I review specific instances where each of these themes are at work from across my data. These examples from Jennifer, Lisa, Emily, Samantha, and Brianna's work illustrate how layers of precarity surrounding nonprofit or advocacy work, social media writing, and mental health communication affect many aspects of professionals' social media writing labor.

Chapter 4: Layered Precarities

Though the Mental Health Advocacy Center (MHAC) is comprised of hundreds of state and local affiliates, the two cases and five professionals at the center of this study offer rich details about the digital labor involved in social media writing for mental health advocacy. Professionals' work tasks and processes reveal the complexity of social media writing and mental health advocacy work, even though they themselves did not always explicitly characterize it in this way. In order to create advocacy content that was useful, relevant, and engaging for their social media audiences, there were several tasks they had to complete. Tasks that might seem simple from the outset involved careful thought. Maintaining a social media presence requires the dexterity to move through an extensive variety of tasks and rhetorical considerations, activities that are not always visible to the public.

The findings I review here populate the field's rather sparse map of the digital labor of social media writing as well as the digital labor of mental health advocacy. While TPC scholars have identified some ways professionals create content for social media (Pigg, 2014; Ledbetter, 2018; Lauer & Brumberger, 2019) or social media advocacy (Warren-Riley, 2018), my research strengthens and expands this work in two ways: by looking specifically at social media writing and communication design as digital labor, and by examining this labor within the context of mental health communication and advocacy.

In analyzing professionals' work processes and how they spoke about them, I identified three themes – Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy; Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies; and Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor. However, I discovered that these three themes all led back to layers of precarity that were present across each MHAC affiliate. Precarity is a key part of conversations about digital labor – digital laborers are often working in environments where they are

susceptible to harm and exploitation, or the work they perform may be considered non-specialized, unnecessary, or not "real" work. Though professionals were not being directly harmed in the ways that many other digital laborers are, I argue that precarity was very much present in their social media writing work at MHAC. Precarity appeared in different interconnected layers that professionals had to manage, layers that reflect the themes I detail in this chapter, as well as contextual layers: the precarity of nonprofit or advocacy work, the precarity of social media writing work, and the precarity of writing and communicating about mental illness. Figure 6 shows these overlapping contextual layers, and how the themes from data analysis fit within them:
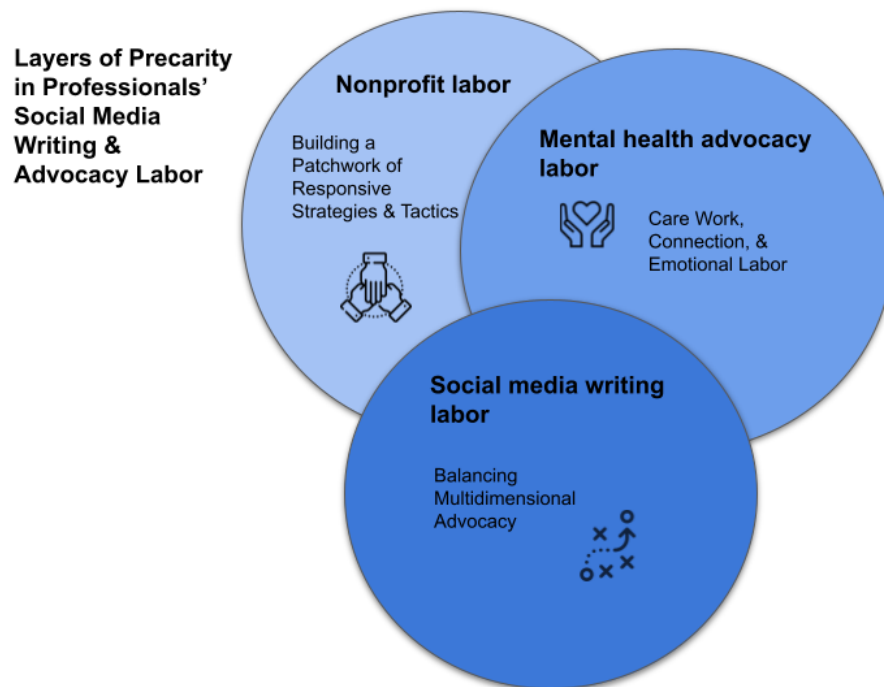
Figure 6. Visualization of layered precarity across contexts and as demonstrated through three main themes

1. As funding and resources were always shifting in nonprofit labor, professionals had to supplement somewhat sparse organizational support for their work by identifying tactics or useful tools, networks, or examples that they could draw from;

2. Nonprofit work at MHAC was centered specifically on mental health advocacy, and as such, professionals had to attend to their audiences' experiences with mental illness, and their own experiences as social media writers, by expressing care, emotion, and awareness of personal connection.

3. While professionals' social media writing labor does reflect all three themes discussed above, these platforms mask the visibility of social media practices, as we cannot see professionals' work looking in from the outside. It is important to emphasize the many facets and elements that are part of social media writing labor in an advocacy environment and need to be balanced, such as sharing information, building community, or promoting events.

These layers also had varying levels of visibility to professionals who did not always explicitly see their work as precarious. Professionals were not overworked or directly exploited by MHAC, however, by virtue of being a nonprofit organization, MHAC faces certain constraints surrounding funding and the availability of resources that affect how professionals perform their work. Moreover, in communicating about mental health on social media, professionals had to consider how language, images, and other communication efforts are respectful towards audiences' lived experiences. Mental health is inherently about feelings and emotions, and as such, social media communication needs to show care for audiences' emotions. In short, professionals are performing precarious work within an environment and for a cause that are decidedly precarious.

Overview of Main Themes

Participants provided a wealth of rich, complex discussions of their work. However, across their accounts of their work, I was able to identify three larger themes that reappeared throughout coding cycles:

- The Labor of Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy

- Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies

- Care Work, Connection, and Emotional Labor

Each of these themes help elucidate my research questions about the nature of professionals' digital labor in routine social media and advocacy writing work, how they navigate organizational approaches to their work, and what we might learn to inform how the field conceptualizes social media writing work, mental health advocacy, and digital labor as critical sites of TPC practice and study. Further, in considering these themes and their connections to my research questions, I discovered that precarity was a consistent and defining characteristic of professionals' digital labor. With the results of my analysis, I do not seek to offer exhaustive answers to these questions, but instead to fill in spaces where the field's knowledge about professionals' social media writing and mental health advocacy work is incomplete.

Additionally, it is important to reiterate that I studied some professionals' social media work during earlier parts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which influenced how they worked and what work they were or were not able to do. I connected with Jennifer and Lisa at MHAC Minnesota in January and February of 2021 when COVID-19 restrictions were much more prohibitive. Restrictions loosened during July and August of 2021 as Emily and Samantha shared their work with me, but those restrictions were still tighter than they are at the time I write this. While my goal was never to provide a representative view of all social media writing work and labor at advocacy nonprofits, I want to emphasize that this study is a snapshot of this labor in context, where the influence of the pandemic and other contextual factors – resources, training, personal backgrounds and connections, among others – was visible in professionals' practices.

Overall, the three themes I developed highlight how the professionals who participated in this study are exactly that – professionals. Though not always acknowledged as such by themselves or others, the work they do is highly complex and requires a high level of

rhetorical skill and dexterity. However, they are also professionals working within layers of precarity: the precarity of nonprofit work, the precarity of social media writing, and the precarity of mental health advocacy. Here I briefly define the three themes before I explain in depth how they appeared in professionals' work at their MHAC affiliate organizations.

The Labor of Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy

This theme most directly addresses my research question about the types of routine digital labor professionals perform in their decision-making and writing processes as they create mental health advocacy content for SM. This theme captures how professionals had to carefully balance the many routine social media work tasks needed to engage in mental health advocacy. Social media writing involved curating and/or creating content; conducting different types of research; planning, moderating, and advertising events; and encouraging individuals to donate and sponsor MHAC, among other tasks. In this way, social media advocacy writing was multidimensional and multi-pronged, encompassing a multitude of complex, strategic approaches and organizational goals. Balancing these approaches and goals, and knowing when social media was the appropriate channel for connection, was a key element of professionals' digital labor.

Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies

Alongside the importance of balancing the complex dimensions of social media writing for advocacy, professionals crafted approaches to social media work by drawing from MHAC resources, external resources, and their own prior experiences in a somewhat adhoc and makeshift way. This theme most directly responds to my research question on the ways professionals navigate organizational discourses about social media writing work and mental health – professionals' navigated organizational discourses by adhering to MHAC's overarching mission or strategy, but they filled in any gaps by tactically seeking out additional resources. This code recalls Kimball's (2006;

2017) articulation of tactics as a way to focus on how individuals perform technical communication outside of, within, or across their organizational environments. Importantly, in piecing together strategies and tactics, professionals looked to create approaches that were responsive, meaning they could easily adapt to diverse audiences, evolving social media platforms, and kairotic moments, which could include popular mental health conversations to the massive shifts precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Building up responsive approaches was a patchwork process where professionals tactically pulled from external sources and organizational strategies to support their work.

Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor

Although the professionals that participated in this study were not healthcare workers or mental health professionals, the labor they engaged in constituted a form of care work. Professionals saw care as a fundamental part of MHAC's mission and advocacy goals. They were cognizant of their audiences' emotions and feelings as they worked to foster a sense of community through their social media writing. This theme was more difficult to surface, not because it was not salient in the data, but because professionals were not always explicitly cognizant of the ways their social media writing tasks were acts of care and community-building. At times, professionals openly categorized their work through the lens of care and connection, while at other points, they distanced themselves from it. Yet even as they distanced themselves from connection offered by social media, they seemed to be exercising care for their own well-being, and for their supporters' well-being. This theme offers responses to my research questions about professionals' routine social media writing and advocacy work and their use of organizational discourses in their work, but it does offer useful insight to my third question about how professionals' experiences at MHAC can inform how we think about social media messaging on mental health.

In the following sections, I offer these detailed explanations of how these themes appear in professionals' social media work, which represent the two MHAC affiliates where study participants worked: MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin. Social media advocacy writing and the approaches and decision-making behind it were not completely uniform at each affiliate. Differences in the numbers of professionals dedicated to social media writing, their schedules, and overall experience with social media led to variations in how this work was performed. First, I provide some context about the professionals who participated in this study. I then discuss specific scenarios and examples to show how each of the three themes appeared in the context of Jennifer and Lisa's experiences as social media professionals.

Overview: Professionals and Their Social Media Writing Labor

At both MHAC affiliates, social media advocacy writing was integral to the organization's purpose to support those with mental illness and disabilities – it was used to share resources and information, to involve audiences in the process of advocacy, and to raise money to support advocacy goals. At MHAC Minnesota, Jennifer and Lisa both strongly indicated the significance of their work with social media. Even so, what was unique in the case of MHAC Minnesota was how the social media workload was spread across three people: Jennifer and Lisa, as well as Anna, the Executive Director of MHAC Minnesota. Jennifer did the most consistent work with social media while Lisa and Anna used social media for more focused tasks. This may not be unique among all affiliates of MHAC or in nonprofit work, but this was different from how social media writing was delegated in MHAC Wisconsin. Figure 7 visualizes how Jennifer, Lisa, and Anna engaged in social media writing work, and how their work overlaps in places.

Social Media at MHAC Minnesota

Anna: Executive Director

Jennifer: Marketing Director

Lisa: Special Events Coordinator

Posting legislative updates & information

Soliciting audience/supporter involvement for legislative concerns

Curating relevant mental health content

Editing, posting, scheduling content

Maintaining connections with audiences/supporters & partner organizations

Creating & promoting events

Connecting with sponsors & donors

Posting content related to events; showing event success

Figure 7. Anna, Jennifer, and Lisa's social media work tasks at MHAC Minnesota

As I mention in Chapter 3, MHAC Minnesota was the first affiliate that I connected with for my study in Fall of 2020, during the first year of the pandemic. Jennifer, who is the marketing director for the affiliate and responsible for social media strategy, was kind enough to chat with me for an initial conversation, and then later in January of 2021 for interviews and filling out logs of her work. Jennifer was my first window into MHAC Minnesota, but also MHAC as a national organization, so I learned a lot about how the affiliate operates and how social media writing is part of mental health advocacy. In her seven years with MHAC Minnesota, Jennifer worked with social media in addition to other marketing or communications tasks, such as creating a marketing plan and budget, managing website updates, sending out an e-newsletter to MHAC members, and creating marketing materials for the affiliate. She mentioned being able to draw from general marketing principles learned during her Master's of Business Administration degree to guide some of her work with social media, though she did not explicitly discuss this much during our conversations. However, her approach to working with social media

was very business-like; she spoke very directly and straightforwardly about her main

social media writing tasks: reviewing relevant content from a variety of sources; editing

or synthesizing content; planning and scheduling times for content to be published; and

maintaining connections with audiences by occasionally engaging with them. She

indicated that social media writing was one dimension of her job that had to be managed

with other responsibilities. Those responsibilities could be difficult to navigate as Jennifer

worked with MHAC Minnesota part time, or about 10 hours per week. Part time work at

MHAC affiliates seemed to be common; Emily from MHAC Wisconsin noted that many

people in nonprofits like MHAC work part time. Jennifer estimated that she spent about

an hour or an hour and a half per week on her work with social media, which was

reflected in the logs that she completed. She was not alone in this – each participant in

the study worked with social media in conjunction with, or as part of, other

communications or writing tasks.

  With extensive experience in the nonprofit world, Anna, the executive director of

MHAC Minnesota, also used the organization's accounts to post content that Jennifer

described as "advocacy work," which included updates on legislation or requests for

people to submit stories for legislative hearings. I reached out to Anna to see if she was

interested in participating in the study, but she was unable to because of her intense

workload. How much professionals were working with social media, or overall, is an

aspect of this study that caught my attention ever since I began my research with MHAC

(and even before), and shows up in the three overarching themes in various ways.

Although Anna was unable to participate, I was able to connect with Lisa, who had been

at MHAC for three years as a special events coordinator. Lisa's primary work

responsibilities consisted of organizing and holding fundraising events either in person

or, during the pandemic, in virtual spaces. Whether fundraising was sourced through

sponsorship from larger organizations or individual donations on Facebook, Lisa used

social media to build relationships with MHAC audiences. Lisa indicated that she had ten years of experience working professionally with social media, or the most experience out of all of the professionals that participated in the study. This experience was clearly visible from all of her knowledge of nonprofit social media writing and her awareness of strategies other organizations were using. Lisa was excited to share opinions and ideas related to social media strategy in an initial interview, but she was difficult to reach after this point; she did not complete a log of her social media writing tasks. Even without the log, my conversation with her was extremely valuable for adding another perspective onto what I had already learned from Jennifer.

Things looked different at MHAC Wisconsin, where social media played just as significant of a role in contributing to the affiliate's goals, but fewer individuals were performing this work (refer to Figure 8). I connected with Emily, MHAC Wisconsin's communications and events director, who worked with social media alongside other job responsibilities, such as planning events, creating marketing materials, facilitating fundraising, and organizing a monthly newsletter. Emily's responsibilities were, in effect, a combination of Jennifer and Lisa's roles at MHAC Minnesota; Emily did many of the same marketing-focused tasks as Jennifer in addition to also covering event planning and fundraising, which fell under Lisa's purview. In comparison to Jennifer and Lisa, Emily had less direct experience with social media; she had worked professionally with social media for four years and with MHAC Minnesota for one and a half years at the time we spoke. By the time Emily and I were able to begin first-phase interviews in July of 2021, ideas about professional social media advocacy and writing work were already swimming through my mind from my conversations with Jennifer and Lisa. Emily's social media writing tasks were not all that different from Jennifer and Lisa in that she was curating and scheduling content to be posted, organizing and promoting events, and engaging with supporters, donors, and sponsors. Where Emily's work diverged from

Jennifer and Lisa was with her focus on creating organic content, or content she produced herself. Creating content was not something she did all the time, but it was something that she mentioned in our conversations. In some situations, that organic content created a sort of snowball effect, leading to marketing or social media campaigns, additional content creation, or opportunities to connect with others who were popular on social media. Emily hoped that content creation, and her other efforts with social media, would expand MHAC's audiences in Wisconsin.

Social Media at MHAC Wisconsin

Emily: Communication & Events Director

Editing, posting, & scheduling content

Creating organic content

Maintaining connections with audiences/ supporters and partner organizations

Creating & promoting events

Samantha: Intern

Researching public policy & advocacy issues

Providing support for events & grant projects

Figure 8. Emily and Samantha's social media work tasks at MHAC Wisconsin

Most of Emily's work with social media had been done on her own, but as I worked with her to schedule our interviews, she let me know that she would be working with an intern for the summer and into the fall. An undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin majoring in psychology and a humanities-focused health policy certificate titled "Health and the Humanities," Samantha expressed that she was hoping to enter a career path where she would be able to work with mental health in some capacity. She

was excited about the internship with MHAC Wisconsin because it was a way for her to fulfill her degree requirements while also focusing on mental health issues she was invested in. Samantha had not worked with social media previously, but she had worked as the Communications Chair for her campus psychology club where she maintained a website and answered emails. At MHAC Wisconsin, Samantha was helping with social media by completing tasks that helped support or assist with social media, such as creating visuals using Canva, finding and reviewing content related to mental health, helping to organize virtual events, and conducting research for an upcoming campaign. In our first interview, it was clear Samantha was enthusiastic about working for MHAC Wisconsin, but in trying to connect with her regarding continued participation in the study, Emily let me know that Samantha's work had shifted to other areas that were less connected to social media writing. Still, her perspective was beneficial for understanding how someone newer to the organization, and in a more contingent position (as an intern), was acclimated into social media work.

Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy

Conducting social media writing and communication work to help MHAC Minnesota, and MHAC in general, achieve its goals means conducting work that is multifaceted. As stated throughout my dissertation, MHAC's mission to ensure that those with and affected by mental illness have access to community support is one sentence long, but that one sentence contains four activities meant to address that mission – advocacy, education, support, and public awareness. The importance of all of these interconnected activities means that social media work has to, by definition, be multifaceted; for example, you cannot support all of these tasks by only posting information and never engaging directly with audiences, or vice versa. These different activities had to work in tandem. However, professionals had to balance these different dimensions of advocacy as well as different audiences and communications tasks.

Multidimensional Advocacy

At both affiliates, professionals acknowledged how different activities were the driving force behind their social media work. However, it is important to note that in the context of MHAC, advocacy appears to be understood as a specific activity more often than it is understood as an overarching goal or purpose. As one example, Jennifer described how Anna, MHAC Minnesota's executive director, was more concerned with "the advocacy piece" of MHAC's social media writing, which she later clarified as being "real time" legislative work. This work included Anna doing things like tweeting about hearings related to mental health at the Capital in Saint Paul or requesting participation from those in the community at legislative discussions. Jennifer mentioned that this "advocacy piece" of social media was not part of her job responsibilities with social media. Emily also articulated advocacy as a somewhat separate or specific concern that was mainly covered by the affiliate Advocacy Director.

Interestingly, this conception of advocacy is also mirrored in scholarship on nonprofit advocacy. Guo and Saxton (2020) explain that many scholars disagree about the definition of nonprofit advocacy, with many definitions privileging activities that directly influence government policy, such as lobbying or directly connecting with legislators. Yet advocacy, they write, is composed of many activities that aren't covered by this limited definition, such as more indirect activities like public education, public events, coalition building, conducting research, and media advocacy, of which social media advocacy would be a part. In fact, Guo and Saxton note that due to more narrow definitions of advocacy, some nonprofit leaders may not see the work that they do as contributing to advocacy goals. To some degree, this was the case at both affiliates, where Jennifer and Lisa both distanced themselves from Anna's connection with real-time, legislative information shared on social media, and Emily noted advocacy was

within the realm of a specific co-worker who would share information with her related to the Wisconsin legislature.

Similar to Guo and Saxton and other scholars studying nonprofit advocacy, TPC scholars envision advocacy as a broader, multidimensional concept. Advocacy includes any "interventions, individual and institutional" that seek to empower or make life better for those who are marginalized (Turner, 2018, p. 48). Warren-Riley (2018) contends that all texts are imbued with advocacy, especially more "mundane" texts like messages shared on social media (p. 286). Conceptually, advocacy asks individuals to consider how messages are constructed and who is being served, or not served by these messages. As professionals' work shows, these messages are expressed in several ways, through creating or curating content, through organizing and promoting events, and through interactions with audiences. Further, Rude (2009) argues that the field's central research question asks: "How do texts (print, digital, multimedia, visual, verbal) and related communication practices mediate knowledge, values, and action in a variety of social and professional contexts?" (p. 176). In essence, Rude's question is asking how messages, and the practices used to create them, promote certain forms of advocacy or courses of action. These forms of advocacy can show up in our actions, but also in the knowledge and values that underlie those actions; what information and resources we feel are important about an issue reflects how we take action. Additionally, the actions taken in advocating for a cause are dynamic and multifaceted. Walton, Moore, and Jones's (2019) 4Rs heuristic of recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing injustices illustrates how advocacy is achieved by different means. Recognizing how individuals face oppression is one part, though not the only part, of helping move towards replacing those oppressive structures.

If advocacy is conceptualized as a broader set of multidimensional "interventions," as nonprofit advocacy and TPC scholars suggest, we can better

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recognize how professionals' work upholds MHAC's mission and vision. In looking

explicitly at social media writing, understanding advocacy broadly rather than narrowly is

valuable because it reveals how professionals' social media labor is key to achieving

mental health advocacy. It also encourages us to identify how different approaches and

different tasks can strengthen advocacy goals. It makes sense that participants would

conceptualize advocacy as a specific legislative-focused activity more than a larger goal

– interacting with legislators and creating spaces for communities to tell their stories is,

after all, an important part of improving mental health support. However, seeing

professionals' social media work as multidimensional makes visible the complexity,

nuance, and significance of their digital labor.

Despite the boundaries they drew around their work activities, it was clear that

professionals were contributing to the overarching advocacy goals of MHAC's mission

by engaging those four activities in their social media work – advocacy (legislative-

centered activities), education, support, and public awareness – in various ways. As

Marketing Director, Jennifer had the most diverse job responsibilities related to social

media. From reviewing articles and other content to be shared online to conducting

analyses of post performance and social media audiences, Jennifer had her hands in a

wide range of social media activities. In her logs of her work with social media for two

weeks, Jennifer's most consistent task included curating mental health content for daily

posts on Facebook and Twitter (refer to Table 4). For every workday Jennifer logged,

her process consisted of the following tasks:

1. Checking Google alerts and other sources for relevant content

2. Reviewing the content for relevancy and appropriateness

3. Using Hootsuite to schedule that content to be posted, which involved choosing a

   phrase or quote from the content and choosing when it should be posted

4. Checking and reviewing email newsletters from trusted organizations and
    publications connected to mental health

5. Using Hootsuite to post and schedule content from these organizations or
    publications

Table 4. Jennifer's Log, Week One (147 mins; about 2 ½ hrs)

Day (e.g. Monday)	Tasks	Time spent on each task	Rank tasks

Monday 1/18	Start prep for social media for Black History Month
	  1. Download all posts from February 2020 from Facebook to see if any can be used again this year
	  2. Edit Excel sheet by reading all post titles and deleting posts that are not relevant to Black History Month
		5 min
		25 min
			2
			1

Tuesday 1/19	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts
	  2. Click on links and review potential articles
	  3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)
	  4. Check email newsletters for new material to post
	  5. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience
	  6. Post articles to Hootsuite (see process above)
		5 min
		10 min
		5 min
		
		2 min
		
		5 min
		5 min
			3
			2
			1 (tied)
			
			3
			
			2
			1 (tied)

Thursday 1/21	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts
	  2. Click on links and review potential articles
	  3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)
	  4. Check email newsletters for new material to post
	  5. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience
	  6. Post articles to Hootsuite (see process above)
		2 min
		2 min
		2 min
		
		15 min
		15 min
		
		8 min
			3
			2
			1
			
			3
			2
			
			1

Friday, 1/22	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts
	  2. Click on links and review potential articles
	  3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)
	  4. Search for Black History Month hashtags to add to post
	  5. Check email newsletters for new material to post
	  6. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience
		(23 mins)
		
		1 min
		2 min
		2 min
		
		<1 min
		4 min
			3
			2
			1
			
			7
			3
			2

	7. Post articles to FB and Twitter on Hootsuite (see process above) 8. Like previous few days posts 9. Like posts where NAMI Minnesota is mentioned 10. Comment on post from DIY fundraiser to thank them 11. Check Facebook Insights for most viral posts to list in e-newsletter 12. Copy post and link. Insert in newsletter	3 min 2 min 1 min 1 min 1 min 2 min 3 min	1 4 4 4 6 5
Saturday, 1/23	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts 2. Click on links and review potential articles 3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date) 4. Add Black History Month hashtags to one post 5. Check email newsletters for new material to post 6. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience 7. Post articles to Hootsuite (see process above) 8. Promote unfilled class on Facebook	2 min 4 min 3 min <1 min 1 min 2 min 2 min 3 min	3 2 1 4 3 2 1 5

Jennifer's log of her second work week also shows the range and variability of social media writing labor, a finding that I discuss in more detail as I explain how professionals built up responsive strategies and tactics. However, Jennifer's log is interesting for illustrating how many tasks are part of social media and advocacy writing work. During this second week, she followed her same consistent process, but also had several other tasks to address (refer to Table 5). On Tuesday in the log, she reviewed a social media toolkit from the Minnesota Department of Health in order to develop potential social media posts using a #StayConnectedMN hashtag developed by the Department. This campaign was meant to encourage individuals to be mindful of their mental health during the pandemic. Similarly, Jennifer reviewed resources sent by the National Institute of Mental Health for Eating Disorders Awareness Week to find content that she could share from MHAC's accounts. She also spent time on multiple days reviewing mental health content posted during Black History Month in the previous year

to identify content that audiences might still find helpful and relevant. And she needed to make sure she was maintaining MHAC's social media presence by "liking" posts from audiences or other organizations where MHAC Minnesota had been mentioned. At the end of our interviews, Jennifer expressed how mentioning names of donors and thanking those who had held individual fundraisers on Facebook were a part of her work that wasn't reflected in the logs, along with any research on post performance or audience analysis. Lisa did not complete a log, but she offered a view into her social media writing tasks through her interview.

Table 5. Jennifer's Log, Week Two (149 mins; about 2 ½ hrs)

Day (e.g. Monday)	Tasks	Time spent on each task	Rank tasks
Tuesday, 1/26	1. Post 3 articles from early morning reading washingtonpost.com	5 min	1
	2. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts	2 min	3
	3. Click on links and review potential articles	5 min	2
	4. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)	5 min	1
	5. Check email newsletters for new material to post	2 min	3
	6. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience	3 min	2
	7. Post articles to Hootsuite (see process above)	4 min	1
	8. Work through MN Dept of Health PDF forwarded by Anna to identify potential posts and resources using #StayConnectedMN hashtag	10 min	3
	9. Review potential articles and resources	6 min	2
	10. Save PDFs as JPEG files in order to be able to post	3 min	4
	11. Post to FB and Twitter on Hootsuite	10 min	1
	12. Review previously downloaded excel file of last year's Black History Month posts	5 min	4
	13. Copy same language, check links	10 min	2
	14. If image was included without link, copy old FB link, put into browser, save image to computer	5 min	3
	15. Post to Hootsuite	7 min	1

Thursday, 1/28	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts	3 min	3
	2. Click on links and review potential articles	4 min	2
	3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)	2 min	1
	4. Check email newsletters for new material to post	5 min	3
	5. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience	4 min	2
	6. Post articles to FB and Twitter on Hootsuite (see process above)	5 min	1
	7. Review previously downloaded excel file of last year's Black History Month posts	10 min	3
	8. Copy same language, check links	2 min	3
	9. If image was included without link, copy old FB permalink, put into browser, save image to computer		4
	10. Post to FB and Twitter on Hootsuite	6 min	1
	11. Like previous few days posts on FB and Twitter	< 1 min	5
	12. Like posts where MHAC Minnesota is mentioned	< 1 min	5
Friday, 1/29	1. Check Google alerts for potential social media posts	2 min	3
	2. Click on links and review potential articles	3 min	2
	3. Post articles to Hootsuite for Twitter and Facebook (i.e., copy and paste link, select phrase or quote from article to accompany post, select time and date)	5 min	1
	4. Open email from NIMH with shareable resources for Eating Disorders Awareness week	2 min	3
	5. Because sources are trusted, briefly skim content to make sure it is relevant for our audience	4 min	2
	6. Save images to computer hard drive	2 min	2
	7. Post posts/tweets with images to Hootsuite (see process above)	6 min	1

Professionals' logs not only helped to make their social media writing work visible, it helped identify how professionals might have conceptualized their work tasks. Jennifer's log, for example, surfaces a lot of tasks that she routinely engaged in that aren't all visible from viewing public, external content; she checked Google alerts and email newsletters for content, and had to review that content in addition to preparing images, planning future content, and liking posts. However, Emily's approach to filling out her log was not as detailed as Jennifer's had been (refer to Table 6). Emily had a consistent process of checking messages and scheduling or posting content, but she did

not go as far as to include any activities that might have been part of those larger tasks. For example, in scheduling social media posts, it was not clear what Emily might have done to determine what content to post or whether she found or created the content. Emily's log was also less specific than Jennifer's in that she did not always indicate what kind of content she was posting, streaming, or editing. This is not to say that Emily completed her log in the "wrong" way, but that her approach might be indicative of how she saw her work. Emily was juggling social media writing with other communications and events tasks, and so it's possible she did not have a lot of time to be detailed. It is also possible that she was so used to scheduling, checking messages, and posting that she did not think about these tasks as being divisible into smaller chunks. Jennifer pointed this out in regards to her experience filling out the log, noting that it was strange to rank tasks and break them down because "it felt like it was all one big task." Jennifer and Emily's experiences filling out the logs point to some of the limitations of the log design – it was perhaps too rigid to capture details about professionals' work. But the logs also highlight how social media writing work might have needed to be completed quickly, as professionals were busy.

Table 6. Emily's Logs, Weeks One & Two, (147 mins; about 2 ½ hrs)

Day (e.g. Monday)	Tasks	Time spent on each task	Rank tasks
Wednesday (7/14)	- Scheduled 3 social media posts, - responded to 1 message, - checked to see if we had any new activity in our MHAC WI Facebook group for our affiliates	5 minutes on message, 30 minutes on the posts	1 - responding to message 2 - scheduling posts 3 - checking out MHAC WI Facebook group

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Thursday (7/15)	● Posted an article that was sent to me by a colleague	10 minutes	
Friday (7/16)	● Checked messages/comment ● Scheduled a social media post	15 minutes total	1. messages 2. post
Tuesday (7/20)	● Checked messages, but didn't have any ● Will post a photo tonight at an event we are going to	(10 mins) About 5 minutes on each task	1. check messages 2. post at event
Wednesday (7/21)	● Posted twice on social media ● Checked messages	(35 mins) 5 minutes checking messages 30 minutes posts	Check messages Posts
Thursday (7/22)	● - posted article on social media ● - thanked donors from recent fundraisers ● - added someone to our affiliate Facebook group ● - live-streamed a webinar to Facebook live	(90 mins, 1 ½ hours) 10 - posted article on social media 15 - thanked donors from recent fundraisers 5 - added someone to our affiliate Facebook group 60 - live-streamed a webinar to Facebook live	1- live-streamed a webinar to Facebook live 2 - posted article on social media 3 - thanked donors from recent fundraisers -4 added someone to our affiliate Facebook group
Friday (7/23)	● Updated our Facebook cover photo ● Invited people to like our Facebook page ● Updated our About section on Facebook ● Edited a live video from yesterday	(40 mins) Updated our Facebook cover photo - 5 min Invited people to like our Facebook page - 5 min Updated our About section on Facebook - 10 min Edited a live video from yesterday - 20 min	1 - Updated our Facebook cover photo 2 - Updated our About section on Facebook 3 - Edited a live video from yesterday 4- Invited people to like our Facebook page

Tuesday (7/27)	Shared an article on Facebook and Twitter	10 minutes	X
Tuesday (7/27)	Posted an article	10 minutes	X

These descriptions of Jennifer and Emily's social media writing tasks are perhaps overwhelming and even dizzying for the amount of tasks they complete. Even so, I describe them here for the ways they highlight not only the amount of labor behind public-facing posts, but the various complex dimensions of social media and advocacy writing work. Jennifer acknowledged the different facets of the MHAC mission when I asked her about the goal of her work with social media work:

> I think it has a number of components. It's education. Providing support to our community. It's bringing people into our advocacy efforts. It's…maintaining, building awareness, and kind of branding, a little bit like, just what we stand for. I think it's multifaceted, the purpose.

Here Jennifer recalls these different advocacy dimensions, yet she also did not see her social media writing as contributing to advocacy, or more direct action, as I discussed above. She described her role as sharing "a lot of general information" ranging from state or national news stories about mental health to personal stories from everyday people or celebrities on how they lived with mental illness. Information sharing was something that Jennifer, and Lisa, set apart from advocacy, fitting them under education and providing support. Lisa commented that information sharing was characteristic of MHAC Minnesota's use of social media, but that she wasn't quite convinced this was the most useful strategy. Lisa stated that "we do a lot of reposting of *USA Today* kind of articles and I feel like if somebody wants that content they're going to see it on their *Yahoo* front page…". For her, posting content, like news articles, with the intention of

informing should not necessarily be a top priority. This is not to say that Jennifer or Lisa did not find this aspect of social media work to be important, but that it was, for them, something different than advocacy.

Yet spreading information can serve larger advocacy goals in ways that might not always be visible from the outset. Many studies of organizations' social media messages argue that these organizations should be emphasizing dialogic approaches to social media that engage audiences while also finding that organizations often do use social media to share information in important, strategic ways (Saxton & Waters, 2014; Shin, Pang, & Kim, 2015; Zhang et al., 2020). Information sharing is not as simple as posting a link to an article that then transmits key facts to audiences who receive them. Instead, information sharing can and does work towards serving action-oriented advocacy goals; informational activity can signal an organization's priorities, present audiences with information that may move them to action, or be combined with more interactive strategies to both inform and encourage supporters to get involved (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Tully et al., 2019). In some cases, information may act as a "base" for other types of engagement (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012) by appealing to audiences who may then be interested in further involvement. Establishing "base" information as a step towards action aligns with Walton et al.'s (2019) 4Rs heuristic where recognizing injustice, or learning about where and how injustice happens, is a necessary first step for revealing, rejecting, and replacing it. Moreover, some studies show that informational posts may be posts that audiences share most frequently (Saxton & Waters, 2014). The practice of sharing information is thus a key dimension of advocacy. Though my goal is not to assert that some social media strategies are more effective than others, it is important to emphasize how professionals' social media writing can work towards advocacy in various ways.

Across Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin, participants were primarily sharing information with their audiences, or preparing to share information, even if they did not always seem to think that information sharing was an effective strategy. They did so to educate, but also to support audiences and keep them updated. In her interviews, and as her log shows, Jennifer's main process involved identifying and assessing content she could share with audiences. She offered a hypothetical example to illustrate how linking to a news article might serve additional MHAC goals:

> What I tend to do, though, is if there's something about, for example, "back-to-school" anxiety for children, I might say…"Attached is the article," but also, at the end say, "Find a class presentation on this topic at our website," you know. So I'll try to tie in our support groups and our classes into other news stories or articles where they fit because I find that gets a little bit more engagement.

Jennifer's example shows how one post can tie together education and support dimensions of advocacy by including a news story and then pointing them to related MHAC Minnesota offerings. Interestingly, Jennifer mentioned that one part of her goals with social media writing and mental health advocacy involved "building a sense of community" and that information sharing might be a way to do this. While I did not systematically analyze MHAC social media posts created by professionals, I did observe posts during the times they completed their logs. As Jennifer was completing her log, I noticed one post that received more engagement than others (refer to Figure 9). The post was published at the beginning of Black History Month and linked to a *CNN* news article about Black barbers acting as mental health advocates. MHAC Minnesota posts did not typically garner a lot of engagement, but this post seemed to connect with audiences, with 65 likes and four shares. Jennifer commented that she felt this post might have been successful because it was "relatable"; everyone, she explained, goes to get their hair done and so they can understand how the peer support individuals might

find in those spaces would be important, particularly for marginalized groups. This post does do some community-building work. It educates audiences about how Black people find mental health support while also signaling awareness and recognition of the specific mental health issues Black people experience. And the article, by itself, is about the significance of community support. Even simple posts that link to news articles or share information in other ways can engage in multidimensional advocacy (Tully et al., 2019).

How Black barbers have become mental health advocates for African American men
#blackhistorymonth http://ow.ly/GfSn50Dgirj

GREAT
BIG
STORY

CNN.COM
How Black barbers have become mental health advocates for African American men

65   4 Shares
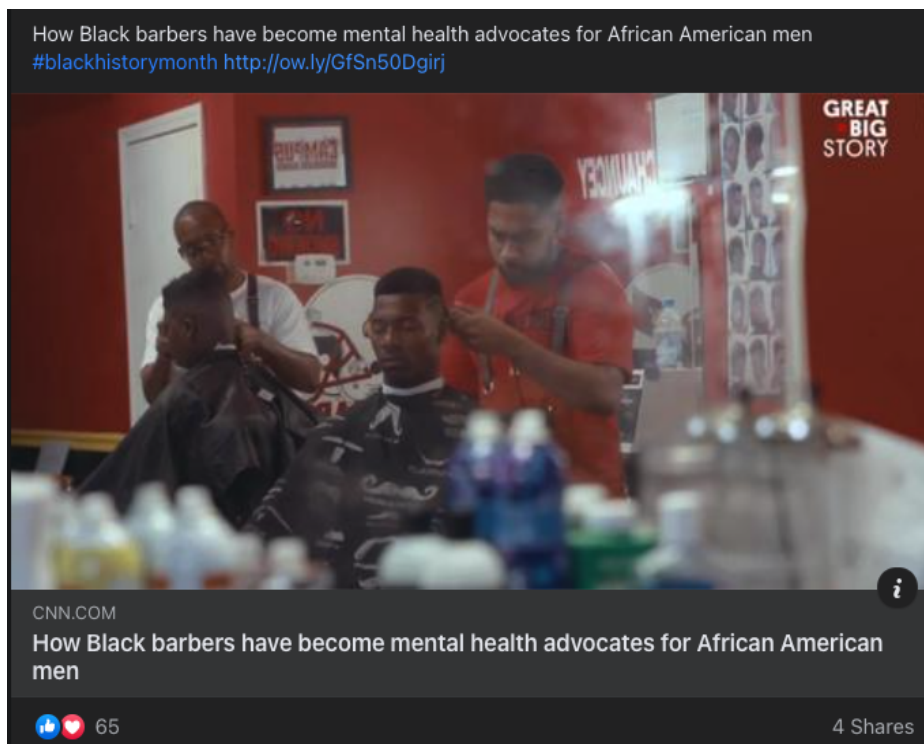
Figure 9. An article on Black barbers as mental health advocates, posted to Facebook by Jennifer

At MHAC Wisconsin, Emily also acknowledged the interconnected facets of MHAC's advocacy goals, but her overall approach to upholding those facets was different. She pointed to MHAC's mission and vision when asked about the goals of her social media writing work, referencing what she called the "three pillars" of the organization: education, advocacy, and support. Later on, Emily clarified how she saw these different dimensions of her work, explaining that she saw spreading awareness around mental health as the primary goal, but that education, advocacy, and support

were three areas that MHAC could focus on in spreading awareness. To spread awareness across these three areas, she was performing many of the same tasks as Jennifer and Lisa, including reviewing and scheduling content; organizing, scheduling, and promoting events; and maintaining connections with MHAC Wisconsin's audiences.

But unlike her counterparts at MHAC Minnesota, Emily's discussion of her work seemed to be less concerned with curating already existing content, and more concerned with generating organic content to fulfill MHAC's mission and vision. Jennifer articulated her process as centered around reviewing a lot of content from other outlets or organizations. Yet Emily relied on coworkers to help monitor content on specific mental health-related topics so she could focus her time on creating content. In a few places, Emily described organizing virtual events that she streamed through social media and edited to be posted later for those who could not attend live, or occasionally attending in-person events to take photos that she could post later. Jennifer and Lisa did not discuss these types of tasks as often in their interviews, but it is important to note that at the time I connected with Emily in summer of 2021, COVID-19 restrictions were being slowly relaxed, whereas when I connected with Jennifer and Lisa in early 2021, restrictions were much more stringent. This undoubtedly affected what Jennifer and Lisa were able to accomplish with social media; both noted that MHAC Minnesota was and had not been holding in-person events since the pandemic began. Even so, Emily worked with a wider range of content in meeting advocacy goals. Her social media writing work reflects the multidimensional nature of advocacy at MHAC, but it also demonstrates the different approaches and priorities that professionals took to promote those advocacy dimensions.

As an intern working alongside Emily, Samantha's social media writing work illustrates the type of labor that supports multidimensional advocacy. Samantha did not typically work directly with social media by posting or writing content herself, but her role

was that of researcher to identify and review information Emily might use in her posts. Her work in this supportive or assisting role is significant for how it reveals another approach to multidimensional advocacy, where one individual is tasked with overseeing planning, day to day posting or content, and upcoming events, and another individual works to support those larger tasks by assessing and compiling information. Again, the role of information as a "base" or foundation for other advocacy actions on social media is key. As one example, Samantha discussed a Q&A event that MHAC Wisconsin was organizing with a Colorado State Representative who had championed legislation related to mental health. This event, and information promoting it, was going to be shared on social media. As part of her responsibilities, Samantha spent significant time researching the representative and the mental health legislation she had put forward:

> I wanted to like, really do my due diligence [...] researching the bills, researching what she's done, her experience, not asking a question that comes across ignorant in any way or that we didn't put in the time to really learn about her story before having her come to our event. So that was difficult in that respect, like for every question I really tried to research as much as I possibly could about the bill that had to do with her position on it, her involvement with it, what she said in her Ted Talks.

Her research might not have been visible to those attending the event or watching the recorded version, but her efforts contributed to making content that was relevant and interesting for audiences while also respecting the representative's experiences. Samantha's work here might seem just like the activities of an intern new to an organization. However, her research or information gathering gave shape to the event, which in turn, when shared on social media, might have motivated others to take action, learn more, or seek out support.

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Balancing Advocacy Dimensions

Because working towards advocacy involves many different elements, and
because MHAC emphasizes those elements in its mission and vision, professionals
expressed that a lot of their social media writing labor required a sort of balancing act.
As I discuss, advocacy had many interconnected facets – education, advocacy, and
support – but those facets were not always easy for professionals to prioritize with social
media. Part of the reason for this balancing act is due to the precarious nature of
nonprofit and social media work. But the act of balancing was a recurring activity
appearing throughout interviews and logs, suggesting that balancing itself is a critical
form of social media writing labor for professionals at MHAC. Balancing involved making
decisions about what tasks could or should be done, with professionals weighing what
was most appropriate and beneficial for MHAC supporters and social media audiences.
In essence, juggling various aspects of advocacy meant that professionals had to make
careful, informed rhetorical moves. Professionals made these moves so often and
quickly, it was clear they were skilled rhetoricians and technical communicators.

Professionals referenced balancing their social media writing work as they tried
to uphold the different facets of MHAC's mission and vision. It became difficult to
accomplish each of these goals or to determine what tasks were most important
because of the amount of responsibilities that fell under their purview. Emily mentioned
that, for her, one of the notable challenges of working with social media was figuring out
how to balance MHAC mission and vision goals. This was especially the case during
times of the year devoted to specific mental health concerns. Emily recalled how juggling
education, advocacy, and support was tricky during Mental Health Awareness Month:

> It was really difficult to balance the promotional aspect of like spreading
> awareness of the events that we were doing and trying to get the word out there
> and to get people to sign up for the events and awareness things that we were

doing, while also maintaining the balance of putting out their educational

resources and advocacy things. It's also hard because it's like, okay what's the

most important thing that we need to prioritize? And that's kind of the hard thing,

like do we prioritize these events that we're working really hard on or do we

prioritize continuing to spread the research and advocacy part of things, which is

also important?

Specific months or weeks devoted to mental health issues could be exceptionally

complicated because those times usually meant organizing special events, activities, or

content targeted towards the month or week's focus. Then, any content, particularly

events, would need to be heavily promoted on social media, without fully overshadowing

the other aspects of the MHAC mission. Professionals needed to be rhetorically skilled

by attending to the purpose of their social media work, their coordination with coworkers

or others, the timing of certain responsibilities, and overall, identifying ways to encourage

audiences to take action while also providing them with the education, support, and

advocacy to achieve MHAC's mission.

At MHAC Minnesota, Jennifer felt similar pressure to devote equal attention to the facets

of MHAC's mission and vision, and to balance those facets with what she had time to

work on. My analysis revealed how professionals' had to be conscious of the amount of

time they were able to devote to their social media writing work. To save time, Jennifer

would often reuse content she posted in the previous year. This involved her reviewing

that content to determine if it was still relevant or appropriate. At the time of this study,

Jennifer was trying to identify reusable content posted during the previous years' Black

History Month that she could then integrate with newer content. Jennifer explained her

process as a way of trying to establish genuine connection:

For example, I don't care what [...] Walgreens thinks about the George Floyd

killing, I didn't need them to send me a statement just because I'm on their email

list. So we, we're not, it's not just performative [...] It's really an opportunity to highlight a specific community and show that we do know, that we care, and are interested and, I think it's really just to show that it's part of our mission to serve people of all different communities.

Jennifer's goal was to try to avoid performative advocacy by sharing informational content that shed light on the unique intersections between Black people's lived experiences and mental health. Yet at the same time, she was hoping to express MHAC Minnesota's support for the Black community and to build connections with them. Her goal was to ensure she could complete her work in the time she had, but to also ensure she was not engaging in performative advocacy. Even so, this does not mean that Jennifer was always able to successfully balance her time and her intentions to substantively support Black Mental Health. During the first week of Black History Month, Jennifer was also trying to include posts on MHAC social media accounts about Children's Mental Health Week. Additionally, the Martin Luther King Jr. quotes and articles about Black mental health that Jennifer was posting could only go so far to achieve action-oriented advocacy goals; as Walton et al. (2019) contend, coalition-building for advocacy has to include recognizing injustice as well as rejecting and replacing it. Still, Jennifer, and other social media professionals could not take on the entirety of these concerns by themselves, especially as they were often already stretched thin.

Establishing mutually beneficial relationships with audiences was not an easy task. One recurring code developed in analysis related to balancing advocacy was titled "Overlapping Audiences;" each MHAC affiliate's social media audiences were positioned as communities that needed to be served as well as potential donors or fundraising sources for the organization. Not completely unlike for profit organizations, nonprofit organizations needed to generate donations to keep the organization viable so that it

could support its mission. Fundraising via social media is increasingly popular (Saxton &

Wang, 2014; Bhati & McDonnell, 2020; Xiao et al., 2021), especially with new tools, such

as Facebook's fundraising features that allow organizations to solicit donations in

various ways (Meta, 2021). With the popularity of these tools, social media audiences

become sources of financial support for organizations.

In an editorial guide, the national MHAC organization categorizes its main

audiences in the following ways: caregivers, individuals with mental illness, advocates,

or donors (refer to Figure 10). MHAC encourages writers to be thinking about audience,

but the categories it presents fail to account for the overlap among audiences, an issue

that emerged in interviews. Professionals pointed to a tension they felt in seeing social

media audiences occupy multiple categories – supporters, community members, donors,

stakeholders, and/or decision-makers. Lisa seemed to be especially attuned to how

audiences fit across these categories. When asked about how she would describe

MHAC's donors, Lisa distinguished sponsors from donors as two of her main social

media audiences, stating that she had to see audiences as "either someone who is

giving us money, or is in the process of giving us money or it's someone that I hope will

give us money. That's from my fundraising perspective, like every audience member as

a potential donor." Audience members could be "supporters" of MHAC Minnesota,

meaning they were attending and have different identities, but they also needed to be

viewed as donors.

Audience

When writing content, it's important to consider who you are addressing. Are they familiar with ░░░░ ?
Are you asking for something or are you providing support?

Here are ░░░░ 's main audience categories to consider:

- **Caregiver** – Parent of a newly diagnosed child or long-term caregiver of adult child living with MI
- **Individual with mental illness** – Young adult or adult living with MI
  - Youth / young adults
  - Veterans / active duty servicemembers
- **Advocate** – Friend of individual living with MI or individual wanting to get engaged with the cause
- **Donor** – Family member, community leader or company/organization who wants to support ░░░░ for its efforts

Figure 10. Excerpt on audience from MHAC's Editorial Guide

Lisa's articulation of her social media audiences through the lens of their fundraising potential might seem crass or reductive, but fundraising is a significant part of nonprofit social media use, and nonprofit work in general. Fundraising helps organizations maintain their programming and support for the groups they advocate for. Emily was especially insightful in explaining how the difficulty in prioritizing or balancing social media work revolved around the need to raise money for the organization:

> We obviously can't do our mission without donation so it's like, how often should we be asking for donations and what avenues [do we use]? And then, how do we balance that so people don't feel like they're following our pages and just being constantly asked for money? How do we balance the…like, okay let's give you really valuable resources, education, and awareness. And then also you've seen all these great things we're doing now, will you donate to us? So that's definitely the balancing act. That's probably the thing that we spend most time on.

Emily's discussion highlights the importance of fundraising and donations to MHAC and the tension this introduces into social media writing labor. Audiences might be

individuals with mental illness, caregivers for others with mental illness or active

volunteers with MHAC. At the same time, however, professionals had to see all

audiences as potential donors in order to continue to support MHAC. Viewing audiences

for their money-donating potential felt uncomfortable for professionals, who referenced

what they did to try to balance audiences' overlapping positions. Lisa described her work

with MHAC Minnesota sponsors, who were typically larger for profit organizations that

would provide financial support for certain events to receive public recognition of their

support. Lisa acknowledged that she tried to be equitable in how she recognized support

from sponsors and individual donors:

> If somebody's giving a $100 gift, and that's one percent of their income, I'm going
>
> to take that as seriously as somebody who's giving $100,000 a year, and that's
>
> one percent of their income [...] I try to be very balanced with my social media
>
> use as well. So while I will definitely post the picture of my sponsors' kid, I'm also
>
> going to make sure and post a picture of, you know, somebody who's kid raised
>
> $25.

Lisa's hypothetical example reveals her attempts at balancing audiences' overlapping

positions as audiences who might benefit from MHAC Minnesota's support and as

audiences who can benefit the organization through financial support. In Lisa's view,

both of these audiences are just as valuable to MHAC Minnesota, as are those who do

not end up donating any money to the organization. She explained that she viewed

social media audiences who were volunteers or event participants as donors in that they

were donating their time to the organization. All social media audiences needed to be

equally considered in the content that MHAC Minnesota posted, but that proved to be

tricky to accomplish at times. Whether involving different facets of advocacy or

overlapping audiences, these examples are illustrative of the level of complexity

professionals' felt about their social media writing work.

An additional layer of professionals' perceived balancing acts emphasized how social media writing was intrinsically interconnected with other communications work. Professionals were constantly balancing social media writing tasks with other tasks, like creating email newsletters and other content shared across different digital channels, developing strategic plans for marketing or communications, or organizing and holding in-person events. Social media writing labor did not, and could not, happen separately from these other activities – it was part of a larger communications plan. In order to strive to meet MHAC's advocacy goals, professionals talked about how social media had to work in tandem with other communications efforts and with the needs of MHAC's social media audiences and supporters. When I asked about her work with social media at the time of our first interview, Emily listed off several tasks, many of which had to do more with larger communications work: organizing and facilitating a Q&A event with a speaker; sending out the bimonthly newsletter; updating the website; planning for a webinar in August, a fundraiser in September, and an annual MHAC conference in November. All of these activities made sense for her to be focusing on, as Emily was MHAC Wisconsin's communication and events director. Communications took precedence in her formal job title. In working closely with Emily as an intern, Samantha was helping support all of Emily's communications tasks. However, these communications tasks provided content that could be leveraged on MHAC Wisconsin's social media accounts to reach different audiences. For example, Emily noted in her log and interviews that she attended an event where she was would take photos to post to post to social media.

Even though they helped drive social media writing, these communication tasks did end up taking priority over social media writing at times. Professionals were handling many responsibilities or were only part time workers, and so their time was something they had to carefully manage. I witnessed this through my own negotiations with

professionals in setting up interviews, and in my formal coding process where "time" was a code that appeared across interviews. With their time being so precious, it could be difficult for them to regularly and substantively engage social media. Jennifer spoke about how social media could be difficult to manage as other tasks popped up:

> In terms of urgency, if we're updating publications, that can take priority. If an article comes out in the *Star Tribune* about [MHAC] and they're referring people to our website, we need to make sure that all the relevant links are working. It's just other things that tend to just take priority. And then we have this newsletter that I write that goes out to 16,000 people every other week. And so that just has to go out [...] And then depending on the time of the year also, if it's budgeting time or if it's right around our big walk. There's a lot of time spent interfacing with our media partners and actually writing the radio spots and listening to the radio spot recordings and making sure that we're right, making the actual physical ad that will go in the *Star Tribune* in Adobe Illustrator and running that file. Whereas social media sometimes it feels like, "Oh, I've got my four articles for today. Check." And it doesn't feel like a higher priority than any of those other tasks.

While Jennifer's comments about social media might seem flippant or dismissive of the importance of these platforms, they highlight how much work professionals in these positions take on. It makes sense that Jennifer would not be able to spend as much time with social media with more immediate or significant communications tasks filling up her to-do list. Clearly, MHAC Minnesota was prioritizing social media, but it could only do so within the limits of what Jennifer, Lisa, and Anna were able to accomplish.

Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies

One of the first questions I asked of all professionals participating in this study was if they could describe what a typical day of their work with social media looked like. When I would ask this question, I was expecting neat responses where professionals

would explain how they followed the same routine process every day. Instead, what I did find was that social media writing work was constantly evolving and changing – planned or unplanned events came and went, algorithms were adjusted, and large-scale, life-altering situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic, changed everything. Professionals did have routine processes for their work, but ultimately, a large chunk of their labor consisted of flexing with constant shifts in their workload, type of work, and the modes and media available for finishing that work. It also meant responding to shifts in communication goals, audience or stakeholder expectations, and the allocation of resources, such as time or money. To be able to flex with these changes, professionals "patched" together individual tactics with organizational strategies for social media writing. I identify tactics as useful resources or approaches for social media writing work that professionals had developed on their own, or that they found outside of MHAC and adapted to their work. Strategies were approaches and resources that MHAC as an organization had produced and that professionals used to guide their work. Professionals drew from a mixture of these tactics and strategies as their various communication situations called for them.

Though I was not explicitly looking for and did not code my data for them, I realized during analysis that tactics and strategies helped to describe professionals' social media work practices. My use of tactics and strategies here is grounded in Kimball's (2006; 2017) conception of tactical technical communication. Building from the ideas de Certeau (1984) set forth in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Kimball argues that the field of TPC must broaden its boundaries to focus less on technical communication performed within organizations and institutions, and more on how individuals engage in technical communication outside of these spaces. In focusing too much on TPC done in institutional contexts for institutional goals, Kimball contends that TPC scholars and practitioners may miss the significant ways that individuals produce TPC outside of

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institutions. Tactical technical communication asks us to distinguish between strategies as the "systems, plans of action, narratives, and designs created by institutions" whereas tactics are the ways individuals operate in and outside of institutions for their own purposes (Kimball, 2006, p. 71). Kimball explains de Certeau's examples of two tactics – la perruque, where individuals use "time or surplus material at work" for their own personal goals, and bricolage, where individuals "make do" by creatively arranging certain elements together in ways that institutions perhaps did not anticipate or intend (p. 71-72). An example of la perruque would be an individual using their work laptop to search for a new job or to buy clothes, or engaging in these activities during work hours. Years after introducing the idea of tactical technical communication, Kimball (2017) described another tactic he called "radical sharing," or the ability of individuals to widely share their tactical approaches using the Internet and social media. For example, as the professionals in this study did, individuals might seek out radical sharing spaces, such as Facebook groups or forums where people discuss the tactics they used to get a job, buy a house, make lasagna, or any other action.

Conceptually, tactical technical communication is focused on how individuals outside of institutional or organizational contexts take up TPC in their everyday lives, which may appear to be at odds with my focus on professionals at a nonprofit organization. However, my dissertation is centered on *individual* professionals performing social media writing labor, and the interplay between their digital labor and the nonprofit contexts they work in. Further, though tactical technical communication asks about situations where individuals subvert institutional or organizational goals, I am interested in what we might learn about the precarity of professionals' social media writing labor if we consider how individuals locate tactics to support organizational goals or strategies. As I've discussed, nonprofit advocacy organizations can drive social and political change in ways that individuals alone may not be able to, yet they are also

situated within layers of precarity. Evolving changes in funding and resources lead to evolving changes in what social media writing work looks like. The theme that I cover in this section offers a response to my second research question, which asks how professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing that structure or influence their work. In building up tactics to respond to fluctuations in social media writing work, professionals were navigating organizational strategies and supplementing them with resources from their previous experience, coworkers, or other organizations. Examining these tactics and strategies shows how professionals' social media writing labor requires them to respond to layers of precarity.

Responding to Organizational Constraints & Platform Changes

While professionals worked to craft support for their social media writing work in various ways, they had to navigate shifting organizational constraints related to resources, the number of co-workers helping out, and available funding. They also had to flex with changes in the platforms they were using. Professionals noted that the larger MHAC organization and its affiliates may not have always had a lot of social media resources that they could draw from, but this seemed to make sense. For example, Emily explained how some organizational strategies or resources, such as official social media policies, could potentially hinder social media writing:

> I personally am not a huge fan of actual policies. I think guidelines are very
>
> helpful. But I think that policies can sometimes end up being restrictive. So I think
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> that if I leave [MHAC] Wisconsin, I would probably put together some of my own
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> personal guidelines, but I think that's also up to the next social media person who
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> comes in and their experience and background to kind of tweak that. And I think
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> that's kind of because I don't know everything that there is to know about social
>
> media, and I don't think that there's anybody on our board who could create

policies that will never change over time, especially because these are evolving
platforms.

For Emily, social media policies focused on specific details would be too inflexible to respond to any changes with the platforms themselves or with changes at MHAC Wisconsin and its audiences' needs. Further, as an affiliate organization of MHAC, the lack of strict policies made it easier for professionals to respond to the needs of their own local audiences. However, though Jennifer and Lisa did not speak as directly about policies, it was clear that the organization was constrained in how it could support social media work. Jennifer expressed that she didn't feel MHAC Minnesota needed more training or materials related to social media, but that constant changes the organization could make it difficult to pin down valuable knowledge:

> Sometimes I feel like it's hard at [MHAC] and most nonprofits. There's quite a bit
> of turnover and what you train a group of people to do within a few months [...]
> you know, you got to do it all over again, or things have changed, or the person
> that made it is gone, and you can't find it again. It's challenging.

Emily reiterated some of these concerns, pointing out that part-time work at MHAC was common and many employees came and went. Read together, Emily and Jennifer's comments are illustrative of how social media professionals need to be able to react to changes in platforms and audiences. However, at the same time, those changes could make their work complicated by asking them to build up social media writing approaches without always being able to draw from previous localized knowledge of what might have worked well previously.

Additionally, as a nonprofit organization, MHAC mainly relies on contributions from individual donors, corporate sponsors, and larger fundraising efforts as well as federal and state funding to support its mission. Funding is perhaps not the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about professional social media and advocacy writing,

but it does affect how professionals are able to complete their work and what they focus

that work on. MHAC generates most of its funding through donations from individuals,

yet those donations may not always come with stipulations in the same way that grants

and corporate sponsorships do. Figure 11 shows a list of corporate sponsor

contributions to the MHAC national organization in the first quarter of 2021. This list and

others are publicly available on the MHAC national website, and they show how funding

can be connected to specific programs or efforts. Funding might also be marked as

"Unrestricted," meaning that it can be used at the organization's discretion to support

programming.

Major Corporate and Foundation Contribution Registry

1st Quarter 2021

Funder	Funding Purpose	Amount
Alkermes	Walks	$200,000.00
AWE Inspired	Unrestricted	$7,409.62
Boehringer Ingelheim	Real Time AP Board 2021	$25,000.00
Bristol Myers Squibb	Sharing Hope and Compartiendo Esperanza	$400,000.00
Broad Institute	Support of Patient Recruitment and Engagement and Survey	$40,000.00
Buckingham Television	Unrestricted	$10,000.00
Cargill	Unrestricted	$25,000.00
Change Healthcare	StigmaFree Companies	$5,000.00
Entertainment Industries Council	Frontline Wellness	$230,000.00
Experian	Unrestricted	$50,000.00
Facebook	Unrestricted	$10,000.00
Goelet Family Foundation	Advocacy	$6,000.00
Google	Postpartum Depression Screener Launch and Campaign	$15,000.00
Health Care Service Corporation	Unrestricted	$59,257.00
Intra-Cellular Therapies	Corporate Supporter Membership	$35,000.00
Intra-Cellular Therapies	Corporate Supporter Membership and Patient Advocacy and Education	$85,000.00
Kaiser Permanente	Convention	$50,000.00
Kendra Scott	Unrestricted	$25,000.00
Lokai	StigmaFree Companies	$5,075.00

Figure 11. Excerpt of major corporate donations to MHAC in the first quarter of 2021

Emily provided some background on MHAC's funding sources in connection with her work, explaining that 90 percent of her salary for her position is supported by a state grant, and 10 percent is supported through fundraising efforts. She also mentioned that the national MHAC organization did not offer much funding to the affiliate usually, but that they did offer MHAC Wisconsin a grant to work on a social media and communications campaign on tardive dyskinesia, a disorder that causes involuntary muscle movements and is brought on by the long-term use of antipsychotic medications. Emily also explained how the money for the grant actually came from a biopharmaceutical company that develops treatments and medications for neurological, endocrine, and psychiatric disorders. The national MHAC organization then reached out to the Wisconsin affiliate to offer financial assistance to spread awareness about tardive dyskinesia. Researching and crafting this campaign was one of Samantha's projects as an intern. In fact, the grant itself was providing Samantha's stipend as an intern with MHAC Wisconsin. This appeared to be common, as Emily explained how the amount of employees the affiliate could hire would "ebb and flow" based on the grants that could be used to pay their salaries. It was unclear if receiving the grant was primary the reason the affiliate hired Samantha as an intern, but that grant did dictate what Emily and Samantha's work would involve. Working towards this grant was additional work that had to be done in conjunction with other social media and communications tasks. Overall, changes surrounding available resources, funding, and fellow co-workers who could help with their work were the reasons professionals performed tactical labor as part of their social media writing work.

Using Organizational Resources Tactically & Strategically

Professionals drew from internal MHAC materials while also tactically coupling those with external resources found through other organizations. MHAC offered a limited amount of resources connected to social media writing, and affiliates seemed to offer

even less. There were very few publicly available, social media-related resources that I

could collect as part of my study. Plus, professionals could only provide materials that

did not offer specifics about marketing and strategy, which further limited the data.

However, all professionals did note that they consulted MHAC materials specifically for

guidance on language. This made sense as most MHAC texts I analyzed spoke about

writing and communicating for the MHAC organization. Figure 12 shows a screenshot

from a page on the MHAC website titled "Tips for Writing for MHAC." This includes tips

that are applicable to writing in general, such as keeping audience in mind, and focusing

on concise, accurate, clear, and "scannable" text. The MHAC website offered a lot of

general strategies for writing, many of which align with best practices in TPC, but what

professionals referenced most often were materials that spoke about inclusive language.

I discuss this in more detail in regards to the final theme (Care Work, Connection, and

Emotional Labor), but inclusive language was a key part of MHAC's organizational

communication strategies and overall identity. Professionals were particularly cognizant

of using "person-first" language when talking about mental illness; instead of defining

individuals by their mental illness, such as calling someone "a schizophrenic," MHAC

advocated for describing an individual as a person with a specific mental illness, or "a

person with schizophrenia." All professionals referenced MHAC's guidance on inclusive,

nondiscriminatory language as influencing their social media writing.

Be Casual but Smart

You aren't writing a term paper, so there's no need to be stuffy. Present some knowledge but engage your readers in conversation.

> Example: The first step in getting help is talking to medical professional who is familiar with mental health, ideally a psychiatrist. A psychiatrist will ask that person questions about their health, life history and any injurious behaviors in the past and present. This conversation, called a diagnostic interview, may last an hour or more. Allow yourself time in your schedule so that you aren't in a hurry during this conversation.

Be Brief

Don't make your busy reader work. Limit content to what readers need to know and anticipate their questions and concerns. Sentences should deliver essential information quickly. Use short sentences, paragraphs and sections and include "white space" to make the material easy on readers' eyes.

Watch for double writing. Eliminate words that simply say the same thing again. It cuts length and can make the writing clearer.

> Example: You may have also experienced pressure to drink, use drugs or abuse medication to fit in because it seems like everyone is doing it. The strike through part is not necessary. "Fit in" already implies that everyone is doing it.

Be Specific

Give pointed advice. Give readers something to act on. Saying "Be there for your loved one" may sound nice, but it's not particularly helpful. Give them specific things to do — also known as calls to action.

Figure 12. Excerpt from the "Tips for Writing for MHAC" webpage

Outside of language-specific resources, professionals did not discuss many additional MHAC strategies that they used in their work. Brianna, a social media manager at the national MHAC organization, noted that affiliates could access Awareness Field Guides to support public awareness efforts on particular topics. These guides offered information and direction on how to communicate about certain campaigns, such as those surrounding Suicide Prevention Awareness Month or Mental Illness Awareness Week. As one example, Figure 13 shows a page from the Suicide Prevention Awareness Month section of the 2021 Awareness Guide, which includes MHAC advocacy goals for the month, specific MHAC events and activities, "Fast Facts" about suicide, and sample social media posts and content. Despite sharing these guides with affiliates, it was unclear how much or often they were used, as professionals didn't speak about them in our interviews. Even so, Jennifer did remark how she would review the MHAC website or social media channels to check in on events and national

campaigns. I noted that she linked to articles on the MHAC website several times as I

monitored the MHAC Minnesota Facebook and Twitter accounts. But in general these

MHAC-specific materials did not come up often in interviews.

Figure 13. Sample social media content for Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, in MHAC Awareness Guide

However, professionals did speak about partnering with other organizations to

amplify MHAC messages or messages related to mental health. Jennifer spoke at length

about her process of reviewing and curating materials sent to MHAC Minnesota from

other organizations, which is visible in her log as she reviewed materials from the

Minnesota Department of Health campaign, #StayConnectedMN, focused on mental

health awareness during the pandemic. She listed her subscriptions to a dizzying amount of organizations' public newsletters – Bipolar Hope, The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Hope to Cope, maternal mental health organizations, Mental Health Minnesota, and Mental Health Network, to name a few. Jennifer would sort through these newsletters to find relevant and timely content for social media. Lisa was constantly building partnerships with those at other organizations to support fundraising events and content. At MHAC Wisconsin, Emily described partnering with other state organizations, such as the Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition, to share their work with MHAC's social media audiences. She also was invited to a fundraising event at a local venue to spread awareness about MHAC's work, an opportunity that she leveraged by sharing a photo on social media from the event. Professionals hoped that connecting with organizations, and their resources or materials, would spread information to wider audiences, a crucial tactic for strengthening MHAC's social media presence. Professionals' tactics here recall Kimball's (2006; 2017) discussion of radical sharing and Walton et al.'s (2019) emphasis on coalition-building; it was through these connections, and a willingness to share knowledge and audiences, that professionals could form coalitions across organizational boundaries. It was a way of achieving something greater and reaching far wider than professionals were able to do on their own.

Sometimes professionals didn't need to establish a formal connection with organizations outside of MHAC in order to find tactics that they could use to inform their social media writing. Informal monitoring or research on organizations' social media approaches could be insightful for generating new ideas. Of the professionals I spoke with, Lisa was the most attuned to how organizations were engaging with social media. At many points during our interview, she offered examples of different ways nonprofit or for-profit organizations had leveraged, or failed to leverage, social media. Lisa

repeatedly recounted her experience coordinating sponsorships for art museums where she noted the organizations' more sophisticated audience analysis techniques, such as creating audience personas that she then would refer back to:

> I literally had a picture of Meryl Streep above my desk with like this very sort of like fancy up-do because our audience was kind of older, fancy, very sophisticated [...] My tendency is not to speak in that voice. I was like, "No, you're not writing this to your friends, you're writing it to her [the Meryl Streep persona]!"

It was unclear to what extent Lisa was able to bring these audience analysis tactics into her work at MHAC Minnesota, as she wasn't in charge of directing social media communication outside of sponsorships and fundraising events. Yet having this knowledge could be useful if MHAC Minnesota was able to develop a more detailed audience analysis approach. Lisa also sought out her sponsors' social media accounts to try and learn new ways of connecting with them. In examining how a sponsor was using LinkedIn, Lisa noted that she might begin using LinkedIn more often.

Facebook and Advertising as Tactical Nonprofit Tools

As one of the most widely used social media platforms, it made sense that professionals used Facebook and its many features to spread awareness about the MHAC mission and connect with local audiences in Minnesota and Wisconsin. In each interview, professionals spoke about how they leveraged Facebook's various features or tools in support of MHAC's mission. Professionals mentioned Facebook so often throughout interviews that I created the code "Facebook as a Nonprofit Tool" to account for its significance. Facebook was a critical part of nonprofit social media writing because it provided professionals with affordances that other platforms did not have, such as options for facilitating fundraisers and donations, placing advertisements, creating events, analyzing audiences in detail, and organizing private groups; additional codes captured these functions and professionals' use of them. MHAC professionals were

using all of these features as part of their social media work. Lisa even noted that in her nonprofit work, she had "spent a lot of time talking about Facebook with people." I initially hesitated to develop a code around Facebook use because I had expected that it would naturally be part of social media writing, being the most used platform. As I continued my analysis, however, it became clear that professionals were not only using Facebook because it was the largest platform where their audiences would most likely be active, they were tactically leveraging the different features and resources it offered in support of MHAC strategies.

As I discussed in the section on balancing multidimensional advocacy, Facebook was an especially valuable tool for fundraising. Nonprofit organizations had options to create fundraising campaigns, add "donate" buttons to their profiles, allow supporter fundraisers organized by followers, or create live videos where followers could join and donate (Meta, 2022). In February 2020, MHAC Wisconsin began using Facebook fundraising tools and had generated around $15,000 in donations, according to Emily. At MHAC Minnesota, Lisa described how she had settled on Facebook as a social media fundraising tool after considering other options, such as Amazon Smile. Amazon Smile allows Amazon customers to donate a percentage of eligible purchases to a chosen nonprofit. Yet through her research, Lisa found that many had warned against it:

> Well, of course I was like, That sounds too good to be true. And so I looked into it
> and the portion that these nonprofits are getting [through Amazon Smile] is like,
> unbelievably miniscule, it's like 10 percent of a penny or something like that. The
> thing is when Facebook started doing fundraisers, there's real money there and
> they don't charge for it. And we, I heard about it three months before everybody
> was like, "Facebook fundraisers, Facebook fundraisers!" If there's money there,
> nonprofits will talk about it a lot.

Facebook's fundraising tools were far more attractive to Lisa and professionals at other nonprofits because Facebook does not charge processing fees for donations. Lisa's tactical research helped MHAC Minnesota make a choice about what would be best to strengthen strategic goals around fundraising.

Professionals were also interested in Facebook's advertising features as a way to ensure that their audiences and supporters were aware of certain events, programming, or fundraisers. At MHAC Minnesota, there was not as much attention paid to advertising, though Jennifer mentioned paying to "boost" certain posts so that they would reach a larger audience. At MHAC Wisconsin, Emily brought information learned from her Bachelor's degree in Advertising to her work with social media writing. Emily explained how she had begun running paid, targeted ads on Facebook in the past year, noting that those ads seemed to have expanded MHAC Wisconsin's reach to audiences who are interested in supporting mental health advocacy. Creating ads was actually Emily's favorite part of her work with social media because the ads would connect with new audiences who hadn't heard of MHAC before:

> I think the thing that I find most enjoyable is with the paid ads we're able to find new audiences and a lot of times, these new people will comment on the event and be like, "Oh, this is so cool, I didn't know that things were happening like this in Wisconsin!" And so I think that reaching new audiences and having new people hear about [MHAC] Wisconsin, that's probably what I find most enjoyable.

Emily would also occasionally be asked by other nonprofit organizations to run ads. She recalled how a state nonprofit was hoping to get the word out about a program offering money to those in need of housing during the pandemic. The organization offered to reimburse MHAC Wisconsin to place the ad so that MHAC audiences could perhaps benefit from the program or spread awareness about it. Partnering with other organizations to use Facebook advertising was an "interesting new tactic" for Emily, who

remarked that it could help supporters not only learn new information, but also gain trust in this network of nonprofits who were working together to advocate for their needs.

Audience or post analysis tools available on Facebook were useful for identifying how to best connect with MHAC supporters. Professionals did take advantage of other tools for audience analysis that were available through the social media management tools they used, which included HootSuite or Constant Contact. Yet in our conversations, they spoke about using Facebook in particular for the extensive metrics it offered. Professionals could use Facebook Audience Insights, an analytics tool built-in to the platform, to review information about audiences as well as post performance. Tools like this helped Jennifer develop a clear sense of who MHAC Minnesota's social media audiences were and how they responded to certain types of content. She used Facebook as a sort of baseline assessment tool for understanding how audiences responded to posts, and what kind of content would be most interesting for followers, often assuming that if something was popular on Facebook, it was most likely popular on Twitter as well. Jennifer described downloading post metrics during a certain time frame and sifting through data about post reach, organic reach, and total impressions. In managing a Facebook page specifically for the MHAC United Walk in Minnesota, Lisa followed a similar process of reviewing post performance and audience engagement. Data collected from those analyses were then used for discussion in meetings about how to develop specific strategies for gaining new supporters, sponsors, or participants for the MHAC United Walk.

Even with the tactical benefits and versatility of Facebook's tools, professionals were aware of Facebook's massive monopoly of audience data as well as its less-than favorable business practices. Facebook may have had its issues, but professionals knew that its tools would help strengthen their social media writing and MHAC's mission and vision. Lisa was open in expressing her distaste of Facebook, stating that she had "a lot

of problems with Facebook" and she "didn't like their politics." Yet she felt that professionally, there was no way to avoid using the platform. Her distaste revealed that she was perhaps a more critical Facebook user. She found the way that platforms like Facebook were so inherently tied to data and metrics to be disconcerting – in a past position, her colleagues referred to the number of "eyeballs" that were engaging with content, which was a memory that made Lisa groan. Emily also seemed to find the vast amount of audience data to be jarring:

> There's so much that you can do with Facebook, like looking at what people identify as what, their interests are, what their jobs are or their occupations, where they live, their income. It's pretty bizarre the things that you can see and analyze.

This sense of bewilderment and discomfort with Facebook not only indicated how wary professionals were of the platform, but their own sense of their precarity as nonprofit social media workers who did not have a choice about whether or not to use this behemoth of a platform. When meeting with me for our second-phase interview to discuss her log, Emily explained that Facebook had flagged an ad she was trying to place. This was something that did seem to happen fairly frequently with ads for advocacy-related content, and it was something that happened to other nonprofit organizations, according to Emily – ads would be flagged for violating policies about "social issues," and she would be asked to confirm her identity, which was a difficult process that could take a long time to complete. It appeared that Facebook had instituted a strict policy for ads relating to "social issues, elections, and politics," (refer to Figure 14) a policy that may have come after foreign interference in elections. Issues surrounding ads were aggravating for the ways they could impede MHAC's social media advocacy work, as Emily explains:

We do come against this stuff on Facebook, and what's a little bit frustrating is

that technically [MHAC]'s a nonpartisan organization, so we can't choose a

Democratic or Republican stance on things. So it's kind of a case-by-case thing.

Even though, like a lot of these ads shouldn't be rejected because we are

nonpartisan, they still get rejected. And so I think it definitely affects our reach,

and being able to reach more people who are passionate about the same issues

in the way that we're kind of used to with Facebook and social media ads.

In this situation, Emily ended up not placing the ad because of the trouble she had had

confirming her identity. Emily's encounter with Facebook and the flagged ad represents

more than a frustrating day on the job. It is illustrative of how Facebook as a platform

can act as a roadblock for smaller, less-powerful local organizations like MHAC, and

how professionals' tactical decisions to support their organizations are limited even

further by large platforms like Facebook.
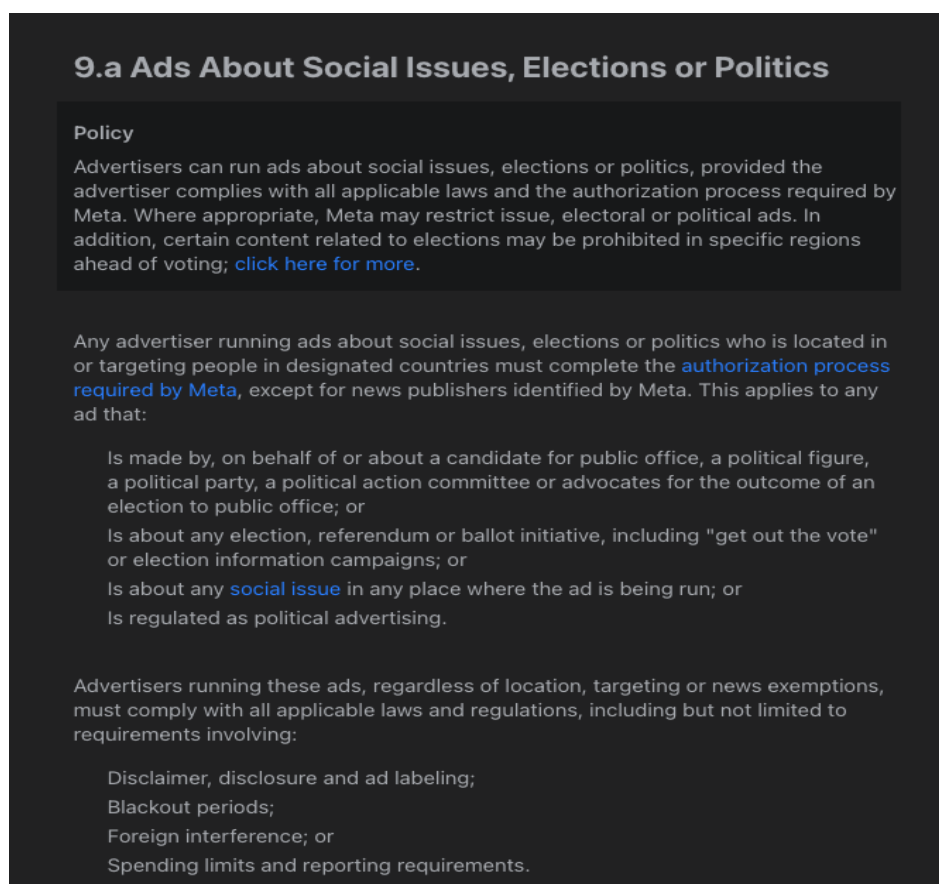
Figure 14. Facebook's policies on advertisements concerning "Social Issues, Elections, or Politics"

Despite the benefit of running Facebook ads or using Facebook Audience

Insights, knowledge about how to successfully use these features, or others on different

platforms was not always widespread. In addition to their daily schedules, professionals

had to go out of their way to learn how these features functioned and how to use them

tactically. One way professionals did so was by signing up for training or professional

courses outside of MHAC. Jennifer had mentioned participating in a workshop on

nonprofit use of social media, and Emily was considering beginning a course on Google

ads. Yet nothing was more indicative of Facebook's influence than professionals using

Facebook groups as a resource for better understanding social media platforms

(including Facebook). All professionals, with the exception of Samantha who was just

starting out at MHAC Wisconsin, consulted Facebook groups to learn more about best practices for social media or other elements connected to their communications roles. Lisa listed off three nonprofit groups she checked in with semi-regularly: one was dedicated to those managing the annual MHAC United Walk event, one was for those in nonprofit or advocacy work to ask general questions, and another was a large peer-support group for those working in nonprofits. When we spoke, Emily had recently joined a Facebook group to learn more about nonprofit growth and social media. These groups allowed professionals to engage in Kimball's (2006; 2017) radical sharing, where they could quickly learn from many others' social media tactics. Lisa explained how group members would share approaches, such as how often they might post during the MHAC United Walk event or how they would create a sort of competition on social media to engage supporters. Lisa, Jennifer, and Emily all sought out these groups in an attempt to find resources that were not available through MHAC affiliates.

Responding to the Pandemic

The influence of the pandemic was noticeable in professionals' approach to social media writing and mental health advocacy work. Responding to the pandemic offered opportunities to expand the MHAC affiliates' reach to new audiences with new content. Yet at the same time, the pandemic also revealed challenges in trying to foster more audience connections while also being cognizant of professionals' time and the organization's needs and goals. A focus on expanding to new audiences and new platforms was repeated throughout conversations with professionals. In her brief written responses to an interview question about the pandemic's impact on social media communication, Brianna, a social media manager with the national MHAC organization, explained that MHAC's strategy was to expand its presence on different platforms and was focusing more intentionally on virtual events and campaigns. This larger strategy was reflected differently across the two affiliates. At MHAC Wisconsin, the pandemic

motivated Emily and Samantha to look to social media for its potential to connect with even more audiences. The overarching approach to social media writing was more dynamic at MHAC Wisconsin, with Emily and Samantha expressing excitement about new ways of extending MHAC's reach. However, at MHAC Minnesota, professionals seemed to be more concerned with maintaining their own tactical approaches to social media, mainly because they were busy balancing their social media work with other responsibilities; it was not always feasible for them, with current expectations and workload, to develop new ways of building relationships with audiences.

Under Emily's leadership, MHAC Wisconsin's approach to social media aligned with Brianna's statements about national MHAC strategies to expand social media connections. Emily engaged in a wide variety of social media tactics that supported MHAC's larger strategic pandemic response to expand social media reach. She was organizing and facilitating virtual events, creating new content, placing ads, and thanking donors. Emily was performing some of these tasks prior to COVID-19, but she noted that one of the "silver linings" of the pandemic was figuring out how to leverage video conferencing technologies like Zoom with social media:

> From COVID, we've been able to do a lot more virtual events, which has really
> expanded our reach to new people who maybe couldn't travel to in-person
> events, for whatever reason, and so seeing the broader reach that we've been
> able to establish this past year has been really cool.

Both Emily and Samantha discussed a virtual Q&A event they organized with a Colorado State Representative as an example of their effort to bring new audiences into MHAC Wisconsin's programming who perhaps may not have attended an in-person event. Their work recalls St. Amant's (2018) remarks that advocacy is inherently connected to accessibility, or ensuring that audiences can find information that they might need to take action. Samantha echoed Emily's responsiveness to the pandemic through new

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events and content. When asked about her thoughts on MHAC Wisconsin's goals in using social media, Samantha pointed to the importance of being able to "reach as many people as we can" by maintaining a consistent presence on various social media platforms.

Among other activities, Emily used time during the pandemic that would have been otherwise spent at in-person events or on other social media writing tasks experimenting with new social media content. As I analyzed my interviews with Emily, I had developed codes that highlighted how the pandemic afforded Emily the time to work tactically in creating content that could be leveraged on social media and across other communication channels. Emily described how when COVID-19 hit, she had to reassess how she was using her time to uphold MHAC's advocacy mission via social media and other communications outlets:

> Before COVID, my job was entirely social media, creating the newsletter, and planning in-person events. And so when in-person events were taken away and nobody had really started to do webinars yet, we kind of had to pivot and figure out how I was going to spend my time. And we had always wanted to create like a five minute video that teachers could show to their kids at elementary school to just explain what mental health is [...] and so we were working on this concept for a couple months.

The resulting project was a short video titled "Let's Talk About Mental Illness" (refer to Figure 15). The video uses animated creatures to explain the concept of mental illness to children, as well as coping strategies they might use to navigate difficult situations. Following the video, Emily and others at MHAC Wisconsin tactically built up content for a campaign on children's mental health. After the video experienced some success on YouTube, Emily developed supplementary worksheets, coloring sheets, and stickers (refer to Figure 16). She also discussed how along with her MHAC co-workers, she

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presented on their work with the video at the national MHAC conference in hopes that

others might be interested in using it in their own communities or that others might be

inspired to create similar content. As Samantha joined MHAC Wisconsin, she worked

with Emily on a second short video meant to accompany the children's video so that

parents and educators understood the purpose of the "Let's Talk About Mental Illness"

campaign. Overall, the changes brought on by the pandemic made it possible for Emily

to create this content. Considering how busy she was, she noted she would not have

had the time to develop an animated video like this if the pandemic hadn't happened.

Even so, Emily took advantage of this time to tactically create content she could

leverage on social media and across other channels.

Figure 15. "Let's Talk About Mental Illness" video created by Emily
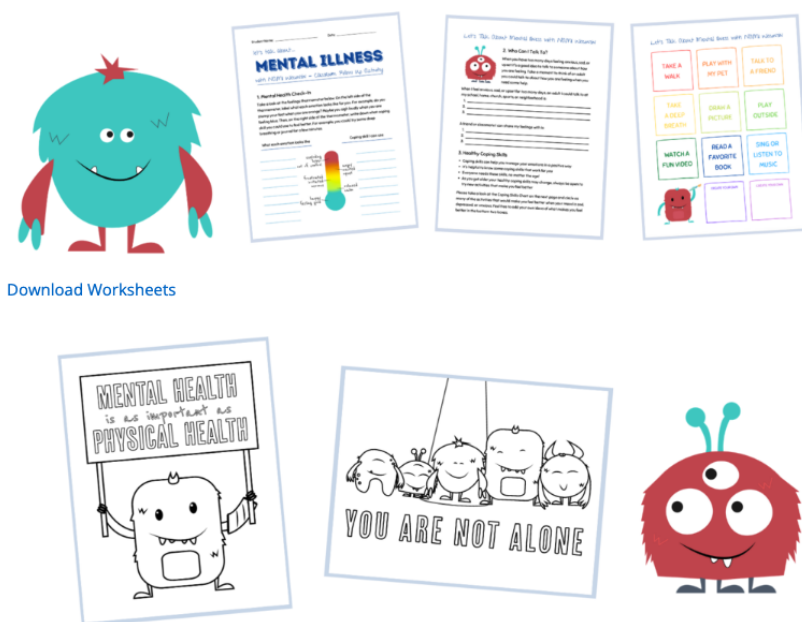
Figure 16. Supplementary "Let's Talk About Mental Illness" worksheets and coloring pages created by Emily

Things looked different at MHAC Minnesota. Jennifer and Lisa's tactical responses to the COVID-19 pandemic reflected their concern about maintaining their social media writing and advocacy work in a way that was sustainable and appropriate for them, and for upholding MHAC's strategic advocacy goals. As I've mentioned, Jennifer and Lisa participated in the study during January and early February of 2021, when COVID-19 restrictions were more stringent and vaccines were just beginning to be administered more widely. While at that point, the world had been dealing with COVID-19 for nearly a year, the general uncertainty of the pandemic and questions about vaccines were primary concerns for the public. Jennifer and Lisa did not talk as directly about the pandemic, and so it was difficult to determine how much it had affected their work. However, in our conversations it became clear that they were concerned with how much work they were reasonably able to take on. Those concerns signified a focus on tactically maintaining their social media writing approaches as a way of preserving

MHAC Minnesota's mission. Jennifer explained that MHAC Minnesota's main audience consisted of women between 50 and 60 years old, and as a result, her approach to social media was to speak to that main audience by avoiding "cute" or "edgy" language and content that she did not think was appropriate. Even so, Jennifer indicated that she wasn't sure she was always able to approach social media work in ways that would meet MHAC Minnesota's strategic goals to connect with more "diverse" groups:

> We're very focused on reaching out to diverse communities and populations right now. And so there are a number of different organizations I should be following as well as being more active and retweeting any mental health content and it just, again, with time constraints and with the desire not to overwhelm people with content, it ends up eliminating a lot [...] I know that there's a lot more I could be doing that I'm probably not doing.

Jennifer was aware that she was perhaps not engaging with the diverse audiences that MHAC was hoping to reach, but with her workload and her role as a part-time employee, she didn't feel she had the time to keep up with new approaches to social media writing to attract new audiences. She stated that if someone was working only with social media, they would have the time to do what Jennifer felt she couldn't. Lisa also generated a similar set of concerns:

> I mean, we are concerned with being in communication with younger people. That is something that is part of our mission, having more diverse audiences. So if it was my organization, I 100 percent would hire a full time social media person to manage all of our channels.

For Jennifer and Lisa, it made more sense to foster existing strategies and/or tactics because they felt they could not take on any additional work, whether that work was a result of the pandemic or a different situation. In an ideal world, Lisa noted, perhaps the Minnesota affiliate would be able to afford to create a role for a social media specialist.

Until then, Lisa and Jennifer focused on a tactic of sustainable social media writing that fit into their schedules.

Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor

Professionals in this study clearly were not mental healthcare workers, nor did they have backgrounds in the sphere of healthcare or medicine. They did not treat patients or offer specific medical advice. Yet their social media writing work was motivated by a sense of care and emotional acuity towards audiences' feelings and lived experiences. Emotion, care, and community are inseparable from social media writing and mental health advocacy. As I reviewed in Chapter 2, social media platforms are designed for users to express emotions through likes, clicks, commenting, and sharing (Arcy, 2016); the heart icons for "liking" content on Twitter or Facebook's "reactions" – Like, Love, Care, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry – are emojis meant to be a "quick and easy way to express how you feel" (Meta, "Reactions," 2022). In essence, social media platforms are imbued with emotions, and as a result, communication on these platforms cannot be considered without attention to emotion. Similarly, conversations about mental health cannot be detached from emotion and care. Those who live with mental illness or mental disability have historically been stigmatized for displaying what was seen as dangerous, unregulated emotion (Johnson, 2010). However, stigmatizing emotion is itself dangerous for the ways it removes individuals' responsibility to communicate care for audiences' emotions and lived experiences. Expressing care is especially important during recent times of crisis surrounding the pandemic and racist violence (Day et al., 2021), and is an approach to helping those in precarious positions, which includes those with mental illness.

In their routine social media writing work, professionals were taking on care work and emotional and relational labor to try to support MHAC audiences, but to also support themselves in their own precarious positions as social media communicators working

within the realm of nonprofit advocacy. Professionals viewed emotion and care as part of their social media and advocacy writing, as they pointed back to MHAC's mission and vision to ensure those with mental illness had access to key resources. Advocacy itself was articulated as a type of care. Part of this advocacy involved using social media to create positive, supportive, and inclusive communities for those with mental illness. Community-building was seen as essential to combating the stigma surrounding mental health as it created spaces where the complexities and precarities of living with mental illness could be thoughtfully represented. Drawing from MHAC's guidelines about language use related to mental illness was also significant for professionals in their work, as was evidenced in the social media writing tactics discussed above. This language reflected an ethic of care and respect for supporters' experiences with mental illness, and professionals emphasized language as a key guiding element for social media writing. Expressing care for audiences through advocacy, community-building, and language was top priority, but professionals balanced that priority with the need to express care for themselves as workers. Though social media was a critical tool for building connections, professionals knew they could only do so much work to that end as they balanced their schedules and work tasks. Further, sometimes disconnection from social media, or seeking out other avenues of connection that were not digital, was a form of care for both audiences and professionals.

With this theme, professionals' approaches to social media writing provide insight that addresses each of my research questions. We can see that professionals are engaging in emotional, affective labor as part of their social media and advocacy writing at MHAC, and that this labor is aligned with MHAC's discourses surrounding social media and advocacy. Even so, I believe this theme is instrumental in considering my third research question, which asks what we can learn from professionals' experiences to inform our knowledge and approaches to social media and mental health advocacy

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writing. As this theme illustrates, it is imperative to view social media communication and advocacy as acts of care, not only for our audiences, but also for ourselves. In doing so, we can draw attention to precarity by acknowledging what is needed to address that precarity, to care for others.

Advocacy as Care & Community

In previous sections, I show how professionals saw advocacy at MHAC as being multidimensional, encompassing various activities that included pursuing legislative advocacy, educating audiences on mental illness, spreading awareness about mental health, and demonstrating support for those with mental illness. Though these goals are equally important, professionals indicate that care for others' experiences and emotions is at the center of their social media writing and advocacy work. Care was a part of MHAC's mission, vision, and values as an organization. MHAC's vision statement focuses on helping those with mental illness "live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a community that cares." One of the organization's core values is compassion, or practicing "respect, kindness and empathy." Brianna, a social media manager at the national MHAC organization did not share the details of her specific responsibilities, but her interview responses spoke to MHAC's underlying values. When asked about the responsibilities of her position, Brianna wrote that she aimed to "create a community for people with lived experience and for people looking to learn more about mental health [and] mental illness." She described MHAC as a "safe and trustworthy place" for the public to find resources and support, and explained that in her work with social media it was "important to be considerate of people's feelings and experiences" as they were "looking for a community to support them." Brianna's language and MHAC's statements position care and attention to lived experience as central to social media writing and advocacy work. Achieving advocacy goals meant fostering a community that was attuned to understanding how others' felt.

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Professionals' discussion of their work reflected the values that appeared in MHAC's vision and Brianna's responses. Alongside MHAC's advocacy goals, Jennifer stated that it was necessary to show social media audiences that the organization was there to help and support them:

> In the mental health world it's also really just important to build community and to make people feel less alone. Because it can be a very isolating experience. So a lot of it is really just, "Hey, we're here, we've got a lot that we can offer. We have a helpline." You know, so really just reinforcing everything that we can do to be supportive.

Ultimately, in sharing informational resources about anxiety and depression or promoting a peer-led support group at MHAC, Jennifer wanted her social media audiences to feel that they had a space to rely on with MHAC Minnesota. Lisa was concerned with how MHAC Minnesota was expressing care for audiences, and how organization could identify new ways to leverage social media to do so. In the context of a question about how Lisa tried to keep up with new social media trends and approaches, she explained that doing so was really about extending the reach of MHAC's main purpose, which she describes in the following way:

> Some of the work that we want to do is normalize a conversation about mental illness, that it's not something that you should be ashamed of, or that should be hidden away from people. That it's something that you can talk about and that it's a physical ailment like any other and I'm not going to blame you for having cancer and I'm not going to blame you for being depressed.

Lisa wanted her work with social media to situate mental illness as typical, as something that MHAC's supporters and social media audiences could feel comfortable with, rather than something to be ashamed of. Emily and Samantha had a similar focus at MHAC Wisconsin, where Emily repeatedly pointed to her own personal policy of integrating

"uplifting" messages into posts she shared so that audiences knew it was "okay to have a bad mental health day." Samantha hadn't been at MHAC Wisconsin for very long, but thought that it would be valuable to try to connect with social media audiences "on a more human level" by sharing uplifting arts or literature-focused content that supporters could find empowering.

Envisioning advocacy as care involved fostering a sense of community for social media audiences and supporters. Community-building is an essential part of advocacy in that it creates spaces where those who are marginalized feel represented and safe; in the context of mental health, individuals gravitate towards peer-organized digital spaces where they can build meaningful relationships and help others who experience mental illness (Prescott, Hanley, & Ujhelyi, 2017; McCosker, 2018). MHAC affiliate social media accounts were not necessarily peer-led or organized, but they were managed with an eye towards creating spaces that those with mental illness could feel included in. Professionals did so in several ways, from sharing news articles on certain issues facing those with mental illness, such as techniques for limiting anxiety symptoms during the pandemic, to posting updates on fundraising or other community events. Jennifer stated that it was important to always schedule out content via Hootsuite that could be posted later so that MHAC Minnesota could be "in front of people consistently." This idea of consistently posting to maintain community appeared in questions about professionals' own policies for social media writing; at most, Jennifer tried to post no more than three times per day and Emily had a goal of at least three times per week. Consistency helped audiences know that the MHAC affiliates were active. Additionally, both Jennifer and Emily discussed how they would thank individuals who created Facebook fundraisers as a way of connecting with audiences and showing gratitude.

These community-building efforts did appear to have an impact on social media audiences. In an anecdote that I shared in the beginning of Chapter 2, Jennifer recalled

a situation where Anna, the Executive Director of MHAC Minnesota, noticed that an individual had reached out to MHAC Minnesota in a Facebook comment, stating that they had been feeling suicidal:

> [Anna] actually was able to track him down and get someone to his house to help, like a crisis response team. And also the community at [MHAC] was incredible. I mean, there were probably 70, 80 comments back saying, you know, "You're going to get through this, we're here for you! Call [MHAC]'s helpline." You just had like this flood of people trying to support this man.

Although Jennifer herself wasn't directly involved in this situation, her day-to-day social media writing work was in part responsible for building up the community members who reached out to offer support to this person via the comments. That community, in turn, helped alert Anna, who monitored MHAC social media accounts fairly often, so that she could locate the man and send him help.

Community-building was powerful work, but it was work that professionals did not always feel that they had time for, or that they could tackle by themselves. Jennifer, Lisa, and Emily spoke about community in relationship to specific communities that they felt MHAC needed to do more to connect with on social media and in their overall messaging. For Jennifer at MHAC Minnesota, community-building work came up when I asked if she felt there were additional audiences she felt that MHAC should be reaching out to:

> It's just a time constraint. So, the Hmong community, the Somali community, youth, the LGBTQ community, it just goes on. Then we want to attract people living with depression, with bipolar disorder, with psychosis. So I think the potential is massive.

Lisa echoed Jennifer's concerns about establishing ties with more communities, stating that MHAC wanted to connect more with younger people, but that doing so would mean

the organization would need to hire a person to manage social media full-time (Jennifer worked part-time). MHAC Wisconsin appeared to be making an intentional effort to connect with marginalized communities through diversity, equity, and inclusion work. Emily explained that the organization usually had one event every year, and then didn't return back to these efforts. In response, Emily formed a committee to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. The committee hadn't begun its work when we spoke, but she was excited about potential projects, such as reviewing all MHAC communications to ensure that they were "welcoming and inclusive" for all groups. Emily's aspirations were critical for MHAC Wisconsin to reach marginalized groups, but this was work that would need to be done in addition to her regular tasks, which were already a lot. Professionals knew that they needed to keep up community-building efforts like these to support those in precarious positions, however, that was difficult to do when schedules were stretched thin.

Language as Care

In the context of social media writing and mental health advocacy, language was especially critical for expressing care. Professionals consistently mentioned how they were careful to avoid discriminatory language or language that positioned mental illness as a defining feature of an individual's identity. MHAC's policy of using of person-first language was a critical part of professionals' work as they wrote and created social media content. This approach to language demonstrated awareness of the experiences and feelings of those with mental illness while also fighting against stigmatized assumptions about people with mental illness as being weak or abnormal. Jennifer described person-first language in the context of the MHAC Communication Style Guide (refer to Figure 17), which centered person-first language as the "default" when talking about individuals and encouraged communicators to avoid "negatively-charged language" and to take a "strength-based perspective." For example, the guide argues for

referring to individuals with schizophrenia or depression to center them as people, rather than as schizophrenics or depressives, where the mental illness is the main element being emphasized. Avoiding negative, outdated terms like "handicapped" or "physically challenged" helped to "convey dignity, empathy, and hope" instead of "condescending, isolating, and stigmatizing" attitudes towards individuals. Similarly, the MHAC style guide calls for communicators to keep away from language that articulates those with mental illness as "inferior" or unhealthy compared to those without mental illness, or that implies those with mental illness are in some way "suffering" or "struggling."

Use	Avoid	Why?
person with schizophrenia / person with depression	schizophrenic (noun) / depressive (noun)	Using person-centered language communicates that a person is not defined by any one trait or condition. It's important to avoid turning words that should be descriptors or qualifiers into nouns.
person (living with/experiencing) a mental illness / people with mental illnesses (plural)	the mentally ill / consumer(s)	
person experiencing homelessness	homeless person / the homeless	
person with (or experiencing) substance use disorders(s)	addiction / addicts	
person experiencing a disability related to (the illness)	disabled* / handicapped**	Negative words can be experienced as condescending, isolating, and stigmatizing, whereas neutral and positive words can convey dignity, empathy, and hope.
person with a physical disability	physically-challenged	
uses a wheelchair / person with a physical disability	confined to a wheelchair / wheelchair-bound	
diagnosed with bipolar disorder / living with bipolar disorder	suffers from bipolar disorder / is bipolar / struggles with bipolar disorder	Avoid language that implies that people without illnesses or disabilities are superior.
without disabilities	normal/able-bodied/healthy/whole	

NOTES:

* Not everyone with a mental illness considers themselves "disabled" or part of the "disability community."

** Avoid using "handicapped" in any context.

Figure 17. Examples of how to use "Person-centered and positive language" from MHAC's Communication Style Guide.

All professionals spoke about the importance of person-first or inclusive language in their interviews. The MHAC Communications Style Guide did ask all employees to adhere to policies around language, but professionals acknowledged that this language was one of the most important things they kept in mind when engaging in social media writing. Emily explained that using thoughtful language was necessary to normalizing mental illness:

> I think that [language] is really important to help with the stigma, and just like any sort of illness, a mental illness is the same as a physical illness. And so creating that verbiage, I think, is one of the most important things around social media and making that a normal thing that people are used to seeing, used to using those words.

Person-first language was one way to create an environment of care where those with mental illness felt comfortable, where this use of language might demonstrate that MHAC was listening to how they felt and trying to avoid stigmatizing their experiences. And as Emily points out, consistently using positive language on social media could not only build a safe community where those with mental illness felt represented, it could educate others who, in seeing this language, might change how they show care for those with mental illness. Emily's explanation here recalls Lisa's comments about MHAC's goals to "normalize a conversation about mental illness" so that individuals would not feel ashamed or embarrassed. Both Samantha and Emily mentioned how trigger warnings were a way of considering how content could make others' feel; Samantha wanted to keep in mind that "mental health was a heavy subject for a lot of people." Paying close attention to language ultimately meant paying close attention to how others felt, how they were affected by negative, stigmatizing terms, and how to enact care by respectfully representing others' experiences. This labor was necessary

for understanding how those with mental illness inhabited precarious positions and how that precarity could be addressed.

In alignment with the MHAC style guide, professionals also discussed how language was essential for ensuring that MHAC was inclusive of marginalized groups' experiences with mental illness. Professionals wanted to use this language to respect marginalized groups and to recognize their precarity. Jennifer discussed the importance of capitalizing "Black" when writing about Black mental health to show respect. As part of her leadership of the diversity, equity, and inclusion committee at MHAC Wisconsin, Emily wanted her language and any accompanying content to reflect all groups. She did so by making sure that she was not posting content only showing white people or connecting to white experiences, stating that she was concerned with "showing Wisconsin" by representing the different groups living there. Similarly, Samantha framed person-first language through the lens of inclusivity:

> When it comes to race, sexuality, or pretty much any group of people, you want to make sure that your messaging can reach as many people as possible. And that it doesn't inherently discriminate against a group just because of the way you worded it. Making those mistakes is a lot easier than I think people realize, I think, especially now with social media. Or you know, using gendered words, making implied statements of who you're talking to. So just being really cognizant of the way that you word things so that people don't feel like they're alienated in your message, or that, "this isn't for me."

For Samantha, making a habit of using inclusive language helped MHAC Wisconsin connect with people who might need MHAC's resources or advocacy, rather than pushing them away. She wanted those from marginalized groups to be able to see that MHAC's content was "for them." Using inclusive language to respect and connect with marginalized groups in precarious positions was a form of care.

Samantha's discussion of language use was interesting not only for her claims about inclusive language, but also for her efforts to decode confusing language for the purpose of making it accessible. Samantha referred back to courses she had taken for her "Health and the Humanities" certificate, some of which had centered on communicating about health and medicine in ways that others could understand. She reflected on these courses, explaining that they helped her in the internship by preparing her to "interpret legislative language." In a future project that might connect with social media, she was hoping to put those interpretive skills to the test by reviewing a bill brought forth in the Wisconsin legislature related to mental health:

> I would be summarizing it [the bill], summarizing what a nonprofit like us, whether
> we would support it or not, and putting things like that in our newsletter. I think
> the most direct way that I will be using those skills is being able to you know
> actually read the bill and understand what they're talking about, and then being
> able to summarize that into a kind of laymen's terms, so normal people can
> understand what's going on in the legislature, which is, you know, that's a whole
> separate issue of like the barrier between the public and what happens in the
> government. It's just hard to understand for the normal person because they
> haven't had experience with reading such complicated documents.

Samantha's goals were to translate complex language in order to bridge a gap between legislative decision-making on mental health and the public's knowledge of that decision-making. Decoding language in this way is an act of care because it ensures that the public can access, or understand and use, information connected to their mental health. Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) argues that making spaces or language accessible is an act of care: "If I'm having a pain day and a hard time processing language and I need you to use accessible language, with shorter words and easiness about repeating if I

don't follow, and you do, that's love. And solidarity" (p. 46). Samantha's attention to language illustrates how she prioritizes care through making information accessible.

The Emotional Labor of Personal Connection

The care that professionals displayed through their attention to advocacy, community-building, and language indicate that they were engaging in emotional labor centered around personal connection. As explained in Chapter 2, emotional labor is a type of digital labor that involves managing one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Also referred to as affective labor, emotional labor is defined as the labor needed to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hoschild, 1983, p. 7) or as the "creation and manipulation of affects" (Hardt, 1999, p. 96). In digital spaces, emotional labor can involve managing the emotions of others or suggesting how individuals should express emotions in certain situations, as Cummings (2017) shows in her study of mommy bloggers' labor. Many social media communicators perform relational labor (Baym, 2015), which requires attending to how content induces certain emotions in audiences with the ultimate goal of building relationships.

Managing a social media presence by itself involves a consideration of audiences' emotions, as I've shown. This meant determining how to best engage in community-building, as I reviewed above, but also how to support personal connections in ways that were beneficial for audiences. Lisa was the most vocal about the significance of creating personal connections with social media audiences. When I asked her if she could expand on a comment about what she considered to be the ideal characteristics in a social media approach, Lisa explained that she felt social media were for individual, personal communications, and that they presented "an opportunity for somebody to be very personal and honest and communicate one to one." She went on to elaborate:

I'm going for conversation, more of a personal feeling or experience. I follow a

ton of artists like, it's one person making their own stuff and [...] I find it very

relaxing, you know. This person's doing needlepoint, and this person's making

paintings and, you know, that's very calming and soothing. I like it. It feels much

more like a specific conversation that I'm having with that person, a little window

into their world. And for me, social media, the whole point of it is that it's

personal.

Being able to connect with individuals personally was important for how Lisa viewed

social media communication overall. Social media were about creating a "personal

feeling or experience" for audiences. Doing so had to involve emotional labor, or

considering how to construct content so as to invoke certain feelings in others that would

make them want to connect with MHAC. In tying her understanding of social media back

to MHAC Minnesota, Lisa shared a potential idea for a social media campaign where the

organization could share the personal stories and experiences of various individuals

living with mental illness. The goal was to amplify multiple individual voices as Lisa felt

that audiences would be more likely to engage with personal stories from various people

rather than messages appearing to be written from an organizational or "brand"

perspective. Crafting materials for the potential campaign that Lisa suggested would

require analyzing how these personal narratives would make others feel. It would

ultimately be a process of crafting emotional materials to elicit an empathetic response

from audiences.

Personal, emotional connections were thought to be powerful for sustaining the

MHAC affiliates' social media presences. Both Emily and Jennifer mentioned that they

spent time trying to respond to individuals' Facebook fundraisers or react to mentions of

the affiliates in comments as a way of signaling gratitude or support. Emily noted that

responding to those who set up fundraisers was a new but important part of her job as it

helped show audiences that MHAC was thankful for their contributions. These personalized thank-you or acknowledgment-focused interactions were visible in both professionals' logs. In her experience at MHAC Minnesota, Jennifer mentioned that at times, social media writing work meant having to respond to emotionally volatile situations where individuals experiencing symptoms of mental illness would leave obscene or incomprehensible comments. In those cases, it was important to be cognizant of any interactions that might trigger them, and to find them any resources they might need.

Yet sometimes, building personal, emotional connections via social media was not the best way to show awareness of others' feelings and needs. At multiple points, professionals expressed that social media were not always the right channels for showing care and emotional connection; social media writing needed to be supplemented with other forms of communication. Jennifer explained that she would occasionally receive requests from coworkers to share information on social media about classes held by MHAC Minnesota. However, sharing information on these platforms would most likely not reach those who could benefit from it, according to Jennifer:

> I do have some people sending me things like, "Hey can you promote my Understanding Psychosis class on Facebook?" And it's more like, "Yes we can put it as an event." You should know that that's not the way to fill your class because it will go out to 400 people out of our, you know, 8 or 9,000 followers, because it's not viral. It's not engaging. And the likelihood that it's going to hit somebody who actually wants to or has a need to understand psychosis better and is in the Elk River area is like zero. So, that's not the right avenue to promote a class.

Jennifer would find a way to still include information about the class on Facebook in the form of an event, which she felt was more appropriate. But ultimately her concern was to communicate information via channels that had the best possibility of connecting with audiences. Social media were not those channels in this case. Lisa echoed Jennifer's claims as she recalled a time when she had used a different method for communicating an event:

> We once did a printed poster one time and one of our volunteers took them all around to different therapists' offices'. On [the event day] there was somebody there who was there for the first time. And so I said, "Oh, how'd you hear about it?" and she said "There was a poster in my therapists' office." But like, that never happens with social media. Nobody has ever said, "I saw it on Instagram."

Lisa and Jennifer's scenarios are illustrative of social media's limitations for connection. A poster or other methods of delivering information might help reach those with mental illness who either did not use social media regularly or who might have missed it on Facebook or Twitter. Guo and Saxton (2020) argue that attention has become a "scarce organizational resource" because of the flood of information present on social media; they ask, "if everyone is doing social networking, who is paying attention to your nonprofit?" (p. 16). The personal, emotional labor of connection, then, needed to engage multiple methods of communication to meet supporters' needs. In short, professionals had to recognize when it mattered to disconnect from social media so they could connect in other meaningful ways.

Emily emphasized disconnection from social media as well in her discussions of how she saw the relationship between MHAC Wisconsin and the organization's social media audiences. She acknowledged that on social media, MHAC Wisconsin's content did not always seem to resonate with audiences:

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We don't get that much engagement, like comments and stuff, but I think that's because of the way this is set up. We have a national organization, then we have the state organization, and then we have local affiliates so I feel like, people just have different involvement levels [...] with their local affiliates who are much more hands-on and meet them in-person. Then the state level and the national level, which is more like "Let's get together, let's have the support group, let's meet with our local communities." Much more hands-on, boots on the ground. We're much more high-level awareness, statewide events, general things.

For Emily, it made sense that as a state organization, MHAC Wisconsin might see lower levels of social media audience engagement, mainly because a lot of action was taking place in local communities. At the higher levels of the organization, social media use was geared towards more general subjects that didn't always seem to carry the same weight or interest as local concerns. Moreover, Emily's discussion implies that audiences' disconnection from MHAC Wisconsin on social media was necessary for connecting more with local communities in person, outside of digital platforms; disconnection did not mean separating oneself from everything digital, but rather was a way of understanding how, when, and why audiences engaged with social media. These examples are aligned with Light's (2014) articulation of disconnective practice, which holds that connection and disconnection are essential to how social media have been constructed and used. Light writes that we should see "disconnection as something that we do in conjunction with connection" (p. 3). Disconnection does not have to be sought out for negative reasons, such as choosing to completely disengage from a platform. Instead, disconnection might involve situations where individuals assert agency to achieve their own goals; individuals' disconnective practices can be "powerful" and can contribute in "adding value to our experiences" (p. 17; 156). Karppi (2018) explains that "moments of disconnection [...] shape the ways in which we experience social media

sites and make them work for us" (p. 3). In the case of MHAC, audience disconnection did not mean that social media communication was not effective or that audiences were actively choosing to disengage with the organization's digital presence. It signaled to professionals that there were other avenues of connection they could pursue in order to show care and emotional awareness for their audiences' needs.

Emotional labor and disconnection also appeared in relation to how professionals felt connected to their social media writing work with MHAC. Professionals' conversations revealed tensions about how emotionally invested they felt about their work. For example, Emily stated that it was important to have passion for the larger advocacy work an organization was doing, and that she felt passionate about MHAC and mental health advocacy. The language of passion came up repeatedly with Emily, calling back to work that shows how "passion" and emotional connection often appear in relationship to both social media and nonprofit (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018; Duffy, 2017). The extent to which someone feels "passionate" about their work can be mobilized by organizations to argue that if workers are only passionate enough and work hard enough, they can attain career success. Still, even though Emily mentioned passion, she along with the other professionals seemed to acknowledge it was necessary not to become too connected to their work. Jennifer notably took a very matter-of-fact approach to her work with social media. When I asked if she felt her work affected her emotionally, she responded that it did occasionally, but that the impacts of her work were "pretty routine." Both Jennifer and Emily noted that they felt there was flexibility and balance in their work, despite indications that they did not feel they had enough time to devote to social media writing. As an intern, Samantha was perhaps feeling the tension between needing to feel passionate and completing all of the work on her plate. She was not being overworked, but she appeared to be trying to balance investment in her work and disconnection from it:

It's definitely more fast paced than my other job. Because you know, just the

nature of what [MHAC] does. Because it's also a mental health-geared nonprofit,

I think they try really hard not to burn people out. We are very cognizant of how

much we can handle as human beings. I feel like it's really easy to get burnt out

and they know that so keeping things to a doable level is definitely for the health

of everyone that works here.

Samantha's statement highlights burnout as a reason for disconnection – in order to

sustain the connective work that she and other professionals were doing with social

media, it was important for them to keep their workload manageable. It was also

possible that with too much work and connection to social media writing work,

professionals could become overwhelmed by their work or feeling less invested in it.

Disconnection from emotional labor and investment was what helped keep social media

and advocacy writing work viable for professionals.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented findings from my analysis of interviews with

professionals about their social media writing work; of professionals' logs of social media

writing tasks; publicly available organizational documents; and social media content. I

surfaced three main themes that demonstrate how professionals' social media writing

labor is situated within various layers of precarity: Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy;

Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies; and Care Work, Connection, &

Emotional Labor. Here I review how my findings offer insight for each of my research

questions. My following overarching research question – **How do professionals**

engage in the technical and professional digital labor of social media writing in

the context of mental health advocacy? – is divided into these three subquestions:

- **RQ1: What types of digital labor do professionals perform in their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media content that advocates for mental health support?**

  Each of my three themes provide insight about types of professionals' social media labor – they balanced different dimensions of advocacy; blended their own tactics with organizational strategies to respond to shifts and changes in their work; and engaged in the emotional labor of considering how best to show care and connect with audiences. However, the theme of Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy is most appropriate for answering this question because of its focus on the routine practices that professionals performed. Professionals did not always articulate their social media writing work as advocacy, yet the content they created, shared, or promoted was integral to achieving MHAC's multiple advocacy goals – advocacy (legislative-centered activities), education, support, and public awareness. As one dimension of advocacy, professionals curated, reviewed, and amplified information for their audiences, which in turn could help build community and encourage audiences to take action. Yet it could be difficult to juggle all of this work, as professionals were often stretched thin trying to cater to overlapping audiences – supporters, volunteers, donors, sponsors, and others – and to complete other communications tasks.

- **RQ2: How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?**

  Professionals in this study wove MHAC's discourses regarding social media writing and mental health together with tactics they had discovered were useful for completing their work. In working towards organizational goals or strategies, professionals had to identify activities that were perhaps not directly discussed or

supported by MHAC, but that would allow them to perform their social media writing work as best they could. In doing so, professionals did have to contend with the shifting nature of social media writing, as platforms changed frequently over time. They also navigated MHAC's organizational constraints – as a nonprofit, access to resources and funding was not always guaranteed. Even so, professionals drew from organizational strategies, such as standards on inclusive language and content in Awareness Field Guides, as well as tactically establishing partnerships with similar organizations or using tactics they observed other organizations using on public social media accounts. Facebook was especially critical for professionals' social media writing work, allowing them to tactically leverage tools for fundraising, advertising, and connecting with others doing similar work. Lastly, professionals had to respond tactically to the impacts of the pandemic on social media writing, and work in general. This included using time that would normally be spent organizing in-person events to develop streaming or online events, or to create new content to share. However, in some cases, responding to the pandemic meant ensuring that current social media writing work could be sustained throughout tough times.

- **RQ3: What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?**

I have shown how professionals balanced various dimensions of advocacy and patched together tactics and strategies as a response to continuous change. These are both findings that identify how we can visualize social media writing in the context of mental health advocacy as TPC – not only are professionals performing TPC tasks, such as making information available and accessible so

that the public can take action, but they are doing so across platforms and environments that are always shifting. These first two themes demonstrate that we must view social media writing work for mental health advocacy through the lens of precarity – precarity surrounding nonprofit labor and social media writing labor. Nevertheless, the third theme I developed in analysis – Care Work, Connection, & Emotional Labor – yields particularly significant insight about how TPC work should attend to care work. Professionals viewed advocacy as a form of care that needed to attend to audiences' emotions. They worked to build community so that audiences could feel connected to others who might have had similar experiences with mental illness. Language, whether using person-first, inclusive language to acknowledge others' experiences with mental health, or making dense, legislative materials accessible for audiences, was key in professionals' care work. Engaging in these activities involved the emotional labor of establishing personal connections with MHAC audiences and supporters. Yet sometimes this meant having to disconnect from social media in order to find more meaningful connections that could meet supporters' needs. For professionals, disconnection from work seemed to emerge from a tension between needing to feel invested and needing to keep social media writing work sustainable.

Chapter 5: Concluding Thoughts and Looking Forward

In this dissertation, I explored how professionals' work at two state affiliates of MHAC, a mental health advocacy nonprofit, engaged in specific types of digital labor while creating advocacy messaging and content. I centered this study on two cases of professionals' routine work within the MHAC organization. At the Minnesota state affiliate of MHAC, Jennifer and Lisa were working with social media in different ways to uphold MHAC advocacy goals; Jennifer was managing day-to-day social media tasks as Lisa used MHAC's platforms to organize and promote fundraising events. With Jennifer working part time, different aspects of social media writing work had to be shared with Lisa and Anna, MHAC Minnesota's executive director. Tasked with similar communications responsibilities at MHAC Wisconsin, Emily and Samantha worked closely to develop varied yet consistent content for the affiliate's audiences. In a combination of Jennifer and Lisa's roles, Emily worked full-time to ensure that MHAC Wisconsin's social media presence was a space to find information, resources, support, and relevant events. Samantha, an intern who had been working with Emily for two months, assisted with daily tasks as she also conducted research for special projects.

Contingent and shifting, professionals' work at both of these MHAC affiliate organizations constituted valuable opportunities to understand what the digital labor of social media and advocacy writing looks like in practice, particularly as this work provides support for those living with mental illnesses. As I've discussed in the dissertation, studying social media writing work in these contexts complements the field's conceptions of TPC labor, acknowledging social media and advocacy work as well as digital communication about mental health as critical topics worthy of inquiry. I sought out responses to my overarching research question – **How do professionals engage in the technical and professional digital labor of social media writing in the context of mental health advocacy?** – and the following subquestions:

- **RQ1:** What types of digital labor do professionals perform in their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media content that advocates for mental health support?

- **RQ2:** How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?

- **RQ3:** What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?

I approached this project using a multiple-case study research design (Yin, 2014) and a modified grounded theory framework (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, & Breuch, 2019) that couples deep, data-centered analysis with the influence of relevant theoretical positions. Theories of tactical technical communication, social justice and advocacy, and digital labor helped to articulate the significance of this study, but they were also instrumental in my interpretation of key findings that appeared in analysis. As part of these case studies, I analyzed transcripts of six synchronous interviews conducted with the four main participants, a brief asynchronous interview with a professional at the national MHAC organization, participant logs of their daily social media writing tasks, and organizational texts and resources. Brief introductory surveys and observations of social media content informed questions asked during interviews, as well as my contextual knowledge of professionals' work practices. Through two cycles of coding and extensive memoing (Saldaña, 2021), I found that the digital labor of professionals' social media writing was situated within layers of precarity that structured how social media work was performed, but also how professionals connected with their work.

In the sections that follow, I briefly review how the three main themes developed from analysis – Balancing Multidimensional Advocacy; Building a Patchwork of

Responsive Tactics and Strategies; and Care Work, Connection, and Emotional Labor –

address each of my three research questions. Together, these themes reveal how

various layers of precarity constitute professionals' social media and advocacy writing

labor within MHAC. After reviewing the insight offered by these findings, I discuss the

larger scholarly and pedagogical implications of this study for the field of TPC. First, I

explain how three theoretical lenses forwarded by study findings – precarity, care and

emotional labor, and disconnection – can drive future TPC research. These lenses not

only expand how we conceptualize what TPC work is, they also surface the contingent

nature of social media writing and other digital communications work, and how we can

continue to study that work. Second, I articulate how findings from this study can inform

TPC pedagogy. Though instructors may already frame TPC through the lens of

advocacy, this study emphasizes the importance of accounting for precarity in digital and

social media advocacy work as well as in other forms of TPC. By closely examining the

types of TPC we prepare students to engage in and thoughtfully centering care, we can

ensure that our pedagogy considers students as future professionals and change-

makers in the world.

Summary: Research Question One

This question asks: **What types of digital labor do professionals perform in**

their routine decision-making and writing practices when developing social media

content that advocates for mental health support? Each of the themes that I

developed from analysis provide a response to this question – professionals' typical

social media labor involved balancing various dimensions of advocacy, blending

personal tactics and organizational strategies to flex with continual changes, and deeply

considering care, emotions, and connection, for both public audiences and

professionals' personal lives.

However, with this question's focus on routine social media writing and decision-making practices is best considered in relationship to how professionals' balanced various dimensions of advocacy and other concerns in their work. Professionals had to make many rhetorical choices on a day-to-day basis, such as how to meet the needs of MHAC's various, overlapping audiences, or how to best build community through sharing different types of content. All of these choices were aimed at achieving MHAC's multiple advocacy goals: legislative-focused advocacy, education, support, and public awareness for mental illnesses. To uphold these goals, professionals had to balance different facets of advocacy in social media writing – they focused on sharing information as Jennifer often did by linking to articles about mental health support, or they connected with local or state nonprofit organizations to share relevant resources with MHAC followers, as Emily did. They considered how to best speak to various, overlapping audiences who might be general supporters and also potential donors, which fell under Lisa's purview as an events coordinator. Advocacy was supported through multiple activities. Professionals' did not always view the tasks they were engaging in as being acts of advocacy, mainly because for those within MHAC, advocacy was usually connected to legislative and policy issues; for example, Jennifer and Lisa described advocacy as being under the purview of their executive director, Anna, who would post legislation-focused content or updates to Twitter.

But, as others have argued (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Tully et al., 2019), understanding advocacy too narrowly limits our understanding of the many complementary tasks that can provide support for people. Walton et al.'s (2019) 4Rs heuristic similarly highlights a multidimensional approach to advocacy by centering four different activities – recognizing, revealing, rejecting, and replacing – that are meant to take action against oppressive structures. Coalition-building, or "working collectively to understand oppression and spur change" is also key to enacting this heuristic (p. 134).

As Jennifer's work reveals, an information-sharing task like posting a link to a news article on a specific mental illness may not appear to be an act of direct advocacy, but it can inform others on a topic they were not aware of or make them feel validated and less alone in their own experiences with mental illness. Using social media to share information could signal to others the inclusive values of the organization, which would help with building a supportive community. It could perhaps encourage audiences to get involved or to join the MHAC "coalition." Sharing information was a necessary act of advocacy that might not be viewed as such, but it provided a foundation for other types of action.

At both affiliates, professionals frequently spoke about the challenge of balancing activities in order to support advocacy goals. Social media writing work not only required balancing informative, promotional, or interactive messages, it also required careful attention to overlapping audiences, other communications tasks, and professionals' time management. MHAC's social media audiences were current or potential supporters, donors, sponsors, volunteers, or advocates with connections to those with mental illnesses. Professionals needed to be aware of the overlap among audiences when communicating using social media. For example, an individual living with mental illness could be a supporter of MHAC, but they were also a potential donor. Corporate sponsors were also an important audience as they provided financial support for the organization. Professionals had to balance the attention they gave to large sponsors and individual donors as audiences, as well as to audiences who could not support the organization financially. Working in communications or event coordination roles, professionals were constantly trying to keep balance between social media writing and other communications tasks, such as creating newsletters, contacting sponsors, or attending events. At times, social media had to take the back seat to some of these tasks,

demonstrating how busy professionals were and how difficult it was to prioritize focused social media communication.

Summary: Research Question Two

This question asks: **How do social media professionals navigate organizational discourses on social media writing and mental health?** My second overarching theme, Building a Patchwork of Responsive Tactics & Strategies, reveals the ways professionals make use of organizational strategies for social media writing and supplement those strategies by seeking out tactical approaches, all within the shifting realm of nonprofit and social media work. In short, professionals' digital labor involved responding to any fluctuations through a mix of organizational strategies and ad hoc tactics drawn from other resources.

What social media communication looks like in practice is undoubtedly impacted by the larger organizational context that professionals are working within, including the standards organizations set for this work. Additionally, an organization's structure or type – for-profit, nonprofit, or government organization – can affect how much support social media communication receives. Professionals noted that along with the ever-evolving nature of social media, MHAC's status as a nonprofit organization came with shifts in funding and staff. Nonprofits are known for their struggles with high turnover (Jones, 2021), an issue that has been exacerbated within all organizations due to changes in employment brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the professionals I spoke with seemed happy in their positions, but they noted that they were stretched thin and that ideally, they would like to have more time to devote to social media. Grants and contributions from sponsors also dictated how professionals prioritized social media writing; at MHAC Wisconsin, Emily and Samantha were beginning work with a campaign about a specific disorder resulting from the extended use of antipsychotic medications. This project, along with the stipend for Samantha's internship, was funded by a grant

from the larger MHAC organization. Without Samantha's help, it would have been difficult for Emily to manage this campaign in addition to her social media writing and communications responsibilities.

At both state affiliates, Jennifer, Lisa, Emily, and Samantha used MHAC organizational policies as well as external resources to structure their social media writing. Kimball's (2006; 2017) concept of strategies – organization-sanctioned approaches or narratives – and tactics – approaches individuals take that are not necessarily sanctioned by their organizations – were valuable for understanding how professionals found pathways of support for their work that were not directly available within MHAC. All professionals pointed to MHAC's policies on "person-first" and inclusive language as being critical resources for social media writing; those with mental illness were not to be defined by their illnesses. For example, instead of referring to an individual as an "obsessive compulsive," MHAC recommended using the descriptor, "a person living with obsessive compulsive disorder." However, outside of guidelines around language, professionals relied heavily on their own tactics to strengthen their social media writing. They partnered with other advocacy nonprofits to amplify one another's messages and build connections. They generated ideas by closely observing how other organizations were using social media – Lisa at MHAC Minnesota repeatedly referred to approaches other organizations were using to connect with social media audiences. All professionals leveraged Facebook as a useful tool for general communication with audiences, but also for things like advertising, audience or post performance research, and for connecting with other social media professionals at nonprofits via private groups. The features Facebook offered worked well, but professionals were not completely comfortable with the platform's practices.

With one of the longest-lasting and most momentous changes of all, the COVID-19 pandemic precipitated many changes to professionals' social media writing work in

regards to what this work encompassed. Professionals continued their work from home, but the workload was different than it had been before – expansion, to new audiences, new content, and new platforms, was a new priority for MHAC, according to Brianna, who worked at the larger MHAC organization. Expansion was very much on Emily's mind at MHAC Wisconsin as she used her time during the pandemic to create video content on children's mental illness or to livestream virtual events through social media. The goal was to reach new audiences that might not have been able to engage with MHAC Wisconsin before the pandemic. However, even though the pandemic might have afforded Emily more time to tackle new tactics, Jennifer and Lisa were focused on trying to maintain their social media writing work. Focusing on creating new types of content or organizing more virtual events was already enough to fill their already-full schedules. Going further than this would mean the affiliate would have to hire someone to work solely on social media.

Summary: Research Question Three

This question asks: **What can we learn from professionals' experiences of their digital labor that can inform how we conceptualize social media writing for mental health advocacy as a form of TPC?** Each of the themes that I've already summarized elicit key findings that respond to this question. Professionals' digital labor indicates that advocacy encompasses a complex, wide-range of activities, activities that need to be carefully balanced and recognized as meaningful. Professionals' digital labor also requires dexterity and flexibility in responding to the changes present in nonprofit and social media writing work. It means complementing organizational strategies with new-found tactics. Though I articulate how social media writing is a form of TPC in Chapter 2, these findings are further support for this claim because they demonstrate how professionals not only engage in TPC tasks, such as performing audience analysis, ensuring that information is accessible and comprehensible, and assisting audiences in

taking action. These findings also suggest that the field attends to the precarity that can often underlie professionals' work, particularly in the layered contexts of social media writing, nonprofit advocacy work, and mental health communication. In many ways, precarity is the ultimate influence on professionals' digital labor at MHAC Minnesota and MHAC Wisconsin.

Yet in addition to these findings, I believe that my final theme, Care Work, Connection, and Emotional Labor yields the richest insight for how the field can approach social media writing for mental health advocacy as TPC. While the field has, to varying degrees, recognized the significance of social media writing, advocacy, and communication's role in structuring lived experiences of mental illness, understanding care and emotion as digital labor can inform approaches to digital communication in TPC. In this study, professionals' were consistently engaging in care work and emotional labor by expressing concern for others' feelings. Advocacy was seen as a way of caring for others, or demonstrating understanding, awareness, and empathy for their lived experiences of mental illness. Whether describing an upcoming event or sharing an inspirational quote, professionals were trying to build a community through their social media writing that normalized mental illness. Professionals wanted to do more to build community with marginalized groups via social media, yet they felt their own precarity – not always having focused time for these efforts or pushing for slow-going initiatives in addition to other tasks – made it hard to support those who were occupying the most vulnerable or precarious positions. Adhering to person-first and inclusive language was a critical way to perhaps build community and show care for audiences. Many of the MHAC-created texts laid out guidelines for using appropriate language. It was also important to ensure that audiences could understand language pertaining to mental health; Samantha was excited to spend her time as an intern at MHAC Wisconsin

making legislative texts easier for the public to interpret and perhaps sharing that information on social media.

Interestingly, professionals expressed care for their audiences and for themselves by weighing the benefits of personal connection on social platforms. Social media communication seemed to inhabit a sort of paradox at times – it was an incredibly useful tool for building personal connections, yet in some situations, that personal digital connection was not the most appropriate or effective way of supporting audiences. For example, Jennifer knew from experience that promoting a support group event on social media was not going to elicit more attendees. Other avenues for connection, such as emailing individuals who could spread the word about an event, were likely to be more useful. Social media were not a panacea for every communication situation. In regards to their personal connections to the MHAC organization and mental health, professionals tried to protect themselves from becoming too connected to their work, either directly or indirectly.

Implications & Future Directions

In this section, I describe implications that this study holds for TPC research and pedagogy. Overall, the findings I've reviewed point to the significance of a layered precarity in professionals' social media writing labor. Precarity is a larger theme that the field of TPC, either through research or teaching, can use to illuminate the conditions from which individuals and organizations are communicating.

Implications for TPC Research and Scholarship

This study highlights several theoretical lenses for studying social media writing and other forms of professional practice in the field. Although the concept of precarity is in no way new to scholars who have done extensive work to highlight the oppression of marginalized groups in relationship to TPC (Haas, 2012; Agboka, 2014; Jones, 2016; Walton et al., 2019), it does provide the field a fruitful lens for examining communication

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work. As I explain in Ch. 2., digital labor reveals the contingency and instability of digital work by considering how this work is paid or unpaid, valued or undervalued, visible or made invisible. It is critical to ask what it means for individuals to communicate from precarious positions, or what it means to advocate for those in precarious positions. Precarity is attached to individuals' intersecting identities and social positions. Interrogating those identities can elucidate the layers of vulnerability marginalized groups experience. As Walton et al., (2019) write, examining positionality "provides a lens that brings into focus some of the precarity and difficulties associated with claiming and performing identity" (p. 68). For example, Black women are often doubly-marginalized because of their overlapping, intersecting identity positions. They may, and often do, experience harmful stereotypes or direct discrimination based on these overlapping identities. Positionality, as Walton et al. note, illustrates that "identity has very real meanings [...] with very real consequences for people's lives" (p. 69). Precarity is concerned with analyzing the material conditions that enable certain detrimental consequences or impacts on people's lives. As this study finds, precarity, much like positionality, is layered in different ways across overlapping identities or overlapping contextual positions; professionals' worked as social media writers, as nonprofit employees, and as advocates for mental health support. These environments were shifting, contingent, and not without instability.

Professionals in this study did enact power and privilege as employed individuals who could engage in advocacy work, and therefore did not experience precarity in the same ways that marginalized groups did. However, it is important to ask how social media writing work itself is precarious, as this work can contribute to the fight against deeply-entrenched structures and discourses that render others vulnerable or unsafe, such as stigmatized conceptions of mental illness or a lack of options for mental healthcare.

Using digital labor and layered precarity as lenses for studying social media advocacy writing, and digital writing writ large, asks scholars to attend to how this work is shifting, evolving, contingent, and invisible. These lenses draw attention to the conditions from which individuals are working, and how those conditions enable or constrain individuals to advocate for those in marginalized communities. As such, these theoretical lenses contribute to the field's momentum in centering social justice approaches in TPC research. Future research could continue to explore the digital labor and precarity of social media writing in diverse contexts. Additionally, focusing on digital labor and its precarities involves critically examining the ways digital spaces, such as social media platforms, have fundamentally changed how TPC work is performed. As Fisher et al. (2020) write, "Digital technologies enable and entrench various forms of labor exploitation" (p. 20). Scholars might also consider how the design of platforms affects digital laborers' abilities to complete their work successfully. As one example, this study revealed the key role that certain Facebook features, like fundraising options or access to audience data, played in professionals' social media writing work. Yet, as I discuss in my analysis, Emily had consistent trouble trying to place ads for MHAC events on Facebook because those ads would be flagged by the platform for promoting "social issues," a policy that was meant to stop political interference. When ads were flagged, Emily would have to either confirm her identity, which she explained was difficult to do on the MHAC account, or give up altogether on posting the ad. Not being able to place the ad did not do any direct harm to Emily or MHAC Wisconsin, but it did limit how she was able to connect with potential new audiences who might benefit from MHAC's resources. It would be useful to analyze how certain features on social media platforms might impede advocacy work that digital laborers perform.

As forms of digital labor, emotional labor and care work are concepts that can build upon the field's study of social media writing and advocacy. Professionals in this

study articulated social media writing advocacy as a form of care for their supporters and audiences. Expressing care allowed professionals to acknowledge the lived experiences of those with mental illness. In TPC, scholars should develop additional studies that explore how emotions and care are significant factors in TPC work, particularly in social media writing work. Pickering (2019) analyzes how emotions motivate communicators to engage in their work and locate opportunities for empowerment in new work settings. Reviewing instances of tactical technical communication, Colton et al. (2017) use care ethics to surface how individuals respond to one another's' vulnerabilities when weighing ethical decisions. Walton et al. (2019) do not discuss care explicitly, but their 3Ps framework (positionality, privilege, and power) and 4Rs heuristic (recognize, reveal, reject, and replace) ultimately function to show care for marginalized oppressed groups through critical reflection and advocacy. Additionally, using Walton et al.'s 3Ps framework can be used as a critical tool for examining care – how are those with certain identities or positionalities expected to engage in care work or emotional labor? Who has the privilege to display care and emotion openly, and whose emotions are valued? How is care and emotion mobilized by those with access to power?

Scholars can also extend this attention to care and emotion in TPC research by considering how TPC workers are asked to engage in invisible and uncompensated care work in digital spaces. In social media communication, professionals are analyzing, managing, and responding to their audience's emotions. As was the case with this study, professionals were performing emotional care labor to further MHAC's advocacy goals. This work might have been recognized in some ways by the organization, but at the same time, social media platforms rendered the details of professionals' care work invisible – details about professionals' decision-making practices around language, community-building, and protecting against burnout were not readily visible from public social media content. Moreover, scholars must examine the nuances of care and

emotional labor. Exploitative and violent actions can be rationalized as forms of care, yet care can also be a means for addressing precarity, as this study demonstrates. Further research should explore the complicated nature of emotional care labor as it manifests in digital writing practices.

Though I maintain that social media writing and communication are valuable for promoting change and care, this study suggests that constant connection, either with others over social media or to social media writing labor, is not always a good thing. The concept of disconnection encourages a critical awareness of digital platforms and their effects on our lives. Disconnecting may seem to carry a negative orientation in regards to social media, but as Light (2014) claims, "disconnection makes connectivity possible. We cannot be connected to everything all the time [...] and therefore we have to disconnect in some way in order to make the connections we want to emphasize [...] feasible" (p. 155). Being mindful about disconnection can strengthen situations where connection might be most appropriate. While scholars in TPC are no strangers to critically assessing technologies, theories of disconnection can motivate studies of social media writing by centering how professionals choose connective or disconnective practices when communicating with audiences. In examining smart cities, Verhulsdonck and Tham (2022) argue that postconnectivist frameworks encourage TPC scholars to act as advocates for users by encouraging tactical resistance through disconnection from technological systems of control. Disconnecting can be a way of finding non-digital community support, as Jennifer at MHAC Minnesota pointed out when discussing how she promoted certain events. It can also be a means for social media workers to enact boundaries between their personal and professional lives in industries where organizations prize individuals who are wildly passionate about their work (Duffy & Schwartz, 2018). TPC research should continue to ask how connection and disconnection appear in social media writing work contexts.

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Lastly, this study offers methodological implications for researchers conducting qualitative studies. As I experienced firsthand, researchers must often navigate many complexities throughout the course of a project. In this study, I discovered how challenging it could be to recruit participants, particularly during a large-scale crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. I was also challenged by the process of qualitative analysis and coding, which required iterative arranging and rearranging of data through different methods. I describe these challenges in detail in Chapter 3. In short, the process of conducting this study was decidedly messy. However, researchers do not always articulate this messiness in reporting their findings (Rickly & Cook, 2017). I would argue that being transparent about this messiness, though it may seem mundane, is valuable and perhaps even necessary for strengthening the field's methodological approaches; we cannot learn from how others have navigated complexity if that information is not shared. In this study, I detailed the difficulties I faced in recruiting participants during the pandemic, and how, as a response, I developed a recruitment letter that clearly stated research goals. This letter is a strategy that can inform how other researchers approach recruitment. Additionally, I argue for researchers to carefully describe coding or analysis processes in order to demystify this interpretive process. Initially unsure of how to transition between cycles of coding, I tried out different methods for categorizing data, which I describe in Chapter 3. I provide an image of a tool I used to organize codes, a step that was crucial for my analysis. Overall, researchers can enrich the field's scholarly work by being transparent about the methodological obstacles they encounter and the strategies they develop to address those obstacles.

Implications for TPC Pedagogy

While the three theoretical lenses I've described in the previous section – precarity, care and emotional labor, and disconnection – can guide future TPC research, they also provide insight for pedagogical approaches. First, this study's claims draw

attention to the overlapping layers of precarity surrounding pedagogical work: Our

students are precarious communicators and audiences of TPC, who may then become

TPC professionals trying to respond to precarities in their workplaces while also

assessing how to best communicate to vulnerable, marginalized communities. In short,

our students may inhabit interconnected layers of precarity. TPC instructors can devise

activities and assignments to make these layers visible to students. One way to do so is

to encourage students to reflect on their positionalities or the positionalities of others to

pinpoint how precarity functions. Walton et al.'s (2019) 3Ps framework, focusing on

positionality, privilege, and power, comes to mind here as a heuristic aimed at making

oppression visible. Reflections could be completed in the form of a private journal that

students work on throughout the semester, prompting them to identify how the TPC texts

they create might address precarity. Precarity could also be made visible by having

students articulate the various tasks they complete in working on TPC projects. In this

dissertation, professionals made their social media writing work visible through the logs

they completed. Students might log the tasks they complete for projects or develop

planning documents to not only manage their work, but to reveal its complexities.

Part of the precarity that professionals in this study encountered was a result of

the continuous shifts and changes within MHAC, and within social media writing as a

profession. Students would benefit from learning how to respond to an ever-shifting

environment in regards to social media or digital communication. Scholars like Lauer and

Brumberger (2019) argue that communicators have become "responsive" multimodal

editors due to rapid changes in technologies and the delivery of texts (p. 635). My

dissertation echoes these findings, suggesting that students must practice responsive,

flexible digital writing. In TPC instruction, this could be accomplished through several

means. Instructors could build mutually beneficial partnerships with community or

advocacy organizations where students could develop several sample digital texts for

the organization. These partnerships would expose students to the constraints, affordances, and expectations within an organization where communicating with and for vulnerable groups is key. Outside of community-engaged learning, instructors could scaffold assignments so that students have opportunities to practice the "multimodal editing" skills that Lauer and Brumberger highlight. Much like professionals in this study, students should practice developing original content, such as materials for a social media campaign, as well as editing and repackaging existing content for audiences across different social media platforms. Doing so means students gain experience with the types of responsive digital communication tasks professionals routinely perform in their workplace.

TPC Instructors must consider care, emotional labor, and disconnection in relationship to the labor they expend in the classroom, but also in relationship to the labor they teach students to perform. Approaching teaching as care is a growing site of reflection for writing instructors across fields. Day et al. (2021) explain that teaching has been noticeably altered by a succession of crises – the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ongoing racial violence. They contend that teaching during an age of crisis must consist of fostering communities of care for students and others in academic institutions. Though not writing about writing instruction, Piepzna-Samarasinha (2018) urges individuals to consider care as a motivator for interactions with others, particularly those who are disabled. She asks: "How do we learn to do this love work of collective care that lifts us instead of abandons us, that grapples with all the deep ways in which care is complicated?" (p. 21). This question highlights the complexities of care. On one hand, centering TPC as advocacy and care can help students acknowledge that audiences, users, and humans are the center of our work, not organizational efficiency or expediency. Approaching students with care, flexibility, and attentiveness to their positionalities creates a supportive classroom community. However, as studies of digital

and emotional labor have shown, care must also mean instructors are mindful of the labor they and their students perform. At times, care means setting up boundaries between professional and personal labor to avoid burnout. At other times, care means spending extra time with students who are struggling, developing digital or analog spaces for students to connect, or assessing course materials to determine if a trigger warning is needed.

In the context of TPC courses, care and attention to emotions can help students envision their audiences as real people who feel the impacts of TPC texts in very real ways. This is a welcome shift to a field where instruction has sometimes tended towards hyperpragmatic concerns for "efficiency, technological expertise, and innovative infrastructure" (Jones et al., 2016, p. 213). One way to model a focus on care and individuals' lived experiences is through user experience methods. Though perhaps too involved for actual application in a class, Rose's (2016) design ethnography of how individuals who were homeless used a bus system is instructive. Her work shows that in working closely and thoughtfully with individuals impacted by designs, communicators can help create more equitable systems. For main projects in a TPC class, instructors can ask students to connect with their audiences to determine how a text or technology affects their lives. In regards to social media writing, students might analyze public audience data while also seeking out interviews with audiences to inform how they create social media texts. Overall, instructors should have students ask: How does this text affect those who use or don't use it? How can this text demonstrate care for others' experiences?

Final Thoughts

In sum, the field of technical and professional communication has always been concerned with the types of work professionals engage in when creating texts. This study extends and expands that tradition by asking what theories of digital labor can

reveal about social media writing for mental health advocacy. Though perhaps mundane by professionals' estimations, their labor reveals the rhetorical dexterity needed to uphold advocacy work in a precarious organization, precarious digital spaces, and for those in precarious positions. These layers of precarity help us to complexify the work of social media writing, to consider what routine activities can tell us about how professionals experience this work. Professionals' daily work suggests that precarity, vulnerability, and contingency structure social media writing. Yet this work also points to the community and care that can be built from within those conditions.

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<div align="center">**Appendices**</div>

Appendix 1: Recruitment Letter for Professionals & Their Organizations

To: [Organization contacts, titles, organization name]
From: Katlynne Davis, PhD Candidate, Department of Writing Studies, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, davi2936@umn.edu
Subject: Proposal to study professionals' social media writing and communication work in [name of organization]
Date: [date]

Introduction & Background
Thank you for taking the time to learn more about me and my project! The purpose of this letter is to provide further information about research that I would like to conduct involving employees of [your organization].

I am currently working on my dissertation project that examines how organizations and proessionals structure the writing and communication work of social media communication professionals. The specific, routine tasks that those working with social media perform are often not discussed in detail in academic conversations or, at times, in industry conversations. What's missing in both cases is a clearer understanding of how organizations and the professionals working for them approach the often invisible labor of writing and communicating on social media platforms.

For my dissertation, I am specifically interested in studying professionals working for nonprofit and/or for-profit organizations where social media communication is an active part of the organization's goals to connect with its audiences. [Your organization] is an excellent potential focus for my study because of your clear emphasis on using social media platforms to facilitate relationships with customers and stakeholders. I have been lucky to speak with [list employees/professionals I've connected with] about their work with [your organization]. These conversations have further helped me identify [your organization] as a specific focus for my study.

Proposed Study
I would like to ask permission of [list of employees/professionals I've connected with] to learn more about the writing and communication tasks they do as part of their routine work with social media for [your organization]. My research design would involve a case study approach which would address the question:

What do routine social media writing and communication tasks look like for professionals working within [your organization]?

In order to answer this research question, I would propose collecting the following forms of data:

- **A short survey** that asks professionals about their current role and work experience with social media, including questions that specifically ask for detail on:
    - Demographic information (gender)
    - Education level
    - Professional certifications/training

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- o Work responsibilities and tasks

- **Interviews** with [list of professionals/employees I've connected with] regarding the typical writing and communication tasks they perform.
    - o Interviews would be done in two phases – once after completing initial survey and then again after completing logs (discussed below)
    - o Interviews would be completed remotely (over the phone or via videoconferencing software).
    - o Interviews would take between 30 and 60 minutes to complete
    - o Interviews would be recorded

- **Any nonproprietary documents, notes, or resources** that that employees consult as part of their work or that inform participants social media work.
    - o **Employees would NOT be asked to provide any information that is proprietary to [your organization]**

- **Logs that participants will complete of their writing and communication tasks** related to social media work
    - o Logs would be completed over a two-week period, during weekdays
    - o Participants would be asked to indicate day of the week, tasks for that day, the approximate amount of time spent on each task, and to rank each task in terms of priority

- **Public social media posts/Tweets** that are created and published by employees from your organization's social media accounts
    - o I would collect this social media content for the period of two weeks that the participant is completing the logs, and potentially for up to 2 additional weeks after this period

Security, Privacy, & Confidentiality
To ensure the appropriate measures have been taken to protect data security, and participant privacy and confidentiality, this study has undergone an approval process administered by the University of Minnesota's Institutional Review Board (IRB). In working with the IRB, I have established the following steps to ensure confidentiality and privacy:

- Participant names and any information provided in interviews/logs that directly identifies participants, co-workers, or department/divisions by name will be changed in transcriptions of interviews, manuscripts, and publications so that a reader cannot identify participants. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants, and all personally identifiable information will be altered.
- Public social media content (Tweets and Facebook posts) from your organization will be collected, but because this information is already public and because I will not be identifying participants by name, privacy concerns are believed to be low-risk.
- All data, including audio files and word-processed transcriptions of interviews, will be stored in an electronic folder on the investigator's secure UMN Box.com account.
- No paper documents of any data will be kept—any paper documents will be scanned in an electronic format and then destroyed.

- Audio files will be kept for a maximum of three years (until 2024) after the interview takes place. After three years, they will be deleted.
- Interview transcriptions will be kept on the investigator's secure UMN Box.com account for five years (until 2026).
- Data will only be accessed by the student investigator and faculty supervisor.

I hope this information is helpful for you to better understand my research and my commitment to privacy and confidentiality in my work. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact me at [email] mailto:davi2936@umn.eduo or [phone number]. I'd be happy to meet at your convenience and walk through what I've included here in more detail.

I'm looking forward to potentially learning from the talented social media communication professionals working for your organization! Thank you so much for your time!

Best,
Katlynne Davis

Appendix 2: Phase One Interview Questions

1. Can you describe what a typical day/week of work looks like for you in your current position? What does your work with social media entail?
   a. What are you currently working on/most recently worked on?
   b. What do you see as being the overall purpose of your work with social media?

2. What would you consider to be some typical routine (writing/communication) tasks that you perform as part of your work?
   a. You mentioned that you do the following activities: [information from participant survey]
   b. Are there (other) tasks that you perform that support your writing tasks? Can you describe these?

3. If you work with others on social media communication/writing work, can you describe what your relationship is to your co-workers and what kind of work they perform?

4. When you first started working with your organization, how did you become acclimated to what social media writing/communication work entailed within that organization?

   a. Was there any training of any kind? Can you talk about [survey response]?
   b. You said you have [level of education] – did either of these prep you for social media work?

5. Can you discuss any projects, campaigns, or specific tasks that you worked on that were particularly challenging? What was challenging?

6. Can you discuss any projects, campaigns, or specific tasks that you worked on that were particularly rewarding? What was rewarding?

7. You said your org does/does not offer training or resources to help you perform social media writing/communication work. Do you wish they would? Do you feel like you'd be interested in having some kind of training or resources to access?

8. Are there any organizational documents, resources, or other texts that directly inform or guide your work?

   a. Your org does NOT have social media policies, but do you wish they did?
   b. Can you describe how you consult or keep these texts in mind while working? (Note that you do NOT have to speak on texts that are proprietary)

9. Please briefly describe any other resources/materials you consult to support your work with social media -- this could be books, online services or information, co-workers, etc.
   a. How do you consult them?

10. You mentioned your own personal policies/standards: [survey responses]. Can you talk more about these:
    a. Why is it important for you to have these standards?
11. Can you describe who you see as being your main social media audience(s) for the work you're conducting?

12. How would you describe your organization's relationship with your larger social media audience? How important is this audience to your organization?

13. Is there a difference between your relationship and your organization's relationship with the audience? How would you describe your relationship with your larger social media audience?

14. Do you use any technologies – software, programs, online services – as part of your social media writing/communication work?
    a. If so, can you describe them and how you use them? How important are they to the work that you do?

15. How would you describe your organization's approach to professional social media communication overall?

16. Is there anything that I didn't ask that you thought I would? Is there anything that you'd like to add?

Appendix 3: Log Formats for Jennifer and Emily

Social Media Work Log (Jennifer)

For two weeks, please log your social media work activities for each day of your work week.

Week One

Day (e.g. Monday)	Tasks	Time spent on each task	Rank tasks*

*Rank tasks in terms of importance for each day, starting with 1 as most important

Notes (Feel free to add any information that you think might add context, be helpful):

Week Two

Day (e.g. Monday)	Tasks	Time spent on each task	Rank tasks*

*Rank tasks in terms of importance for each day, starting with 1 as most important

Notes (Feel free to add any information that you think might add context, be helpful):

Social Media Work Log (Emily)

Social Media Work Log - #1

The purpose of this log is for me to get a better sense of the types of tasks you work on with social media. This log helps me observe your work, as we can't meet up in person for me to do so. Once you've completed the log, I'll review it and develop questions to ask you in our second interview session.

For two weeks worth of work days (whatever that looks like for you), I ask that you keep track of the different tasks you work on related to social media. Each day you can submit a "response" to this survey, indicating: 1) Day of the week, 2) what tasks you completed for the day, 3) how much time you spent on each task, 4) how you would rank each task in terms of importance, and 4) any notes you'd like to leave.

Feel free to fill the logs out in whatever way makes sense and works best for you. You can provide as much detail as you'd like. If you have any questions, please reach out (davi2936@umn.edu)!

Thanks so much for taking the time to work on this -- I appreciate you!
--Katlynne

Day of the Week

○ Monday

○ Tuesday

○ Wednesday

○ Thursday

○ Friday

○ Saturday

○ Sunday

Please include a quick description of tasks completed for the day.

Long answer text

About how much time did you spend on each task? You can list this out (doesn't need to be exact).

Long answer text

How would you rank these tasks in terms of importance, starting with 1 being most important? You can list this out.

Long answer text

Are there any notes you'd like to leave about the tasks you completed or your day in general? If so, feel free to include something here.

Long answer text

Appendix 4: Sample Analytic Memo, Written after Coding Emily's First Interview

Emily Post-Coding Memo, Interview #1

To me, after coding Emily's interview, I feel as if there's a different tone between her approach to SM work with MHA WI and Jennifer & Lisa's approaches at MHA MN. Maybe it makes sense to approach this memo by looking at what seems to be unique to Emily's experiences at MHA WI, and then maybe how her experience does seem to align with how Jennifer and Lisa have described their work.

So first, what seems unique? **Well, it felt as if Emily was framing her work much more from the position of what she's been able to do with her NAMI team, whereas I felt as if with Jennifer & Lisa, the conversation seemed to be focus on a deficit, what wasn't able to be done (Jennifer) or what was able to be done by others that would be good for MHA MN to do if they only had the time, resources, etc.** One thing that seemed to come up is Emily's repeated focus on the MHA mission, and she returned to that repeatedly – needing to balance uplifting, educational, and promotional messages was one of the bigger codes, in my mind (this came out from page 1 and she seemed to return to this over and over again until the end, like page 30). So in thinking about my research questions that ask about how professionals navigate org discourses, I think the answer here would be that Emily is very much aligned with the org mission and discourses about MH advocacy.

But I also think there's a lesson to be learned that might also support my larger argument – that SM advocacy comm work surrounding MH needs to be focused on balancing different rhetorical purposes or goals, and being open to adapting those when needed for audiences. I'm thinking about Emily's discussion of the structure of MHA (p. 26) and how certain corporate approaches to SM may not fly with NAMI, and how set in stone social media policies may not be the best thing because of the different needs that communities have across the larger MHA org – for example, some MHA's may not have a FB page because that's not where their communities are at. **This has got me thinking about the value of SM work through the lens of disconnection, which may not been devaluing what SM can add, but may be a more nuanced, complicated, and audience-aware/focused way of approaching SM work. It centers the audience much more (or does it?), and also how can SM work be combined with non-virtual, "real world" in person comm work to be even more effective?** For example, Emily talks about having to coordinate other communications work (like newsletters, events, setting up webinars, thanking donors – check out p. 3 for some of these, but they reappear everywhere). This work needs to work in tandem with SM – on p. 9 Emily talks about how SM might be used in part to get SM audiences to do things outside of SM, like contacting legislators or voting.

Another thing that is very clear from Emily's conversation is her experience with and interest in advertising as a way to expand to reach new audiences. Advertising starts coming up on p. 8 in the context of creating FB ads for events, and she mentions how she has been working to do some trainings on FB & Google ads Program (p. 13). On p. 20, she talks about how using the ads has helped new audiences find MHA. She also talks more about her experience on p. 21. **This, to me, seems significant because it shows how professionals like Emily can take on something that usually isn't in the discourse of nonprofit work, advertising, and can apply it tactically to**

support the overall goal/strategies of an org like MHA. Interestingly though too, Emily distinguishes between the use of advertising in nonprofit contexts vs. in for-profit, corporate contexts – she says on p. 23 that there are tweaks that need to be made, because in the for-profit world, someone gives you money and you give them a product. But with nonprofits, there isn't a physical product, and so when someone gives you money, you need to do something to show them that their money is going to something good. It seems like people might be giving from more of a personal connection and tie to MH, which Emily acknowledges on p. 24. I'm not quite sure what to say about the advertising part of this. I think it is definitely worth discussing, **but it is almost as if professionals in these spaces are looking to SM advertising as a way to put an ethical spin on what happens in for-profit spaces. Nonprofits obviously have to operate within capitalist systems, and so co-opting advertising strategies in this way seems to help divert money in the "right" direction. It also shows how maybe advertising is a space that is not so well-supported in the nonprofit space,** just by Emily's mention of her training on her own to get this knowledge. This also comes up in Lisa's conversation too from MHAC MN

So what's aligning between MHAC MN & MHAC WI, or among Jennifer, Lisa, and Emily:

I **think there's definitely some support here for the idea of precarity in SM work and MH advocacy work that shows up in other interviews. While it doesn't feel as explicit here – because Emily is pretty upbeat and focused on what is working – precarity does come out in her discussion.** SHe talks about if the team had a bigger staff, they could do more targeting of messages to specific audiences (p. 16). On p. 18, Emily notes just how many things she was doing during MH Awareness Month (webinars every Wed., children's MH awareness day, Selling casserole cookbook, etc.), and she notes how difficult it was to prioritize everything. Granted I'm sure she wasn't doing everything completely alone, but that's a lot of communications work embedded within that. She talks about how challenging it is to figure out how to prioritize events and more communications-y stuff and prioritizing research and advocacy, and then coupling that with donations (18-19). On p. 22 she talks about how another org reimbursed them for running an ad for them, which ties into the advertising situation but also precarity, I think, because it's asking an already precarious org to do something? On p. 24, Emily talks about nonprofit work being smaller, more flexible, less pressured, and balanced, which kind of aligns with her idea that building up "brand awareness' takes some time – things will be slower. I**t might not be that Emily, Jennifer, and Lisa are being explicitly exploited through their work, but it might be more like the expectations for SM are exploited in a way and dictated by other needs (see her discussion of grants for salaries, govt involvement, part time work, etc. – p. 27-28). Maybe the precarity is that there are so many expectations and hands in the pot, so SM work is always being split across different needs, different people, etc.**

I think there's something to be said about Personal Connection (code) and Emotion/Passion, which comes up here, and could be connected to precarity. Maybe the paradox of SM is that what really works for advocacy is creating personal connection, but that becomes so difficult to do when you're in a precarious context (working for a nonprofit), and in a precarious position of working for SM, which perhaps isn't always understood, and it's so difficult to make personal connections on a more specific level when the goal of SM platforms is to amass followers and amplify big messages across big audiences.

That's a big thought, but who knows. There's something interesting on p. 24 where Emily talks about how people have close ties to MH struggles, but then says for her personal ties/connection wasn't what drew her to MHA – she wanted to do nonprofit work. But then she says you do have/need to be passionate about the cause, though she doesn't necessarily explain why. She kinda clarifies saying that you don't have to have a direct personal tie to an issue (like homelessness), but you need to have empathy. And then she goes on to say how nonprofit environments are different and more flexible, have better work-life balance. **It's like you need to be personally connected, but also need to be/are personally disconnected in this type of work by having a more flexible, work-life balance job? There's some kind of contradiction there, or tension that I think Emily is trying to navigate between expectations (maybe org discourse) and reality of the work. Maybe she feels pressure to be more invested?**

I would say there's a lot of the same tasks being done here too that come up in Jennifer and Lisa's discussions. Curating content is something that Emily mentions towards the beginning of the interview. She also talks about the pandemic more explicitly than Jennifer and Lisa, and how the pandemic led to perhaps more work (more precarity). T**here's also a strong level of rhetorical savvy here too,** especially with Emily's pretty profound thoughts on not having set SM policies and that these would be restrictive and perhaps inflexible (p. 28-29) – orgs should be able to identify what works for them and their audiences. **ANd just having to manage the sheer amount of communications work in addition to social media requires so much rhetorical savvy about audience, purpose, media, etc.**