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No One Wants to Read What You Write: A Contextualized Analysis of Service Course Assignments

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A Contextualized Analysis of Service Course Assignment

by

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Abstract

This study takes a systematic approach to answering the question of what services course assignment should accomplish in curricula by looking at the assignment from a contextual perspective that takes into consideration the programmatic factors in which the assignment circulates. The dissertation accomplishes this work by studying curricular artifacts, to include course syllabi and assignment descriptions, as well as textbooks. Additionally, interviews with program administrators and textbook authors are analyzed. The results of this analysis posit a programmatic network that visualizes connections between program, course, and staffing administrative factors with assignments as the nexus of the network. This dissertation illustrates the ways in which assignments function as a point of connection between other programmatic factors and the ways those connections can be leveraged to design more impactful assignment, increase effective program administration, and contribute to Technical and Professional Communication's (TPC) disciplinary identity and values. The implications of this studies conclusions include discussions of contextualized genre, aligning course and assignment objectives, and impacts of curricular standardization. Disciplinary impacts include the value of empirical research in TPC, and the practical and ethical implication of addressing staffing issues through professional development. Future work to develop the programmatic network into a theory of the service course further serves the discipline. Ultimately, this dissertation proves that assignments are reflections and constructions of disciplinary values held by assignment designers, and, as such, further study of the service course is merited.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This dissertation began in response to a conversation with a colleague and mentor about the resume project that was, at the time, the first assignment in the service courses here at USF. My colleague wanted the resume assignment removed from the course. I believed there were grounds for it its inclusion. I argued that the resume taught important rhetorical principles that were fundamental to the course to both instructors and students using a genre with which both instructors and students were familiar. My colleague argued that the genre was inappropriate for the course and that the resume project took time that would be better spent on other, more relevant assignments. It occurred to me that both arguments were reasonable and grounded in experience, and that we both could be right, and I wondered out loud, "Well, what should a service course assignment do?" My colleague said, "That's a good question." I said, "What do other people say about it?" She said, "Not much." And she was right, there really wasn't much. It was stunning how not-much there was. That struck me at wrong. Now, I love service course program administration--truly and with my whole heart. Service course programs are exquisite orreries of interrelating forces--curriculum, staffing, institutional constraints, and the moving target of the workplace itself. All these forces orbiting around the central goal of helping students learn. Equal parts knowledge, psychology, intuition, and empathy, assignment design is the most engaging Gordian knot I've ever worked to untie. Do I wax a little purple? I'm sure I do. But articulating the strength of my sentiments about service program administration highlights how odd it is that, as strongly as I felt about programmatic work, it never once occurred to me that I could write my dissertation on a topic related to administration. It simply never crossed my

mind. I was under the impression that administrative work was custodial--a type of service, but not the work that got a person tenure or enhanced a reputation within the field. And this unfortunate impression was supported by the strikingly limited amount of amount of scholarship on the service course. But in that moment, in that realization that I had a legitimate question to which I wanted a well-researched, scholarly answer, I decided to do my part to legitimize the service course assignment as an object of inquiry. Considering the ubiquity and historical tradition of the service course, I feel this study is warranted. The service course is weird and wonderful and unique, and it is intimately tied to fundamental values in the field of Technical and Professional Communication. It is my goal with this work to contribute to what I hope will become increased scholarly attention to the service course assignment and the service course, in general. I could go on, and I do, below.

Allow me to introduce the lamentable lot of the lowly service course. Never to obtain the title and status of a major, or even a certificate. Often neglected by administrators with so many other, more pressing fires to douse. Reviled by students from disciplines outside Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) who do not see writing as a vital job skill in their chosen fields. And taught by instructors of such wide and varied backgrounds that the relevance and purpose of the course may be unclear even to them.

And yet, these same service courses are vitally important to the departments in which they are housed. Defined by Melonçon and England (2011) as "introductory courses for nonmajors delivered primarily as a service to other departments and programs on campus" (p. 398), service courses are designed to prepare students in non-English majors for workplace writing, and some iteration of the service course is housed in most institutions of higher education across the Carnegie Classifications of Higher Education. Representing "a non-

[English] major's only classroom interaction with [Technical and Professional Communication] prior to graduation" (Meloncon & England, 2011, p. 398), these essential courses represent students' only opportunity to gain experience with the type of writing they will do in their professional lives.

Accomplishing this vital work is a complex task. As described by Schreiber et al. (2018), "Service courses cover a range of technical, scientific and professional communication practices" (p. 1). The authors highlight that "the goal of these courses is not simply to teach practices but to prepare students to effectively transfer that knowledge to new rhetorical situations (Scott, 2008)" (Schreiber et al., 2018, p. 1). Service course curricula must expose students to meaningful workplace practices while fostering the ability to think through the rhetorical processes that will be necessary to succeed in a workplace that's always evolving.

As challenging as that work is, the service course mandate is further complexified by institutional pressures. Service courses must address the expectations of the departments they serve (e.g., Engineering or Business). However, often these departments can't fully articulate their needs because, understandably, other departments don't "fully understanding the work technical and professional communication does" (Melonçon, 2018b). Additionally, the departments that house service courses (e.g., English) often are keenly aware of the student credit hours generated by high enrollments in service courses and the financial implications of those high enrollments, but unaware of the specialized demands that distinguish the service course from other writing courses. Recognition of the financial impact of service course within the department can lead to increased scrutiny from departmental administrators who also may not understand the obligations and requirements of effectively administering the service course. Service course administrators also negotiate pressures to support with both time and resources

the instructors who do the vital work of interacting with students and enacting course outcomes, but who are "overwhelmingly…contingent faculty,...contractual, full-time, non-tenure track, term-to-term adjuncts, or graduate students" and who often "do not have a background in technical and professional communication" (Melonçon, 2018b). At many schools, the service courses are taught by graduate students with little teaching experience, and contingent faculty who, like visiting instructors, have their own research agendas, or, like adjuncts, have significant course loads and course preps. And, outside the institution, the administrator must take into consideration the industry professionals who work daily in the field, who will be hiring service course students after graduation, but who rarely are afforded direct input into service course development.

I'd say that's a pretty big ask. And given the number of institutions of all types offering services courses, and the number of service courses offered per semester, I'd say giving the service course its due is also a pretty important task. Across the nation, 311 institutions house Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) undergraduate degree programs and all of those programs offer some iteration of the service course with enrollments from two to 200 sections per term (Melonçon, 2018a, unpublished raw data). At the University of South Florida, for example, our service courses saw an enrollment of over 4,800 students in 2018, requiring a total of 45 instructors consisting predominantly of contingent faculty (visiting instructors, graduate assistants, and adjuncts) (University of South Florida, unpublished raw data). In addition to these figures are the literally uncounted number of service courses offered at institutions that do not offer TPC degree programs (really, no researcher ever has surveyed this number) and the 79 percent of community colleges that offer the service course (Bivens et al.,

2019). These courses are everywhere, and they make money for and raise the visibility of the departments that house them and TPC, as a discipline.

Both its ubiquity and complexity warrant a strong argument for the value of studying the service course. A systematic study of this network requires a focus, a lens through which the service course ecology can be viewed. For reasons explicated in more detail below, I've chosen service course curricula, specifically, service course assignments, as my focus.

As a force in the service course network, service course assignments must accomplish a complex web of goals in order to be effective within the service course. Service course assignments must speak to a student population who may never take another writing course about content that must emphasize types of workplace writing *and* concepts of workplace rhetorical practice--concepts to which students most likely have never been exposed, and about which they have little reason to care. The assignments developed for the service courses must, at once, a) be easily accessible by both the instructors who teach it and the students who enroll, while b) simultaneously addressing professional and technical objectives valued by disciplines far outside the home department (e.g., Engineering), and c) developing core writing proficiencies and the rhetorical tenants of Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) that may be totally unfamiliar to both instructors and students.

Considering the above constraints, designing service course assignments presents challenges that distinguish them from other writing course assignments. Many writing courses enroll students from multiple disciplines, but the service course also serves other disciplines, with direct accountability to those disciplines for delivering a curriculum that addresses their needs and expectations. But establishing an understanding that facilitates productive collaboration between two very different disciplines (e.g., Engineering and English) is a tall

order. Other disciplines may have ideas about the types of assignments that should be taught that do not anneal with TPC pedagogical standards. Neither discipline knows what the other does, and it is a challenge to describe disciplinary principles in language that is mutually comprehensible. Lines of communication with those other disciplines must be opened to facilitate effective interdisciplinary exchange of ideas, and facilitating those relationship takes time and effort, a topic discussed in this study when the subject of working with other stakeholders is addressed.

Other disciplinary concerns impact service course assignment design as it pertains the unique issue of service course instructors. As previously stated, and as will be addressed extensively throughout this study, service course instructors often come from diverse disciplinary background. Unlike other writing courses, service course assignments must be designed to accommodate instructors who may not be knowledgeable in the discipline they are teaching. Students are unlikely to be familiar with the rhetorical principles, for example, that underpin service course assignment, but instructors may be equally unfamiliar with them. This significant issue is taken up under the topics of staffing, professional development.

The workplace as a focus of the service course creates challenges for the service course administrator that further distinguish the service course from other writing courses. As is stated throughout this study, the workplace is a moving target. The contemporary workplace assignment designers take into consideration is not the workplace students will enter when they graduate. Further, as is suggested by the observation above that service course students come from different disciplines, students will be going into highly varied workplace environments. Service course assignments are tasked with preparing students to write in any number of work-related contexts in a work world that doesn't yet exist. As such, the issue of transfer resonates

especially strongly with service course assignment design. Considering that instructors are not experts in the disciplines from which their students come, impactful service course assignments should be designed to encourage transfer in of disciplinary knowledge that informs the creation deliverables that foster the skills and abilities valued in technical and professional writing. The overarching goal of an effective service course assignment is to enable students to then transfer the skills, knowledge, and abilities they've learned to any workplace writing situation they encounter. In light of its connections to workplace writing, transfer is approached in the Literature Review and Implications chapters of this study.

In highlighting the factors that distinguish the service course from other writing courses, this dissertation works to bring the service course into "plain sight" (Read & Michaud, 2018a), giving the service course assignment the attention is not only deserves, but is sorely lacking. And all of the above factors are brought into high relief in an examination of the role of service course assignment.

In administrative practice, assignments often are viewed as an endpoint in program design--the last link in a programmatic chain that ends with the activities of students in classrooms, and serves as a means to the end of assessing whether these students are achieving programmatic outcomes. This study endeavors to debunk this model of the assignment-as-terminus in the programmatic process. By examining service course assignments, I am working to discover connections between the assignment and other forces and stakeholders extant in the service course network. As such, in addition to gaining practical insight into impactful assignment design, I am researching service course assignments in context to visualize the network of forces and stakeholders in which assignments circulate well beyond their role in the classroom. Exploring assignments within the context of programmatic, course-level, and staffing

concerns works to visualize a programmatic perspective on the service course in which assignments operate not as a terminus or the logical conclusion of programmatic endeavors, but a nexus connecting the competing forces acting within the service course ecology.

As will be discussed, the instantiation of a programmatic network with assignments at its nexus enables a practical application of the GRAM method presented by Schreiber and Melonçon (2018). Schreiber and Melonçon's (2018) call for a deeply sustainable programmatic perspective on technical and professional communication programs that facilitates "reflection and data collection across institutions" (p. 9) and "assemble[s], analyze[s], and align[s] processes and knowledge work [in an] iterative framework" (p. 10) that builds in the processes of "maintenance and reflection" (p. 1). They introduce GRAM as a continuous improvement model drawn from industry as a means to "organize several iterative processes and practices in conversation with each other" (Schreiber and Melonçon, 2018, p. 7). In practice, GRAM manifests as a mechanism by which administrators approach programmatic work by Gathering, Reading, Analyzing, and Making in an iterative process that builds in critical reflexivity and encompasses multiple stakeholders (Schreiber and Melonçon, 2018). The GRAM model is flexible, scalable, and sustainable, rendering it applicable to the multi-stakeholder, multi-directional service course network. However, Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) present GRAM as a model only, and do not provide actionable ways to make connections between stakeholders. The programmatic network posited here provides provides an instantiation of the GRAM model applied to service course program administration (Zarlengo, 2019). The service course programmatic network developed in this study applies the principles of GRAM to the stakeholders and tasks of administering the service course. The data analyzed reveal the connections that already exist between between program goals, course goals, staffing concerns

and assignments, but are not commonly leveraged to improve programmatic operation. By situating assignments at the nexus of the connections between administrative forces, this study posits practical benefits to administrative tasks, including impactful assignment design.

Programmatic goals, course goals and staffing issues all refract through assignments and that this refraction can be reflected back through the model to create the type of "multi-directional active reflection" (Johnson, 2004, p. 102) that fosters the sustainability called for by Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) as necessary to grow and maintain service course programs. In there work, Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) identify the characteristics of a deeply sustainable service course program as leveraging a programmatic perspective that takes into consideration "the interconnected processes in which TPC PAs and faculty regularly engage," engendering "critical review of ..how and why [service course programs] exist and work," and fostering an "understanding that TPC programs are both locally situated and shaped by field-wide trends in academia and industry" (p. 3). My claim is that program goals, course goals, assignments, and staffing concerns are, to varying degrees, acknowledged in literature as important factors in programmatic work, but most often are considered independently, and are rarely put in conversation with each other. I argue that not only are these forces inextricably interrelated, but that we must consider these factors collectively to service the service course adequately. Assignments are situated at the center of the programmatic network not because they are more important than other forces influencing service course administration, but because it is at the assignment level that all four forces most clearly interface. The sustainable program model advocated by Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) aligns with this study of service course assignments, yielding insights informed by all four forces identified in the programmatic network.

As an object of study, the service course manifests a complex quandary requiring significant attention and care. However, referring to it as one thing--"the service course"--belies the network of competing forces already suggested by this discussion: institutional, administrative, and personnel concerns compose a network of forces that comprise the service course in situ. The service course is not one thing. It is a confluence of many factors, all of which are taken into consideration as a function of programmatic work. My claim in this study is that the competing forces in the service course network turn on the course curriculum. As a force within the network, the course curriculum catalyzes all other forces.

All forces within this service course network act on the course curriculum and the course curriculum acts on all forces. The recursive nature of this argument may seem conceptual, but, for me, it has practical implications. As the next chapter evidences, forces in the service course network are most commonly viewed in isolation, but a study of the service course curriculum affords a view of all the forces in relation with each other, engendering an understanding of the service course assignment, its goals and implications, within the larger network in which it operates. The decision to focus on curriculum is not arbitrary. Curriculum encompasses more just assignments. It also includes exercises, outside readings, and other instructional instruments the inclusion of which is determined by instructor discretion and informed by kairotic elements like classroom culture and social context. This study focuses on the assignments presented in the service course classroom because they are structured and documented, whereas the day-to-day and class-to-class modes and means of instruction are not. But situated as they are at the epicenter of the service course network, studying assignments affords meaningful examination of the intersection between practically "what we do" and "what it means."

While this study does not employ Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005) as a method, some of the principles Latour articulates are relevant to the way in which I apply the concept of the network to service course administration. Although ANT is generally applied to Science Studies, there are several aspects of Latour's theory that may be applied to the programmatic network. Among them is his concept of the black box (Latour, 1987). Latour (1987) argues that science facts, as opposed to being taken-for-granted, static objects of truth, are complex sociological webs of actions and events, of controversies and false starts, that he calls "science in the making" (p. 4). This idea that every fact may be unpacked to reveal the web of social forces, controversies, decisions and revisions applies to program administration, as well. An assignment is not simply a thing deployed in a classroom, it is an artifact of the programmatic process in all its complexity, and that process continues even after the assignment is made and distributed to students. The way students interact with the assignment, the way the instructor teaches the assignment, the feedback given to administrators about the assignment, how assignments change as program or course goals shift, or in consideration of extra-departmental interests from other disciplines--all these processes and more are ongoing and may be observed by unpacking the black box of the assignment. These ongoing processes are reflected in GRAM (Schreiber and Melonçon, 2018). The recursivity and reflexivity that are hallmarks of their deeply sustainable program are extant within the black boxes of programmatic artifacts. As Latour stated, "'There is no in-formation, only trans-formation.'" (Latour, 2005, p. 149). The products of administrative work are, when viewed instead as a programmatic network, a continuous, transformative process of interactions and controversies. This study is titled "a contextualized analysis of service course assignments." Latour counsels, "Deploy the content with all its connections and you will have the context in addition" (Latour, 2005, p. 147). In

exposing connections between aspects of service course administration, and unpacking the black boxes of service course artifacts, I work to visualize the context in which assignments circulate and reveal the ways in which service course administration is a network of imbricated forces. The implications of this study, then, suggest ways that these connections, the network as a whole, can be leveraged to not only design more impactful assignments, but facilitate more effective service course administration, and illustrate the ways in which the service course, in general, reflects and constructs disciplinary values.

Read and Michaud (2018a) claim, "Whether because of lack of stakeholders' motivation in the course or its low status in English studies, systematic research into the [service] course remained a risky endeavor for scholars in the emerging field of technical and professional communication" (p. 229). However, raising the visibility of the service course as a subject of scholarly research and sparking practical approaches to administration is precisely my agenda and a "risk" I am more than willing to take. Like Michael Knievel (2007), I see the service course as "a crucial curricular site, significant to the long-term health, credibility, and viability of the [TPC] field" (p. 89). As Melonçon (2018b) observes, "the service course is in many ways [TPC's] beginning...Thus, it ought to be the touchstone from which we improve as a field" (p. 201). Through systematic, critical, and data-driven research, this dissertation foregrounds the service course assignment as an object worthy of study in itself and for the enrichment of the discipline. This study of the service course assignment yields practically applicable insights into constructing data-informed, sustainable service course assignments, and develops a programmatic perspective on the service course that informs perspectives on TPC disciplinary identity. The process by which these goals are achieved is outlined in the chapter summaries below.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, provides a survey of relevant scholarship addressing the service course, assignments, programmatic and curricular issues, staffing issues, the value of moving toward a holistic, highly contextualized perspective on the service course. Owing to the dearth of scholarship focused on the service course, the chapter explains the need to include literature concerning First Year Composition (FYC), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), and TPC not specific to the service course. The chapter begins by situating the service course within TPC, as a discipline. Addressing interdisciplinarity and the role of the workplace, this section identifies elements of TPC disciplinarity that are manifest in the service course as a curricular and scholarly artifacts. The section concludes observing that assignments, designed by TPC scholars, reflect the values of those scholars, which are disciplinary in nature. The chapter then moves to the definition and challenges of the service course, which describes the history of the service course and details the challenges involved in its administration, many of which were introduced above. Following history, the chapter discusses literature specifically relating to each of the four forces in the programmatic network. Assignments in the classroom are discussed, after which the chapter describes the ways in which assignments connect classroom to workplace, and, finally, how the workplace influences assignments. Next, the chapter deals with programmatic goals, to include assessment practices and working with stakeholders outside the home department. A discussion of course goals includes such topics as course outcomes and means of connecting course and program goals. Staffing issues focuses on the contingent labor force endemic in service course instruction and the role of professional development in service course administration. The chapter concludes by claiming that despite and because of the dearth

of service course scholarship, the ideas explored warrant research into the service course assignment and merit a place for the programmatic network is service course scholarship.

Chapter 3, Methodology, provides a discussion of the methods employed in collecting and analyzing my data and the methodology undergirding those decisions. The chapter describes a methodological position that assignments exist within a broader administrative context, and it describes how I accomplished that contextualized analysis using a phronetic approach that was praxis-based--an approached warranted because the study works to achieve practical insights and endeavors to engage in theory-building conceptual work by conducting a systematic analysis of course materials and interviews. The chapter also explains that, as part of the effort to illustrate how Schreiber and Melonçon's (2018) GRAM model can be applied to programmatic research, I employ the first three steps--Gather-Read-Analyze--to my data. The chapter lists research questions and correlates them to the work done to analyze the data. The main method of analysis is identified as thematic analysis, and the method is defined. I discuss why I chose this method, and how I implemented it relative to my data. The chapter defines the scope of the study and the types of data I collected, to include course materials (i.e., syllabi, assignment, and textbooks) and interviews with program administrators and textbook authors. The limitations of the study also are discussed, most significantly sampling issues and generalizability. The chapter then details the analysis of each type of data, describing a) the objects/content analyzed; b) the questions asked of the data; and c) the specific process enacted to obtain answers to those questions. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the measures taken to ensure that the study is trustworthy.

Chapter 4, Findings and Results, describes the results of data analysis, identifies particularly meaningful and/or exemplar data points, and discussing the relevance of those findings. The chapter begins with course materials, identifying the Course Objective Categories

used not only to analyze syllabi objectives, but also other elements of the course materials, such as syllabi keywords, assignment objectives, and assignment keywords. The chapter explains that this decision enables the drawing of connections between syllabi and assignments that would not be possible if different categories were used for the different data types. The results of the syllabi analysis are discussed first, including course objectives and syllabus keywords, and assignments listed in the syllabi categorized by type. Analysis of assignments further entails identification of the types of assignments included in the corpus, to include the number of collaborative assignments. Assignment objectives and keywords also are analyzed using the Course Objective Categories. The analysis of textbooks includes topics covered in the textbooks, types of textbook exercises, and overall textbook themes and goals. The chapter then describes interviews of two types, textbook authors and program administrators. Textbook author interviews are analyzed using the same criteria as the textbooks, to include types of exercises and overall themes, with the addition of a discussion of textbook audience. Analysis of the program administrator interviews entails the identification of the most relevant themes to emerge from the conversations, to include perspectives on working with other stakeholders, connecting course and assignment objectives, and professional development, among others. The chapter concludes with a summary of the most significant findings from the analysis.

Chapter 5, Implications, places my findings into larger field-wide conversations by discussing the implications for TPC and suggest some potential next steps for research in this area. The chapter opens by positing the concept of the programmatic network proposed in this chapter. It explains how the programmatic network is a more effective model of service course administration than one-way, top-down approaches, and explains the impacts on program-level, course-level, and staffing concerns when assignments are placed at the nexus of the network. The

chapter then approaches the implications of the study through the lens of my original research questions. Beginning with improving impactful assignment design, the chapter addresses the question of emphasizing genre or rhetorical principles when designing assignments, and ensuring that course goals are reflected in assignments by aligning course objectives with assignment objectives. Second, the chapter takes up how the field's understanding of service course program administration may be enriched by critically considering the issues of curriculum standardization and instructor flexibility, and exploring the benefits of working with stakeholders outside the service course's home department. Finally, the chapter considers the implications of this study as a function of TPC disciplinary identity and values. Professional development is addressed as a major issue that threads throughout the study. While this study shows the administrative benefits of systematic professional development programs, the need for more research reflects on the implications of disciplinary attitudes toward contingent labor and how the field views the people in our own workplace. The chapter also speaks to disciplinary identity in terms of the dearth of and the need for more empirical programmatic research. This chapter discusses the ways in which this study evidences the value of empirical research in drawing inferences beyond best practices and personal experience, and how the field could benefit from more empirical work. The chapter concludes with a call for further research into professional development, the question of genre in assignments, and transfer in the service course. It concludes with a discussion of future work, to include developing the programmatic network into a theory of service course administration involving praxis.

Contribution

This study challenges conventional administrative practices in an effort to move the service course assignment design away from the intuitive, top-down models discussed here and toward a model which is based on a systematic, data-driven, programmatic perspective. A holistic view of the service course as a network positions the service course assignment at its nexus, a node through which all competing forces in the service course program intersect. The implications of a study of the service course assignment through this analytical lens are as follows:

- Study of service course assignments within a programmatic perspective can yield practical insights into designing service course assignments so they better align with and reflect programmatic and curricular needs and objectives
- Study of service course assignments builds a programmatic perspective that visualizes the service course in context and illuminates how assignments reflect and construct disciplinary goals and values

Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) call for reflexive interrogation of programmatic relationships on the levels of "course to course, course to program, program to other academic programs," and "program to professional field" (p.3). This study visualizes a programmatic network that endeavors to answer their call. My goal is to open a discussion of the service course assignment as productive and critically reflective as the ideas I advocate while framing that conversation around practically applicable ideas that may be useful for service course administrators designing service course assignment and programs.

The service course is sorely under-researched despite its importance to the departments in which it is housed and to Technical and Professional Communication as a discipline. Scholars

have researched discretely the program, course, and staffing factors, identifying them as important programmatic considerations, but limited work has been done to put the factors in conversation to create a holistic view of the service course. The value of the holistic view posited in this study is grounded in a contextualized view of assignments. Very little scholarship exists concerning the service course assignment, and the programmatic network has the potential to be developed into a theoretical model that can guide programmatic development. Additionally, in conducting a systematic, data-driven analysis of the service course assignment, this study opens a dialogue about the service course and assignments that has methodological implications for the field. As the data analyzed bears out, both assignment and textbook exercise design tends to be informed exclusively by the designers' professional experience and best practices. This study highlights the insights that can be gained from the application of empirical methods when designing assignments. Further, an expanded study using methods similar to those used here could yield field-wide perspectives on the service course assignment that would be invaluable to administrators and informative for the discipline. The position taken in this study holds that assignments reflect the values of their designers and assignment designers uphold the values of TPC as a discipline. Insights into service course assignments, thereby, are reflections of disciplinary identity.

This study also opens questions of genre and transfer. Assignments grounded in workplace genres are a staple of service course assignments, but this study reveals the dynamic between genre and rhetorical principles like audience and purpose. Genre is accessible for inexperienced instructors, and rhetorical principles, though also a cornerstone of service course curricula, may not be understood by those same inexperienced instructors. In highlighting the tension between genre and rhetorical principles, this study recommends use of assignment

objectives to provide guidance into balancing the two assignment goals. However, the question that needs to be answered concerns whether an emphasis on genre or rhetorical skills facilitates transfer of knowledge into the workplace.

Perhaps the most significant contribution this study makes concerns the elephant in the service course living room: the contingent labor crisis. Staffing issues loom large in this study and significantly inform almost all the major themes that emerge from the data. This study gives to the field a stark picture not only of how important staffing considerations are to programmatic work, but also how much time and energy administrators spend negotiating staffing concerns. This energy largely is spent dealing with the implications of the contingent labor crisis, often resulting in uneasy compromises that are less than satisfactory. This study offers practical reasons for implement professional development programs that can benefit administrators, instructors, and assignment designers, but, for the field, equally important are the insights into the endemic nature of the contingent labor crisis. The results of this study make a strong case for more research into service course labor issues.

The service course is fundamental to TPC's disciplinary identity, making service course programmatic work of significance to the field. While many in the field may acknowledge that fact, few write about service course administration, fewer write about the service course assignment, and even fewer, maybe just me, write about service course assignments. I see this gap in TPC literature as both unfortunate and problematic. Exploring the service course assignment can yield insight into service course assignment design, and that these insights may contribute to a broader, programmatic perspective on the context in which the service course exits, and how service course assignment, contextualized in that programmatic perspective, reflects and constructs disciplinary goals and values. However, the goal of this dissertation is not

to discover the ideal service course assignment ready-made for implementation in a service course program near you, or to define for the field a comprehensive theory of the service course. Rather, the goal is to contribute to a scholarly conversation about service courses in a way that invites further scholarship. Programmatic work is important. Teaching a class affords the opportunity to impact dozens of lives, but, done with integrity, programmatic work can, without exaggeration, impact thousands of lives. It is my hope that studies like this one can increase the scholarly attention paid to program administration and the disciplinary attention paid to the good work program administrators do in the world.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Scope

Prior to entering a review of relevant literature, it should be noted at the outset that current Technical and Professional Communication (TPC) scholarship reflects a dearth of discussion about the service course, and even fewer resources specific to assignments within the service course. A meaningful conversation about the service course assignments must therefore include research in First Year Composition (FYC), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), and discussions of TPC scholarship not specific to the service course. The decision to focus on Writing Studies also reflects a commitment to expanding an understanding of the role of the service course assignment that is firmly grounded in the disciplinary interests of Rhetoric and Composition through a systematic study of the assignment within the programmatic context, to include curricula and staffing concerns. This emphasis precludes the inclusion of scholarship from other disciplines such as Psychology and Education in the interest of underscoring the necessity of this work within Technical and Professional Communication. However, it is important to note that all college writing scholarship does not port directly into conversations about TPC or the service course. In comparison with the largely academic writing that is the focus of composition scholarship, writing in the service courses focuses on the workplace, and the difference between the academic rhetorical situation and the workplace rhetorical situation is vast. From genres to exigency to goals to research interests, the workplace writing evidences some significant and fundamental differences from the academic writing asked of students in, for example, FYC. Despite these essential differences, the work being done by scholars outside TPC

in other writing fields can facilitate a conversation about the service course and assignments within the service course.

Situating the Service Course within TPC

To effectively discuss the salient issues in play surrounding the service course, the course must be situated within the larger context of TPC as a discipline. Specifically, the service course is manifestly an interdisciplinary endeavor, which has been seen historically in the discussions of the service course as service (e.g., Dubinsky 1998) to other disciplines and in Russell's (2007) view of the service course as instrumental to writing in the disciplines. This interdisciplinary quality is mirrored in Sullivan and Porter's (1993) description of professional writing disciplinarity (hereafter referred to a TPC for clarity) as a function of "dynamic pluralism" with an "interdisciplinary character" (p. 392) that encompasses the multiple academic and professional priorities of TPC. Sullivan and Porter (1993) negotiate a space for TPC, *locating* it among disciplines, rather than *defining* it as distinct from other disciplines, and they identify several features of TPC that reflect its interdisciplinary and workplace orientations. They note that disciplinary boundaries "may always be a little fuzzy," but they see this characteristic of TPC as a strength (p. 415, Sullivan and Porter, 1993). The fuzziness of TPC boundaries aligns with aspects of the service course that require attention to the needs of both the departments that house the course and the departments it serves. As with the service course, "[t]he interests of professional writing are interdisciplinary--and departmental organization works against this" (p.17, Porter and Sullivan, 2007). They stress, however, "[w]e cannot abandon the interdisciplinary nature of professional writing without damaging what is strongest about the field" (p. 19, Porter and Sullivan, 2007).

To illustrate the connection between TPC and composition as disciplines, Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012) focus on the relationship between composition and TPC students viewed through the lens of Porter and Sullivan's (1993) curricular geography. Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012) restate Porter and Sullivan's characterization of TPC as a) a "research field" focused on writing in the workplace; b) a "workplace activity" (i.e., writing done in the workplace); and c) a "curricular entity" (i.e., service courses, majors, minors and certificates, etc.) (pp. 53-54). They identify these elements of TPC as aligning with the disciplinary agenda of writing studies, and establish an association thereby with composition studies (Peeples and Hart-Davidson, 2012). Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012) situate composition and TPC under the auspices of writing studies as separate-but-equal sub-disciplines, where composition occupies a humanist/service-status orientation and TPC occupies a professional/major-status orientation. In establishing a connection, they specifically develop an emphasis on the role of rhetoric as core to TPC and vital to composition, to include a special attention to audience. However, like composition, the service courses exist outside the framework of a specific major, which Peeples and Hart Davidson (2012) claim as a distinguishing factor in their separate-but-equal model of composition and TPC as sub-disciplines. The position of services courses outside TPC majors may account for the lack of research into these courses that are nonetheless central to TPC's disciplinary identity. In focusing on the disciplinary dichotomy of professional vs. technical writing, Blyler (1993) examines the assumptions underpinning fundamental classifications that apply to service courses and to TPC majors' curricular entity, establishing connections between both categories of courses.

Blyer (1993) observes that the distinction between technical and professional writing is not helpful when designing TPC curriculum. She points out that professional writing is not

exclusively persuasive, often including technical information, and that technical writing often has persuasive elements related to successful achievement of the purpose of the document with the target audience (Blyer, 1993). Blyer (1993) challenges formalist and positivist theories of TPC that often underpin arguments for a distinction between professional and technical writing with a discussion of social construction. She observes that, if meaning is socially mediated, as social construction contends, then students can benefit from focusing on the way documents reflect the values and conventions of the communities in which they circulate, regardless of whether they are considered technical or professional writing. She further argues, using Miller (1984), that "genres are responses to rhetorical situations" (Blyer, 1993, p. 228), and, as such, "genres can serve as 'keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community' [Miller, 1984, p. 165]" (p. 228). Using social constructionist ideas, she sees value in focusing "on the communities in which these documents originate, examining...communal values...and the conversations in which community members engage" (Blyer, 1993, p. 228) as TPC documents are created, rather than defining documents based on restrictive categories. The work that Blyler (1993) does applies as much to TPC service courses outside a major as it does to the work of curricular design within a major.

Also, negotiating a restrictive dichotomy, Kimball (2017) challenges the binary of technical communication as profession or discipline. He argues that "much of the rest of the world's population is actually engaging in the act of technical communication every day" (p.340, Kimball, 2017), regardless of whether their job title is that of professional or technical writer. Kimball (2017) advocates for "technical writing instruction more broadly as a set of skills everyone should learn" (p.331). To this end, he foregrounds the service course, lauding it as "a precious opportunity for the discipline to serve a larger and growing group of people: Those who

will do technical communication as part of their lives, both at work and in other contexts" (p. 348, Kimball, 2017). He laments that "faculty delegate the teaching of the basic service course to graduate students or lecturers," resulting in an "unfortunate" attitude that relegates the service course to "something we think of as a support to the professional program, rather than an end in itself" (p. 348, Kimball, 2017). This quandary is but one of many that defines the service course and renders it fertile ground for research, discussion of which follows.

Putting Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012), Blyer (1993), and Kimball (2017) in conversation maps the "dynamic pluralism" (Porter and Sullivan, 1993) of service courses in Rhetoric and Composition, TPC as a discipline, and the workplace. Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012) connect TPC within the larger discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, and while their categorizing TPC as having a major orientation may be reflective of inattention to research into the service course, categorizing TPC as having a professional orientation dovetails explicitly the service course manifest goal. This goal of teaching workplace writing to non-majors is facilitated by Blyer's (1993) work to elide the boundary between professional and technical writing on rhetorical grounds that anneal well with Peeples and Hart-Davidson (2012) assertion that both composition and TPC build from a rhetorical orientation. And it is Kimball's (2017) interrogation of the boundary dividing TPC as a profession and as a discipline that ties directly back into the pluralistic role of service course within the discipline, within the academy, and within the workplace. That the service course directly connects with all three nodes of this TPC network is what this research into service course assignments will make manifest.

Through engagement with assignments, students acquire the skills and knowledge that assignment designers think they need to succeed in their professional lives. Decisions about what students need to know manifestly reflect what the assignment designer values. This identification

of values reflects disciplinary identity. So, in a very real way, analysis of assignments illuminates disciplinary identity. The study of service course assignments has the potential to yield insights into an *expansive learning network* that encompasses not only programmatic and curricular foci, but also insights into how the field views itself, how it wishes to be viewed, and how to design assignments to align with and inform disciplinary goals and values.

Definition and Challenges of Service Course

The service course is rooted in late 19th-century courses in writing for engineers (Kynell, 2000; Cook, 2002). Charged with addressing the problem of otherwise competent engineers who were "near-illiterates" (Connors, 1982, p. 331), these courses focused on mechanical and grammatical correctness via the study of engineering document exemplars (Cook, 2002). Contemporary service courses encompass goals beyond basic writing and style, but their diverse curricula are circumscribed by a simple definition that belies the complexity of their administration. Melonçon and England (2011) define the service course as "introductory courses for nonmajors delivered primarily as a service to other departments and programs on campus" (p. 398). The deceptively simple goal of service courses is to prepare students in non-English majors for workplace writing.

Under this definition, these course are ubiquitous. Some iteration of the service course is housed in most institutions of higher education across the Carnegie Classifications of Higher Education. They also are essential. Representing "a non- [English] major's only classroom interaction with [Technical and Professional Communication] prior to graduation" (Melonçon & England, 2011, p. 398), these vital courses represent students' only opportunity to gain experience with the type of writing they will do in their professional lives. Further, the disciplinary impact of these courses is significant. Knieval (2007) observes, "[T]he service

course remains a crucial curricular site, significant to the long-term health, credibility, and viability of the field" (p. 89). As described by Schreiber et al. (2018), "Service courses cover a range of technical, scientific and professional communication practices" (p. 1). The authors highlight that "the goal of these courses is not simply to teach practices but to prepare students to effectively transfer that knowledge to new rhetorical situations (Scott, 2008)" (Schreiber et al., 2018, p. 1). Service course curricula must expose students to meaningful workplace practices while fostering the ability to think through the rhetorical processes that will be necessary to succeed in a workplace that's always evolving (Kimball, 2017). The work done in the service course, then, is of disciplinary as well as practical import. As Knieval (2007) observes, "it functions as a distillation and encapsulation of the field's values" (p. 89)--values that are passed on to students directly through assignments.

Between providing many students' only exposure to workplace writing, and reflecting and constructing disciplinary values, the role of the service course is manifold. However, the service course mandate is further complexified by institutional pressures. Service courses must address the expectations of the departments they serve (e.g., Engineering or Business). However, often these departments can't fully articulate their needs because, understandably, other departments don't "fully understand the work technical and professional communication does" (Melonçon, 2018). Additionally, the departments that house service courses (e.g., English) often are keenly aware of the student credit hours generated by high enrollments in service courses and the financial implications of those high enrollments, but unaware of the specialized demands that distinguish the service course from other writing courses. Recognition of the financial impact of service course within the department can lead to increased scrutiny from departmental administrators who also may not understand the obligations and requirements of effectively

administering the service course. Further, at many schools, the service courses are taught by graduate students with little experience, and contingent faculty who, like visiting instructors, have their own research agendas, or, like adjuncts, have significant course loads and course preps. And, outside the institution, the administrator must take into consideration the industry professionals who work daily in the field, who will be hiring service course students when they graduate, but who rarely are afforded direct input into service course development.

While inquiry into the service course must consider generalized administrative and institutional issues, work with the service course is also highly contextual. St. Amant (2018) reinforces that the general definition of the service course as a course for writing course for non-writing majors that serves departments other than the one in which it is housed (Melonçon and England, 2011) belies the highly contextual character of the service courses at individual institutions. He points out that the stakeholder groups and their contexts are as unique to the institutions that house service courses as they are to the departments those courses serve. St. Amant (2018) advocates for *contextualized course design*, which he defines as a "systematic approach" (p. 142) to researching the contexts of the various stakeholders invested in the service course with the goal of "developing or revising the technical communication service courses for the contexts of their own institutions" (p. 143). St. Amant (2018) identifies institutional, programmatic, departmental, and instructional/classroom stakeholder contexts as relevant to the overall service course dynamic. His systematic approach to analyzing contexts anneals well with a networked service course ecology that takes into account program, course, assignment and staffing concerns to visualize a programmatic perspective on service course administration. As such, the subsequent work presents a contextual inquiry into relevant literature that will situate a contextual inquiry of service course practice.

Both its ubiquity and complexity warrant a strong argument for the value of studying the service course. As an object of study, the service course manifests a complex quandary requiring significant attention and care. However, referring to it as one thing--"the service course"--belies the network of competing forces that encompass the service course program: institutional, administrative, and personnel concerns compose a network of forces that comprise the service course in situ. To further unpack this network of forces, its significance in curriculum design and to the field, and the key role the assignment plays in service course administration, the sections below will review literature from each of the nodes in the service course network, beginning with assignments, then moving to program and course goals, and finally staffing issues.

Assignments

Focusing first on the role of assignments in the classroom, and next on the connection between assignments and writing in the workplace, this discussion considers composition and writing across the curriculum (WAC) scholars negotiating ideas complementary to service course assignments, then turns to work more directly concerned with the service course, TPC scholarship and disciplinarity.

In the Classroom

To achieve learning objectives, assignments must do more than interest students, they must meaningfully engage students through their relevance to the students' lives. This need for relevance is particularly important in a service course in which workplace writing may seem far from students' experience in the classroom. In their work to identify the the traits of a meaningful writing project, compositionists Eodice, Geller, and Lerner (2016) highlight the "ways the meaningful writing project represented a link to the past via a resonant personal

connection and a bridge to the future via the applicability or relevance of the projects" (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner, 2016, p. 82). While Eodice, Geller, and Lerner (2016) focus on college writing and not TPC, this idea of connection between student's past experiences and acquired skills and future goals and expectations resonates well with the workplace-centered rhetorical situation of service course writing. In their work, they characterize transfer as what a student brings into an assignment, and how this transfer in of skills and knowledge enriches the learning experiences (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner, 2016). They observe that the "personal connection...offers a powerful means of conceptualizing transfer and is a potential bridge between students' interests in and experience with a topic and the kind of writing they identify as meaningful" (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner, 2016, p. 87). At face value, it might seem like there would be no prior knowledge students can transfer in to service course assignments focused on genres they've never experienced and won't experience until they enter the workforce. However, assignments can be designed to make connections between what the student knows and can do and the type of work they'll do in the future, as articulated in course goals and objectives. Thoughtful assignment design presents instructors and administrators with the opportunity to enact program and course goals through the work of instructors who connect students' classroom experience with their future lives as working professionals. In explicating the connections between program, course and instructor, the concept of transfer represents a move toward realizing the assignment as the nexus of all the forces in play in the service course program.

Connecting the assignment to student learning can go beyond the classroom experience. Eodice, Learner, and Geller (2016) also see benefit in viewing "the [assignment] itself as an opportunity, its meaningfulness resulting from a connection between faculty and student aims, a connection which can more easily take place within an *expansive learning framework* (emphasis

added, Engle et al. 2012)" (p. 135). Extending this idea, an expansive learning network might be more robustly viewed as a connection with the student that encompasses the instructor, as well as program and curricular forces, all of which reflect and construct the learning environment. Eodice, Learner, and Geller's concept of expansive learning framework complements a model of the service course as a network of competing forces with the assignment at its center. The role of the assignment is further underscored by Melzer (2014), who identifies writing assignments as "revealing classroom artifacts" (p.3) that yield significant information about both instructor and disciplinary goals and values. While his focus is on Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Melzer's (2014) claim further amplifies the implications of research into the service course assignment. In addition to the practical value of designing effective service course assignments on the programmatic level, the connection between the classroom and the applied work world speaks to the values and goals of TPC as a discipline.

Moving from conceptual studies of the assignment that work to identify the general characteristics of assignments and their impact on students, Graves and Samuels (2010) work to aggregate studies of writing assignments across the curriculum to categorize the types of writing assignments actually being taught. In their survey, they reference key studies including Meltzer (2003, 2009) and Bridgeman and Carlson (1984), Canseco and Byrd (1989), Carson, Chase, Gibson, and Hargrove (1992), and Paltridge (2002) that identify assignments by type and frequency, as well as the placement of writing assignments within a course (i.e., in exams vs. integrated throughout a term). They point out, however, that generalizing between the studies included in their survey is problematic because "inconsistencies in concepts and terms across studies and in which elements of tasks are reported in the data make it difficult to achieve a clear understanding of the range, frequency, and characteristics of assignments that students might

encounter" (p. 295, Graves and Samuels, 2010). To mitigate this methodological issue, in their own research they analyze 179 syllabi across the curriculum at one university (Graves and Samuels, 2010). They focus on type, frequency, and characteristics of writing assignments, in an effort to apply a consistent methodology to the specific case of a single university (Graves and Samuels, 2010). The conclusions regarding the specific types of writing assignments integrated into courses across one university focus on writing assignments across the curriculum (Graves and Samuels, 2010). Similar surveys of assignments in service courses do not exist. However, the issues with lack of standardization in terminology, conceptual categories and methodologies manifest in assignment research regardless of discipline. Further, these surveys offer insight into general categories, but tend not to analyze the assignments in detail, to include looking at objectives of assignments or efforts to align assignment objectives with course goals and outcomes. With this research agenda in mind, Graves and Samuels' (2010) study can be seen as a baseline for the deeper analysis.

Building on his work with Samuels (Graves and Samuels, 2010), Graves (2017) again takes up the question of what students are being asked to write across the curriculum with a focus on transfer, specifically the "failure of students to transfer their success as writers in previous contexts...to their written work in their major programs of study" (p. 1). By creating program profiles (Anson and Dannels, 2009) "in an effort to map the writing demanded of undergraduates onto the curriculums that they encounter" (p. 2), Graves (2017) works to create a "more nuanced look at what instructors are actually asking students to write" (p. 2). Graves (2017) again focuses on genre to categorize assignments, but also considered other elements of the assignments such as target audience and type of evaluation criteria. Graves' effort to add depth to his analysis by taking into account program-level considerations and by evaluating

rhetorical (i.e., audience) and reflexive (i.e., evaluation criteria) elements reflects an effort to put assignments in the contexts in which they exist within the curriculum; however, the question of transfer remains--specifically, for the service course, how does the assignment connect to skills applied in the workplace?

Connecting Classroom to Workplace

Within the context of the service course, an analysis of assignment should consider how the assignment reflect the needs and expectations of workplace writing. Francis (2018) develops a connection between the classroom to workplace writing. Building on the work of Cunningham and Stewart (2012), she researches assignments in professional writing courses for engineers and finds some alignment between assignments in the course and writing done in the engineering workplace (Francis 2018). Most relevantly, however, she raises questions about students' ability to transfer experience in the classroom to actions in the workplace. Here transfer refers to students' ability to port skills and experiences both into *and* out of classroom activities, defining the capacity to make connections between the classroom and other rhetorical situations encountered in the workplace. Put succinctly, transfer may be defined as "the ability to apply knowledge gained in one situation to...another similar situation" (p. 480, Lauder et al., 1999). Transferability, and how assignments can be designed for transferability, clearly are material to discussions of the service course the goal of which is to facilitate transfer of knowledge, skills, and abilities from the classroom to the workplace. As Francis' (2018) research suggests, the assignments we teach now may be applicable in the contemporary workplace, but the workplace is a moving target, and today's workplace will not be the one students enter when they graduate. Francis points out, "The idea of transferability is important because it is virtually impossible to teach every document that students will face in their future careers" (p. 69). Negotiating the

practical need for skills-based learning and the conceptual ability to navigate an evolving workplace is fundamental to the work of designing impactful service course assignments and designing assignments for transferability helps ensure that students can apply the skills and knowledge gained from an assignment in a future workplace context.

Following along the line of reason that links transfer to successful service course assignments, Ford (2004), too, tackles the issue of transfer, specifically as it relates to engineering students in the technical communication classroom. Ford (2004) asks what happens when "students leave the technical communication classroom and face writing tasks in their engineering courses" (p. 302), and she focuses on the transfer of *rhetorical knowledge*, defined in her study as "audience awareness, sense of purpose, organization, use of visuals, professional appearance, and style" (p. 302). Rather than conducting a broad survey of multiple courses or institutions, her study focused on one class of technical writing for engineers taught over one term, and she considered seven specific writing assignments to identify trends under which transfer does and does not occur (Ford, 2004). While she acknowledges that her results are not generalizable to other courses or other institutions, she argues for the importance of studying transfer in the technical writing classroom more systematically and on a broader scale (Ford, 2004). As a means to achieving the fundamental goal of the service course, transfer must be a core consideration when analyzing assignments.

In the Workplace

The work heretofore explicates some of the issues orbiting service course assignment analysis and design, and suggests the value of connecting the assignments to other factors, including service course learning outcomes, TPC disciplinarity, and student experience in the

classroom and in the workplace, but another core concern of assignment design is that of workplace itself as a site of application and inquiry.

The "workplace" is not one place but many, varied, and constantly changing. Because no class can prepare students for all they will encounter in the workplace, focusing on the skills and abilities most useful in the work world can productively integrate the workplace into discussions of outcomes and assignment design. Many scholars (Hart-Davidson, 2001; Johnson-Eilola, 1996, 2004; Slattery, 2005; Thomas & McShane, 2007; and Wilson, 2001) point to *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st Century Capitalism (1992)* by Robert Reich when discussing ways to frame the skills and abilities students should possess in order to integrate successfully into the work world. Reich (1992) characterizes the post-modern workforce with three general job categories: routine production services, which encompass repetitive activities and are easy to out-source; in-person services, those requiring interpersonal interaction for low wages; and symbolic-analytic services, in which workers engage in "problem solving, problem-identifying, and strategic brokering" (pp. 174-177). These symbolic-analytic skills are fostered through an education that "is fluid and interactive. Instead of emphasizing the transmission of information, the focus is on judgment and interpretation" (Reich, 1992, p. 230). Reich (1992) argued that "the formal education of an incipient symbolic analyst thus entails refining four basic skills": abstraction, the capability to "[discover] patterns and meanings"; system thinking, the capacity to "[see] the whole, and [understand] the processes by which parts of reality are linked together"; experimentation, the facility for "continuously experimenting"; and collaboration, the ability to "collaborate, communicate abstract concepts, and achieve a consensus" (pp. 229-233). Reich's framework speaks to skills and abilities that enable workers, and students, to approach problems creatively and solve them using cognitive skills rather than specific tools. Essentially,

Reich asserts that problems in the workplace require the ability to think through a problem rather than knowing what exactly to do.

Reich's framework originates from the workplace, but has clear applications to curriculum development. Other frameworks speak directly to the classroom, working toward the goal of integration into the workplace. Cook (2002) advocates for "layer literacies" in which "six key literacies--basic, rhetorical, social, technological, ethical, and critical" (p. 7)--are "integrated and situated through a complex of classroom goals and activities (p. 6). This work of "layering multiple literacies into classroom instruction" (p. 6) fosters the development of "learning communities" (p. 6) in the classroom (Cook, 2002). Cook believes technical writing curricula need to "promote collaborative team-building skills and technology use and critique," as well as "multicultural awareness and skills for communicating with diverse audiences" (Cook, 2002, p. 8). Cook (2002) sees the fluidity of the six literacies in TPC curriculum as a strength "because it allows instructors to create activities that promote multiple literacies and develop many skills simultaneously" (p. 23). Cook's (2002) layered approach to a curricular framework affords integration of workplace skills and abilities into classroom assignments thereby achieving outcomes that are applicable in the workplace.

The implications of these workplace-oriented conceptual frameworks, however, can encompass assignment design, as well as other programmatic work. Henschel and Melonçon (2014) inventory the skills considered most valuable to academics and practitioners of TPC, and represent those skills culled from scholarly and professional sources in a conceptual framework that can be applied to course development and program assessment. They parse skills by categorizing conceptual skills as "critical thinking and problem solving," and practical skills as "specific, identifiable skills [such as] audience analysis, writing, editing, information and

document design, and technology/too knowledge" (Henschel and Melonçon, 2014, p. 5). Referencing Carter (2007), they clarify: '"Some psychologists describe this distinction as declarative or conceptual knowledge on the one hand and procedural or process knowledge on the other, the difference between knowing that and knowing how (e.g., Anderson)' (Carter, 2007, p. 387)" (Henschel and Melonçon, 2014, p. 5). Henschel and Melonçon (2014) combine Cook's (2002) and Reich's (1992) theoretical frame into a system of their own, encompassing five conceptual skills: rhetorical proficiency, abstraction, experimentation, social proficiency, and critical system thinking. They then align the conceptual skills with practical skills identified as important by both academics and TPC professionals, categorizing core skills such as research, technological literacy, and collaboration under the corresponding conceptual skills to create a visual model that encompasses both practical and conceptual skills. After modeling what students should *know*, Henschel and Melonçon (2014) take up what students *do* when they turn to assessment and course design. They develop a form that assesses courses for inclusion of core conceptual skills and associated practical skills on a scale of increasing proficiency. Using their form, Henschel and Melonçon (2014) illustrate a means through which a TPC program can assess its success in "layering or integrating the conceptual and practical skills throughout the curricula" (p. 19). In concluding, they observe, "[T]he line between conceptual and practical skills becomes thin when the concepts are grouped in sets and placed in a matrix or heuristic" (p. 21). The practical value of which heuristic works to achieve "a 'multi-dimensional, active reflection [that] is a part of a profession like technical communication' (Johnson, 2004, p. 102)" (Henschel and Melonçon, 2014, p. 20). Henschel and Melonçon's (2014) heuristic narrows the gap between conceptual and practical skills, and between academic and professional applications of technical and professional communication, thereby moving toward annealing experiences in

the classroom and the workplace.

The work of Reich (1992), Cook (2002), and Henschel and Melonçon (2014) applies readily to discussions of what assignments should emphasize in the interests of achieving outcomes that transfer into professional skills and abilities, but they do more. These theoretical frameworks also map the outcomes and objectives that underpin programmatic design--what a program is working to achieve and why those goals matter. In this way, conceptual frameworks such as these form a bridge between service course assignments and service course program administration that goes beyond concerns of assessment. Each scholar conducts systematic study and analysis of their sites of inquiry, leading to conclusions that connect the development of program outcomes and course objectives to curriculum and assignment design. Developing the relationship between assignments and program goals yields further insight into the significance of the service course assignment.

Programmatic Goals

As stated above, articulating assignments to program administration is not only possible, but useful, as building such a connection visualizes other connections to factors material to programmatic, workplace, and disciplinary concerns. However, in program administration, assignments commonly are not considered in this networked manner. Frequently, assignments are only leveraged programmatically during assessment practices that use student work to determine the achievement of programmatic goals. The process of programmatic assessment employs program goals to weigh metrics such as whether students are meeting learning outcomes, often based on institutional directives, and programmatic scholarship evidences an interest in these assessment practices (Boettger, 2010; Carnegie, 2007; Hundleby & Allen, 2010; Taylor, 2006; Yu, 2012). As Anderson (2010) observes, ‘‘[t]he literature on assessment provides

an abundance of advice for...analyzing student artifacts and refining curricula based on what is learned" (p. 62). Anderson (2010) notes, however, "Far less advice addresses the fundamental task of defining a program's educational objectives'' (p. 62) and helping faculty ''identify objectives that are most worthy of pursuing'' (p. 58). Because the majority of assessment models are forensic, assignments and the process of assignment design do not contribute to the development and revision of programmatic goals. As Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) emphasize, "The assessment literature is less helpful when programs need to identify new goals or proactively change their orientation or what they emphasize" (p. 2). In assessment, student work is used to determine whether Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are being met. This means that assignments enter the program assessment process only after they are completed. To consider assignments only at the terminus of curricular workflow does not provide administrators with a reflexive means to consider adaptive revision of programs.

While most assessment practices are conservative, rather than generative, the focus on program assessment is understandable because, as Scott and Melonçon (2017) point out, programs "shape how a range of stakeholders within and beyond our institutions understand and value what we do" (n.p.). Visualizing program integrity through assessment increases institutional status and makes money for the departments in which programs are housed. However, program goals can be advantageously applied to more than program assessment. In offering techne, which they define as "rhetoric as the productive art of enacting knowledge" (n.p.), Scott and Melonçon (2017) propose a model for TPC administration that works to reframe the linear, top-down model of program design and leverages the concept of techne at multiple levels from program assessment to course design. While they acknowledge that techne functions within programs as a "conceptual tool," the work they do to illuminate that tool's value

illustrates the potential benefits of conceiving programs holistically, as opposed linearly or discretely.

Evidencing another issue precluding a holistic program model, program goals often are developed with limited data from stakeholders within and without the institution, or from other institutions. Coppola et al. (2016) advocate for evidenced-centered program assessment, as well as a heuristic model based on questions put to stakeholders that include students, instructors, program administrators, and professionals in the workplace. While Coppola et al. (2016) demonstrate their advocacy for both research and the inclusion of a network of stakeholders in modeling their assessment framework, their work operates exclusively at the program level and offers no critically reflexive mechanism for program maintenance that encompasses other factors--such as course, assignment and staffing operations--in the creation and revision of service course programs. Collection and analysis of evidence, and attention to stakeholder networks, is vital to development of a sustainable program, but these modalities must be applied reciprocally, based on heuristics that afford bi-directional interface between all levels of program administration. As previously noted, assignments have important disciplinary and practical implications. These implications are invaluable information that could be leveraged in program design and goal development, if the connection between assignments and programmatic goals were seen holistically.

Course Goals

A step toward building reciprocal dynamics puts program goals in conversation with course goals, work which moves toward the bridge between assignments and program goals. However, on the infrequent occasion when service course goals are the focus of scholarship, discussions of efforts to put course design in conversation with program concerns arise, largely

and unsurprisingly, within the context of assessment. As noted above, assessment models view assignments forensically. Within these models, courses are viewed as content aggregators, focused on a predetermined subject, in which assignments are disbursed. Limiting assignments to this static, retroactive role does little to foster continuity within a program. Carter, Anson, and Miller (2003) astutely observe that lack of unification in service course programs can lead to "new initiatives or random retooling of existing courses and curricula" as a response to concerns from stakeholders, without grounding changes in "careful data gathering and assessment" (p. 105). Carter, Anson, and Miller (2003) advocate for "outcomes-based assessment" that is student-centered and focuses on course outcomes a means to "create connections across the curriculum" (p.112). Included in their outcomes-based assessment model is a question aimed at improving programs, which Carter, Anson, and Miller identify as a key because it enables faculty to "act on information to improve the program" (p. 108), but the mechanism by which improvements are identified, codified, and enacted is nebulous.

A different approach to course goals works to unify programs through the standardization of assessment criteria. Maid (2005) makes an argument for TPC programs to adopt the WPA Outcomes Statement originally developed for First Year Composition, and he discusses a service course at his institution as an example. Maid (2005) explicates the minor changes required to use the Outcomes Statement, which addresses course outcomes, at the program level by highlighting the statement's flexibility. However, while standardized documents like the Outcomes Statement can be useful data points in the development of goals, the Outcomes Statement--however fully vetted by the WPA--is just one document, and one specifically designed to be broadly applicable to all First-Year Composition (FYC) programs across the nation and through all the years since its ratification. Further, course outcomes used for assessment at the program level do not put

courses within the program in conversation with each other in any systematic way. Viewed in a holistic context, the systematic study of assignments can be used to unify courses goals within a program on both course-to-course and course-to-program levels. Additionally, Maid (2005) acknowledges that the review process for developing outcomes in his admittedly small department comprised collaboration with one full-time colleague and feedback from several other faculty, to include one part-time faculty member. This small pool of collaborators highlights the danger in using a single, static document--no matter how lofty its credentials or flexible its construction, illustrating powerfully a lack of data-driven critically reflective review processes in program administration. Put simply, building a service course program around a single document builds in a lack of sustainability and precludes a holistic model. A prescriptive statement is inherently a top-down mandate, affording no reflexive input from assignments, or any other programmatic factor.

Scholarship reflects the discontinuity consequent to a prescriptive framework. In a later article, Maid and D'Angelo (2012) note that after working with the outcomes inherited from the WPA Outcomes statement for a period of time, they realized those outcomes weren't sufficient. Although the outcomes were tied to both the program and course levels, Maid and D'Angelo (2012) acknowledge programmatic disunion. They noted that "some kind of connection was missing" and that "faculty lacked the approach to implement these outcomes into every course they taught" (Maid and D'Angelo, 2012, p. 259). To build a connection, they mapped the outcomes onto the curricula of all courses in their program, adopted a qualitative data-driven approach to assessment in their capstone course, and they describe how this data contributed to revision of their program outcomes (Maid and D'Angelo, 2012). Maid and D'Angelo's move to put program- and course-level artifacts in conversation and the move to include systematically

gathered data in their assessment contributed to programmatic improvements. However, the connection between program and course remains top-down, and assignments are not taken into consideration.

In addition to putting course goals in conversation with program goals to facility unity, course goals may also be annealed with assignment outcomes, which ensures continuity within the course and to the program. Andrews (2003) reports work to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration in the creation of a service course for engineers. In an effort to address the needs of engineering and science departments to develop students' writing skills, Andrews (2003) developed a metallurgical engineering class co-taught by English and Engineering instructors in which students receive joint credits in engineering and writing. Anderson (2003) developed a course in which both the engineering and English faculty were instructors of record and students registered for both an English and and Engineering course, getting credit for both. The two instructors co-developed assignments and each assessed deliverables, commenting based on their areas of expertise. Anderson (2003) acknowledges that this model of interdisciplinary collaboration faces administrative and funding issues that make it a) unsustainable; and b) unscalable, as her program operated on an extremely small scale (approximately 20 students total per semester). However, she believes that the value to students-- whose writing, she reports, improved in language skills, organization, investigation, and use of evidence--and the value to the university, as a model of the type of interdisciplinary collaboration that strengthens institutions, justify the effort at experimentation (Anderson, 2003). Anderson further argues the importance of "technical writing [as] the subject of continuing revision and experimentation" (Anderson, 2003, p. 415). While Anderson's (2003) collaborative interdisciplinarity is both more immersive and less sustainable than many departments could support, it does foreground the

benefits creating a ground-up interdisciplinary service course, not the least of which is course-level continuity fostered by aligning course and assignment goals in the course design phase.

Another means of connecting program and course contexts to assignments is suggested in Schreiber and Melonçon's (2018) discussion of curricular expectations. These curricular expectations are an explicitly stated list of goals that function at the course level to identify what the assignments in each course should accomplish. By identifying what the assignments in all courses should accomplish, these curricular expectations can be mapped onto programmatic goals to ensure that the skills, knowledge, and abilities valued at the program level are realized at the course level, and that assignments manifested at the course level are reflected in program-level goals. This type of critically reflective and reciprocal practice realizes a clear and dynamic connection between program- and course-level concerns visualized through a focus on assignments. Placed in conversation with the networked models and frameworks discussed above realizes the role of the assignment as a nexus in the service course network.

The work heretofore explicates the value of leveraging assignments to connect outside stakeholder, program, and course goals. To initiate a discussion of staffing concerns, the impact of assignments in the classroom must be established. Assignments are manifestly designed to engage students in learning activities. As facilitators and mediators, instructors represent a direct point of contact with the target audience for which assignments are designed. As such, instructors have significant insight into the achievement of assignments' objectives. But instructors also have impact on assignments' outcome. How an instructor presents assignments to a class directly informs how effective those assignments are for students. As such, an assignment is designed not only for students, but for the instructors teaching them. Any discussion of service course assignments must, therefore, take into consideration the people

teaching service courses, and the question of staffing the service course is a complex one--as the next section develops. But this key stakeholder group largely has been marginalized by common administrative practices. Melonçon vociferates, “No future discussion of the service course can occur without an intensive and specific attention to labor and labor conditions” (Melonçon, 2018). In full agreement, then, the discussion moves to staffing

Staffing

While very few scholars write about it, staffing is a core concern among service course administrators, and, as noted above, directly and indirectly impacts how assignments are created and integrated within the curriculum. In order to ensure the preparedness of instructors who do the vital work of interacting with students and enacting course outcomes, service course administrators must support with both time and resources a faculty group who are “overwhelmingly…contingent faculty,...contractual, full-time, non-tenure track, term-to-term adjuncts, or graduate students” and who often “do not have a background in technical and professional communication” (Melonçon, 2018). And this staffing issue is ubiquitous among institutions of higher education. Melonçon and England (2011) surveyed 70 public universities and tallied 742 sections of the service course to learn that 83 percent of the courses were taught by contingent faculty, which they defined as full-time, non-tenure track, part-time, or graduate assistant instructors, with 17 percent of courses taught be permanent faculty. According to a survey conducted by Knieval (2007), “almost all institutions [queried] support a service course…, over a third offer nothing in technical communication beyond the service course…, and nearly half have no devoted faculty in technical communication” (p. 89). Knieval’s findings further underscore the implications of service course staffing challenges relative to the service course assignment. He highlights, “A lack of faculty means fewer people available to direct and

reinvent curriculum to keep pace with changing notions of pedagogy, disciplinarity, and technology" (Knieval, 2007, p. 90). Programs without sufficient full-time TPC faculty are forced to "borrow faculty from allied fields like composition and rhetoric or lean heavily on nontenure track faculty to staff courses" to oversee curriculum and instructors "who are often teaching heavy course loads with no incentive to grow and change with evolving disciplinary conditions" (Knieval, 2007, p. 90). The implications of supporting an experientially and disciplinarily diverse faculty lay bare the importance of designing assignments with staffing in mind. No matter how well-designed an assignment, it will not achieve outcomes if instructors are not prepared to teach it.

As serious an issue as the question of staffing presents, it is woefully under-researched. While organizations such as the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) (2003; Updated 2014) have commented on contingent faculty issues across the university, very little work has been done to explore staffing issues in TPC or the service course. Staffing is ignored in programmatic work, as well. As Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) observe: "We found no assessment plans that consider faculty staffing, professional development for contingent faculty, or the implications of faculty from other departments and their expectations for the service course" (p. 4). Schreiber and Melonçon's (2018) finding highlight the depth of the problem: few are directly confronting what is an endemic issue in service course administration.

That staffing is a significant factor impacting service course program administration may be an intuitive claim, but the extent of the problem may not be as intuitive. Melonçon and England (2011) focus on contingent faculty issues to include significant teaching loads, low salaries, job security concerns, and the absence of professional development opportunities. They look at how these problems challenge contingent faculty to fully invest in every course they

teach. Following up on Melonçon and England's work, Read and Michaud (2018) conducted a survey to characterize service course faculty in greater detail, to include information about the programs in which they taught. Read and Michaud (2018) identify that, while two-thirds of respondents taught to established outcomes, over half of which outcomes were assessed, nearly half of their respondents either didn't have access to or didn't know whether professional development opportunities were available to them. This finding suggests that administrative decisions--to include curricular planning--made at the programmatic level are not consistently relayed to staff stakeholders, nor do staff stakeholders have a consistent means of providing input to administrators. Read and Michaud (2018) assert, "because it is impossible to know or predict whether individual instructors' experiences will reflect any or all of the general trends, it will be challenging to bring instructors of service courses and technical and professional communication programs together to advocate for cohesion, shared missions, or shared outcomes" (p. 105). However, it is precisely because it is unknown what this key stakeholder community has to say--how their perspective might add depth and complexity to a programmatic perspective--that they must be brought into the conversation for a tenable holistic program model.

Professional development is key to responsibly accommodating the needs of service course faculty. Melonçon and England (2011) advocate professionalization for contingent faculty to mitigate some of the impacts of a diverse, non-permanent faculty population, to include raising the quality of instruction and increasing access to campus resources. They also argue that a more professionalized faculty population can help legitimize the service course program within departments (Melonçon and England, 2011). But, as Read and Michaud's (2018) work highlights, professional development opportunities are hard to come by. Melonçon (2017)

understates the problem when she claims that "contingent faculty lack professional development opportunities" (p. 257). Specifically with an eye toward online instruction, she develops a case for the necessity of professional development to ensure instructors understand and have access to the resources necessary to do their jobs and ensure alignment with programmatic goals (Melonçon, 2017). She calls on TPC program administrators to "consider creative, innovative, and program-directed solutions for their faculty" (p. 264). She also recommends that professional development programs consider all relevant contexts in the programmatic "landscape" and the formation of a "community of practice (CoP)" (p. 264). This CoP functions as a support network for instructors that includes pedagogically driven models encompassing questions of how and why courses and assignments are constructed, as informed by program and course learning outcomes (Melonçon, 2017). The practices she advocates for online instructors are valuable for all service course faculty. If assignments are to achieve outcomes, instructors must be able to confidently present them. It is for all of these reasons that staffing concerns are articulated to a networked model of the service course. Instructors are directly connected to the efficacy of assignments and are invaluable resources for their design and development, and the need to connect instructors to course- and program-level concerns is manifest if a service course program is to instantiate a reflexive model of sustainability.

Conclusion

The foregoing builds a foundation for the claim that study of the service course assignment is warranted by its practical and disciplinary significance. While literature directly pertaining to the service course is scarce, this fact inherently suggests a need for study. However, the literature included here from Composition and TPC illuminates the unique position of the service course assignment. Practically, the service course assignment is asked to do the

challengingly interdisciplinary work of teaching writing to students who are not writing majors, students who will work in highly varied, often technical, professional fields very far from writing professions. The service course assignment must also bridge the boundary between the academic and professional world, a boundary no other course most students take will be tasked with breeching. For these reasons alone, the service course assignment merits attention. But this study sees a role for the service course assignment in addressing some of the endemic challenges in service course administration. Specifically, it claims that the service course assignment is underleveraged as a means to connect the levels of service course administration in a network that promotes sustainability and a programmatic perspective. Finally, this work claims that the service course assignment goes under-recognized, yet vital work in both reflecting and constructing TPC's disciplinary values and goals, as the service course assignment is designed to inculcate the skills and abilities most important to engagement with one of TPC's most vital sites of inquiry, the workplace.

The next chapter describes the methodology and methods with which the current practices of and orientations toward building service course assignments will be examined.

Chapter 3. Research Study Design: Methodologies, Methods, and Practices

The SAGE Dictionary of Social Research Methods (Jupp, 2013) defines methodology as, "The philosophical stance or worldview that underlies and informs a style of research" (p. 175). Specifically, "[m]ethodology is the philosophy of methods" (Jupp, 2013, p. 175). Key in these general definitions is the distinction that methodology is a way of thinking about an object of study and the study of that object, which informs, but is separate from, methods, or the means of studying the object. Melonçon and Scott (2018) describe methodologies as "multidimensional, value-laden frameworks for approaching, studying, and making sense of phenomena" (p.1). The approach to methodology taken in this study embraces an ideological definition of methodology in which what a researcher thinks about the world informs her perspective on the object of study and what can be known about it. This philosophy underpins decisions about how to study the object, or methods, which in turn are enacted as practices that describe how the study actually is accomplished. This conceptual model is reflected in the headings of this chapter--Methodologies, Methods, and Practices--as I walk the reader through the rationale behind my study, discuss my methods and the reasons they were chosen, and describe how I used those methods to enact my research into the service course assignment.

Methodologies

In administrative practice, assignments often are viewed as an endpoint in program design--the last link in a programmatic chain that ends with the activities of students in classrooms, and serves as a means to the end of assessing whether these students are achieving

programmatic outcomes. My approach to researching the service course assignment interrogated this model of the assignment-as-terminus in the programmatic process. By examining service course assignments, I worked to discover connections between the assignment and other forces and stakeholders extant in the service course network. As such, in addition to gaining practical insight into impactful assignment design, I am researched service course assignments in context to visualize the network of forces and stakeholders in which assignments circulate well beyond their role in the classroom. Exploring assignments within the context of programmatic, course-level, and staffing concerns visualized a programmatic perspective on the service course in which assignments operate not as a terminus or the logical conclusion of programmatic endeavors, but a nexus connecting the competing forces acting within the service course network.

Toward my object of study, the service course assignment, I applied a phronetic approach. Taking its name from *phronesis*, or "practical wisdom" (Aristotle, 2007), a phronetic approach "suggests that qualitative data can be systematically gathered, organized, interpreted, analyzed, and communicated so as to address real world concerns" (Tracy, 2007, p.4). Tracy (2007) characterizes phronetic research as "praxis-based" (p. 4). The focus on practice-based research is an important one since much programmatic research is envisioned and completed based on an exigency of solving a specific problem or answering a praxis-based question. Programmatic research in TPC has long been applied in its focus (see e.g., Balzhiser, et al., 2015; Bridgeford, et al., 2014; Chong, 2016; Tillery & Nagelhout, 2015), but it has lacked a sense of rigor since much of it has been focused on single examples that are difficult to apply outside of local institutional contexts. The praxis-based, applied orientation I took to construct the research

study design moves TPC beyond the single-institution example toward a methodology that can potentially construct a theory for programmatic research.

This study emphasized solving a real problem, but encompassed a multi-institutional scope that positioned the study at the field level. A field-level perspective encouraged broader applicability, but also put practice in conversation with the work of theory-building, which requires field-level context to be plausibly applicable to TPC as a discipline. While the scale of the study was small, the broader perspective allowed me to do both practical and theory-building work as I analyzd data and drew conclusions, setting up a dynamic between theory and practice that dovetails with Sullivan & Porter's (1997) characterization of praxis-based a methodology:

> [P]raxis refers to a kind of triangulation: not the kind by which you check results by using a variety of empirical or theoretical methods, or by collecting data through a variety of media, but a conceptual one that leads to research that privileges neither the theoretical foundation nor the observed practice. It is a research perspective willing to critique both theory and practice by placing both in dialectical tension, which can then allow either to change (p. 27).

Because my goals were both practical and theoretical, with each informing the other, a phronetic approach is justified. Further, both my practical and theoretical goals were grounded in an applied impact for my study. Not only did I work to produce results that can lead to more impactful assignment design, but I also laid the groundwork for building a theory of the service course that speaks to field-wide concerns about the role of the service course within TPC as a discipline. The methodological approach I developed to achieve these practical and theoretical goals reflects an effort to pursue a systematic approach to study of the service course assignment

not currently found in TPC literature. In this way, my study makes methodological contributions to the field, as well.

Complimenting the use of a phronetic approach to my research, this methodology is an example of the approach designed by Schreiber and Melonçon (2018), who describe the GRAM continuous improvement model (Gather--Read--Analyze--Make) as a means for achieving deep programmatic sustainability they recommend for TPC programs. The GRAM model affords a mechanism for an integrative, holistic approach to program administration that moves beyond thinking of programmatic work through a singular, assessment lens. GRAM enables administrators to think more broadly and holistically, taking into account multiple programmatic concerns to ensure that the program is meeting students' needs. Contributing to the application of GRAM, St.Amant (2018) provided a series of contextualized questions guided my inquiry into the programmatic, departmental, and curricular contexts in which the service course operates. St.Amant's contextualized inquiry also reflected GRAM's "theory into practice" approach, and afforded the opportunity to put this scholarship into action. In methodologically parallelling the first three steps of the GRAM process (Gather--Read--Analyze) in conjunction with St.Amant's inquiry, practical applications emerging from my research affords practice-based, applied insights into sustainable administrative practices.

The theoretical agenda encompassed an inductive approach that worked toward theory-building a programmatic perspective on the service course. To this end, I ascribed to a methodological notion of theory "as part of an ideological network of interpretation" (Melonçon and Scott, 2018, p. 11). In working to develop a theory of service course administration by way of the assignment, I aligned my views with Melonçon and Scott's (2018) position that "theory building gives a necessary force to our existing methodologies that encourages and supports

alternative and innovative ways of doing the work of research" (p.12). My goal is to build a theory that is "measured and nuanced rather than universalizing and flattening" (Melonçon and Scott, 2018, p. 14). I worked to build theory as a framework operating "as a mode of inquiry that can help up pose questions, discern language's functions and impacts, and provisionally help us know" (Melonçon and Scott, 2018, p. 12). The theoretical facet of this dissertation functions to re-vision the service course assignment as an active, reflexive component of the service course network, the implications of which anneal the practical work assignment design with the conceptual role of assignments in embodying and shaping TPC disciplinarity. This project represent an initial step in theory-building, as is discussed in Implications. More work and more data are required to develop a robust theory that can be applied to service course administrative scholarship.

Research Questions

My research focused on service course assignments in technical and professional communication (TPC): what are they doing, and what are they being asked to do, and what are the implications of their design. To answer my questions about service course assignments, I considered the assignment within the network of programmatic, curricular, and staffing concerns that comprise the service course program. To this end, I asked the following questions:

- How are service course assignments designed?
- When viewed within the larger context of service course program administration, what do service course assignments accomplish?
- What can analysis of service course assignments teach us about the larger context, programmatically and disciplinarily, in which the service course exits?

My goal in answering these fundamental questions was to develop an understanding of the service course assignment as it currently is viewed and taught. These three questions apply a layer approach to systematic study of the assignment. The first question focused on the construction of the assignment--to include genre and scaffolding, or how the information is presented to students over the course of the assignment. The second question illuminated the role an assignment plays in the curriculum, and the skills, abilities, and knowledge assignment designers think students should learn over the course of the assignment. And the third question situated the service course assignment in a programmatic and disciplinary context to illuminate the ways in which assignments enact programmatic goals and reflect disciplinary values.

The insights gained by this initial analysis enabled me to address the following questions:

- How can a contextualized analysis of service course assignments lead to more effective and impactful assignment design?
- How can learning about service course assignments enrich our understanding of service course program administration?
- How can learning about service course assignments theorize a programmatic perspective that facilitates a discussion of the service course as a function of TPC disciplinary identity and values?

These questions spoke to the practical implications of a systematic study of the service course assignment and outlined what this study contributes to service course administration and to the field of TPC, thus building on the albeit limited work that exists in the field (e.g., Schreiber, Carrion, and Lauer, 2018). By conducting a systematic analysis of the service course assignment, this project contributes to more efficacious assignment design grounded in the identification of the purpose and impact of the work instructors ask students to do. Giving

rigorous attention to the service course assignment helps service course administrators design assignments that target clearly articulated objectives relevant to workplace writing. To achieve this goal, this study operates from on the premise that the service course is a network of multiple forces and stakeholders--to include program, course, and staffing concerns, and that all of these forces circulate through the assignment recursively (as previously described in greater detail in the introduction). This networked approach moves toward theory-building by situating the service course assignment in a larger disciplinary context, highlighting the disciplinary implications of service course administration.

Methods

My research questions were addressed via thematic analysis of textual artifacts (described below). In this context, thematic analysis is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as "a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (p. 79). Thematic analysis afforded the flexibility to engage with text, and to bring the personal experiences and institutional contexts of interview participants to the table, while allowing me to include sufficient empirical data from multiple institutions to support reasonable conclusions about field-level contexts. Other methods that incorporate thematic elements are more structured (e.g., grounded theory, content analysis, discourse analysis) and would miss the nuance engendered by "named and claimed" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81) thematic analysis. Where thematic analysis "is not wed to any pre-existing theoretical framework" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82) and "provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 2), other thematically oriented methods are bound to epistemological stances and/or are formalized in a way that prohibits exploration of a broad range of themes from

the complete dataset. Specifically, for example, my dataset comprised materials from multiple institutions and individuals of diverse background and experience. The diversity of my dataset's origins precluded the establishment of a standardized language of assignment. Methods keyed to standardization of language, such as content analysis, would filter out the nuance I worked to uncover and articulate in my work. Similarly, quantitative methods, such as those that analyze surveys using Likert scales, focus on limited and specific variables, which cannot record the diversity of perspectives reflected in my data. My goal in applying thematic analysis is to "provide a rich thematic description of [the] entire data set, so that the reader gets a sense of the predominant or important themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84), which is "a particularly useful method when...investigating an under-researched area, or [querying] participants whose views on the topic are not known" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 84). As previously established, the service course assignment is under-researched and the topics about which I asked interview participants solicit views previously unrecorded in extant literature. Fundamental to this work was the effort to report patterns in approaches to and perspectives on the service course assignment previously absent from TPC literature. Thematic analysis afforded the adaptability necessary to provide detailed results without reducing the complexity of issues in play.

The textual work done with thematic analysis was enhanced by an empirical approach that strengthens the study's validity. MacNealy (1999) defines empirical research as ''research that carefully describes and/or measures observable phenomena in a systematic way that has been planned in advance of the observation'' (p. x). That this study was empirical contributes to a disciplinary agenda. As Melonçon and St.Amant (2019) recently highlighted, only approximately one-third of TPC scholarship is empirical. But they argue that, for research to be sustainable, researchers in TPC need to conduct more rigorous empirical and qualitative

research. The systematic design of this study allowed me to take advantage of the flexibility afforded by thematic analysis without the loss of the study's validity. Additionally, my analysis was focused on observable phenomena, which aligns epistemologically with a realist approach to thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006): "[W]ith an essentialist/realist approach, you can theorize motivations, experience, and meaning in a straightforward way, because a simple, largely unidirectional relationship is assumed between meaning and experience and language" (p. 87). By including both course materials and interviews I created an empirical study that encompassed artifacts of curricular design with the statements of intent and purpose that were taken at face value, and interpreted based on only the responses interviewees provided, yielding insights not extant in the course artifacts, without relying on unspoken or implied meaning.

A review of the limited programmatic scholarship in the field reveals that programmatic research needs to incorporate more mixed methods approaches. This study used mixed methods--a combination of qualitative methods (course materials, textbooks, and interviews), as well as quantitative markers from existing research (course materials with results aggregated quantitatively). One of my goals for this project included providing a model for rigorous and replicable (in methods and approaches) research practice.

A description of empirical methods leads to a discussion of the study's variables, found in the next section.

Variables

As the object of my study was the service course assignment, my variables were defined by the types of data collected. I focused on three types of data:

- Course materials: syllabi and assignment descriptions

- Interviews with program administrators and teachers
- Textbooks and interviews with textbook authors

My goal in gathering data was to accumulate course materials that are representative records of assignments and courses as they are taught in the classroom, and to obtain insight into the programmatic motivations underpinning those course materials through interviews. Course- and program-level concerns are two important nodes in the programmatic network. When placed in conversation, the data provided the opportunity to begin the work of analyzing how assignments are created and then deployed within the service course. The scope of the study was bounded by collecting data from service course programs in departments with a TPC degree program. Since there is so little research into and understanding of the service a course assignment, beginning research into the service course assignment with institutions that have a TPC degree program provided an opportunity to glean information and insight from administrators running degree programs. The disciplinary knowledge engendered by running a degree program suggests that administrators potentially could provide insights into assignment creation that are grounded in the basic tenets and knowledge of TPC as a field, rather than those of general writing or composition. Universities at the R1 & R2 levels were included in the study because these are the locations that train graduate students have the largest programs. Large, structured programs represented the best place to start research into the service course assignment, since these programs often dictate trends simply because of their size and the ability of their faculty to publish research. Also, scaling future research downward, to smaller programs, is easier than scaling up to include larger programs. Because smaller programs employ fewer faculty and serve fewer students, methods applied to understand of assignment creation and deployment in a large program may be scaled more simply to address smaller programs than

revising methods to accommodate larger programs. The study was reviewed by USF's Institutional Review Board and found to be exempt from IRB oversight (# Pro00033052).

The last data points that were included in the data set was a survey the five most commonly used textbooks in TPC service courses (Melonçon, 2019) and interviews with their authors. As discussed in Finding and Results, many service course programs require textbooks, especially for inexperienced instructors. These textbooks underpin, to varying degrees, the structure of course curricula and can inform decisions about which assignments to teach. Since textbooks can influence curriculum design, including textbooks in the data set was a priority. Further, textbooks often are written by senior scholars in the field, and, as such, represent perspectives on the scope of disciplinary knowledge as it relates to service course curricula. Looking at the content included in the textbooks, to include exercises and activities, provided a snapshot of the types of topics--frequently parlayed into assignments--that TPC, as a discipline, sees as most appropriate for the service course. Speaking with the textbook authors, as in speaking with administrators, provided insight into the rationale behind the themes developed and topics discussed in the textbook, which allowed me to correlate the material in the text to the disciplinary knowledge on which authors were drawing. Interviews also afforded an opportunity to ask about the role of exercises in the textbook, how those exercises were developed, and how authors intended exercises to be used in the classroom. My intention in including these questions was to understand how the authors viewed exercises and to gain insight into how they saw exercises relative to assignments. Further, information regarding how exercises were developed increases the depth of perspective on how scholars make decisions about service course curriculum design--specifically, as will be discussed in Findings and Results, whether exercise topics were intentionally reflective of chapter objectives and whether authors involved other

stakeholders when designing exercises. My overall rationale for including textbooks positioned them as central curricular artifacts of significant influence in curricular decisions and as reflections of disciplinary knowledge, as such, it was methodologically appropriate to analyze textbooks and conduct interviews with the authors using the same methods applied to the course materials.

This study encompasses both extant writing program artifacts (i.e., assignments, syllabi, and technical and professional writing textbooks) and interviews with service course program administrators and with textbook authors, including the following:

- Service course syllabi from 13 R1 & R2 institutions
- Service course assignment descriptions 13 R1 & R2 institutions
- Interviews with program administrators from 15 R1 & R2 institutions
- TPC textbooks (5)
- Interviews with TPC textbook authors (3)

Course materials included in my dataset take three forms:

- Syllabi
- Assignment description
- TPC textbooks

These materials were gathered from two sources:

- Program administrator interviewees
- TPC textbook publishers

The course materials provided material records that evidence the content currently taught in the service courses from multiple programs. Looking at the actual materials presented to students afforded an understanding of the current status of the service course that is student-facing,

revealing how institutional pressures like programmatic and curricular concerns manifest in the course-as-taught. The course materials were artifacts revealing how goals, objectives, values, and standards are applied in the classroom.

The interviews conducted collected data regarding the practices and processes in which program administrators and textbook authors engage in their own unique "field" locations. This definition of field work aligns with McKinnon, Asen, Chávez, and Howard (2016), who consider "'[t]he field' as a concept representing a site of investigation" (p. 4) and *field methods* to include interviews. McKinnon et al. (2016) "define the field as a nexus where rhetoric is produced," which "enables reflection about rhetoric's emergence, meaning, and influence through methods like interviewing and focus groups" (p. 4). By conducting interviews, I engaged with participants where their programmatic ecology is enacted and in which program artifacts are circulated, affording insight into the context that produced the syllabi, assignment descriptions, and textbooks.

Interviews also were requested of five of the eight textbook authors (three books had two authors) who wrote the textbooks I analyzed. Of the five requests for interviews sent to textbook authors, three interviews were conducted. All interviews were recorded, with permission, using Skype or MP3 Skype Recorder v4.49. Some interviews were conducted as video calls, but all recordings were audio only. Remote interviews were a viable method due to the geographical distribution of participants (Oltmann, 2016). Interview questions for both program administrators and textbook authors may be found in Appendices A and B, respectively, and will be discussed in more detail in the Practices section below.

Limitations

Limitations of my research encompass primarily issues of recruitment and sampling. The decision to include only R1 and R2 institutions was partially one of convenience, in that I had ready access to individuals at the R1 and R2 level, but also one of generalizability. Given that the scope of my study was limited by the format of the dissertation (as a document of limited length) and by the amount of time I had to complete the study, I chose to get more data within limited parameters, rather than less data spread across broader parameters (i.e., if I had included included Masters or Baccalaureate institutions).

While I can say that I began to see repetition in responses in my 15 program administrator interviews, I cannot claim that 15 interviews is representative of the field, especially since my interviews encompassed only R1 and R2 institutions. Additionally, I spoke only to three textbook authors. While they may be viewed as authorities on the books they wrote, they do not represent the sum of textbook authors. Due to the sample size of my dataset--both course materials and interviews--conclusions will not be wholly generalizable.

Practices

While methodology describes the rationale behind the study, and methods describe the mode of inquiry applied to the study, practices describe the process by which the study is enacted. This section describes how was the research design and analysis was conducted and completed.

Questions/Procedures/Data Analysis

Questions, procedures, and data analysis are discussed under a single heading because the subheadings are linked in my study's design. First, I identify the specific elements of the data I

studied, then I list the questions I asked of that data, and, finally, I describe how I proceeded in answering my questions.

To analyze my research materials (syllabi, assignments, textbooks and interviews), I have broken out my research questions based on categories I believe to be most salient to analysis of service course assignments:

- Purpose and Structure
    - What is the purpose (Goals/SLOs) of the service course?
    - How is that enacted in assignments (Outcomes/deliverables)?
- Balance
    - How should assignments negotiate effectively the dual goals exposing students to a) the rhetorical practice fundamental to effective technical and professional communication (Theory); and b) the type of writing they will do in the workplace (Practice)?
- Teachability
    - How should assignments be built to ensure teachability for the broad range and potentially large number of instructors teaching service courses?
- Accessibility
    - How should assignment be built to best serve students from other disciplines who, potentially, have little investment in writing within their profession, and little to no knowledge of rhetorical practice coming into the course?

These questions serve as the initial themes that scaffolded my research, lending insight into the practice of assignment design in a broad programmatic and disciplinary context. My research was significantly informed by my experience as a service course administrator. The application

of my experience contributes to the decision to conduct theoretical thematic analysis, which "would tend to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst-driven" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 85). In selecting course materials, I chose the artifacts that, in my experience, are student-facing manifestations of programmatic functions, by which I mean that documents such as syllabi are student-facing, but include explicit statements (e.g., objectives and keywords) that reflect the programmatic goals and values. The fact that the course materials are student facing is important because these documents communicate to students what administrators and instructors think is valuable, and this is key to both my practical and disciplinary agenda. When an instructor designs a curricular document, they are making a statement about what they believe is important for students to learn about TPC and what they want students to take away from the course. My experience as an administrator and in working collaboratively with other administrators led me to develop an awareness of the importance making these assumptions of value explicit in course design. The questions I asked in this study are designed to extract from the data information about what administrators believe to be important and effective methods and materials of instruction. However, these artifacts cannot reveal implicit assumptions of value, intention, and motivation. As such, I elected to conduct interviews that would solicit responses speaking to both the denotative and connotative contexts in which programmatic decisions are made. To this end, the interview questions also represent lines of inquiry informed by experience, but are structured to be open to interpretation based on the interviewees' experiences. This ideology enacts my approach to thematic analysis as realist, "which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Programmatic artifacts such as syllabi and assignment descriptions are products of the institutional cultures and individual experiences of

administrators as much as they are products of pedagogical practices and programmatic goals and objectives. To that end, supplementing course materials with interviews was vital to add depth and context to the artifacts themselves. Similarly, textbook authors leverage their experience and knowledge to inform decisions about how a textbook should be compiled. Interviews allowed me to gain insight into the context from with the textbook arose. My dataset, therefore, is positioned to yield an understanding of the service course assignment in situ, and to produce data that leads to deductions of programmatic and disciplinary significance.

The analysis of my data relied on text and context as I work to characterize the role of the assignment in the programmatic network by identifying markers of significance in course and interview textual artifacts. My approach was informed by Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Steps for Conducting Thematic Analysis:

1. Familiarizing with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

One of the reasons I chose thematic analysis for this study was, as previously described, the method's flexibility, and I modified Braun and Clarke's process to reflect the parameters of the study. Because the questions I generated serve the role of initial codes and form the thematic basis of my analysis, I did not need to generate initial codes. The section below list the techniques I used to identify and refine the themes that emerged from the data.

Analysis of each data type began by addressing the questions listed under the data type headings below. Using questions as a way to analyze my data is a deductive approach which intersects with thematic analysis' emphasis on language (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Close reading of the course materials and interviews helped me make sense of the themes that were naturally occurring based on the questions I asked. In addressing the questions, I applied the following process.

To begin my analysis of the syllabi, I reviewed the course objectives listed in the syllabi three times, generating on the initial review a list of categories that characterized the objectives by the core concept on which they focused. Subsequent reviews refined the list to ensure I was capturing in the category the ideas the objectives articulated. I also combined related ideas into master categories. For example, Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing included style and tone, and Writing Process included drafting, editing, revising, and proofreading. The goal of this work was to ensure that objectives were accurately categorized. The names of the categories were informed by my experience as an administrator and by the terms used in literature. I referred to these labels as categories rather than codes because, while they represent containers for a type of information, my categories are more conceptual than textually derived, by which I mean that, when engaged in close reading of the objectives, I categorized them based on the concepts the objectives emphasized, rather than the denotative meaning of the text. As previously stated, because the syllabi came from geographically distributed institutions and were designed by administrators from various backgrounds, no standardized language of the assignment exists in the corpus. Categorizing based on concept allowed me to capture the nuance of syllabi objective while consolidating the number of categories into a quantity that allowed me to observe patterns in their use.

Once I was satisfied with the list of Course Objective Categories, I applied them to the course objectives listed in the syllabi, and also to keywords in the syllabi, objectives in the assignments, and keywords in the assignments. The decision to apply the Course Objectives Categories to both the syllabi and the assignment descriptions was based on two factors. First, once compiled, the categories represented a group of core concepts that I felt were highly representative of the ideas that arise most office in the context of service course curricula, and, therefore, these categories were applicable to both types of data. Second, considering the broad applicability of the Course Objective Categories, applying them to syllabi and assignments allowed me to make comparisons and draw connections between the two data types. This ability was especially relevant to my analysis considering the methodological goal of making connections between programmatic practices. Correlating findings between data types also facilitated synthesizing the analyzes of course materials with interviews. Interview questions, for example, included a request for administrators to speak specifically about whether course goals were explicitly connected to assignments. Applying the Course Objective Categories to both syllabi and assignments provided data points connecting course objectives to assignments that could be triangulated with interviewee responses to the course objectives/assignments question.

Another modification to Braun and Clarke's (2006) process involved the identification of trends in the interviews. Part of my analysis of interview data entailed listening to interview recordings and writing up detailed summaries of the responses to questions. Following the initial review of the recordings, I listened to the interviews again to check the summaries' accuracy and also to transcribe representative quotes. These summaries were copied into a spreadsheet that placed all interviewees' responses to individual questions in conversation. I reviewed all interviewees' answers to individual questions collectively, which facilitated identification of

trends. Like the categories used to analyze course materials, trends in the interviews represent patterns observed in interviewee responses. This inductive process was possible because the interview corpus was small, which allowed me to perceive the dataset holistically. Scaling the study up in the future would necessitate a more structured, textual approach to interview analysis.

Once the course materials and the interviews were analyzed, I synthesized the findings from the analysis of course materials, to include results of the Course Objective Categories analysis, with the trends identified in the interviews. This process of triangulation allowed me to identify themes that emerged from the syllabi, assignment, and interview copra. The inductive nature of this modified thematic analysis is appropriate because the goal of my study is to visualize connections between aspects of the larger programmatic process. As previously stated, the method was tenable because my dataset was small, but, despite and even because of its size, it was able to yield useful insights into the programmatic process. Taken collectively, the syllabi, assignments and interviews create a window into actual programmatic work. Because the assignments and syllabi came from the administrators to whom I spoke, I was able to establish a direct connection between what the administrators said about their programs and processes and the products those programs and processes produced. In a larger dataset, it would be more challenging to maintain connections between data within programs while placing programs in conversation with each other. Modifying the Braun and Clarke (2006) approach to thematic analysis allowed me to emphasize connections between corpra while preserving the nuance and complexity of individual artifacts.

Having described the overall process of my analysis, the sections below detail how I approach each data type.

Syllabi (From Program Administrator Interviewees)

As part of my efforts to describe the characteristics of service course assignments, the following elements of syllabi received from program administrator interviewees were evaluated:

- Course objectives/goals
- Student learning outcomes (SLOs)
- Course description
- Assignments/Projects

My goal in looking at these elements was to identify the following characteristics:

- What types of course objectives and assignments do the syllabi include?
- What is the frequency of occurrence of each type?
- Are there trends in the occurence of each type across the syllabi?
- What keywords occur in course descriptions?
- Are there trends in the occurrence of keywords across the syllabi?
- How can the syllabi be characterized based on all analyzed elements taken in sum?

To answer these questions, I performed the following actions:

- Individual course objectives, and assignments were characterized by type (i.e., for course objectives, collaboration, writing within a genre, tool use, etc.).
- The types and frequency of types of the course objectives, SLOs and assignments were aggregated.
- Keywords were identified in the course descriptions.
- The keywords and frequency of keywords from the course descriptions were categorized and aggregated.

- For each syllabus, a qualitative description of each syllabus was generated that identifying the overall character of the course elements analyzed.

This information was compiled in the interests of gaining insight into not only the types of objectives and assignments course designers value, but also what those types say about what course designers think it is important to teach in the service course. Further, analysis of the course description yielded insight into the skills and abilities on which course designers want students to focus in the service course. Summatively, a qualitative description of each syllabus discursively characterized an overall impression of the course and what that course is working to accomplish: how the course reflects what course designers think about the overarching goals of their service course and what a service course should do for students.

My approach to the analysis of the syllabi was designed to yield results that describe and characterize service course design in my data set, while also opening that data up for discussion of the ways in which course design illuminates disciplinary perspectives on the service course.

Assignment Descriptions

The assignment descriptions that are a part of my dataset are associated with the syllabi sent by the program administrator interviews. Interviewees sent one to four assignment descriptions with their syllabi. The data does not reflect a complete set of assignment descriptions for each syllabus. The following elements of the assignment description received from program administrator interviewees were evaluated:

- Assignment objectives (learning outcomes associated with a specific assignment)
- Assignment explanations (the text describing the assignment)

My goal in looking at these elements was to identify the following characteristics:

- What types of assignment objectives do the descriptions include?

- What is the frequency of occurrence of each type?
- Are there trends in the occurence of each type across the descriptions?
- What keywords occur in the assignment explanations?
- Are there trends in the occurrence of keywords across the assignment descriptions?
- How can the assignment be characterized based on all analyzed elements taken in sum?

To answer these questions, I performed the following actions:

- Individual assignment objectives were characterized by type (i.e., collaboration, writing within a genre, tool use, etc.).
- The types and frequency of types of the assignment objectives were aggregated.
- Keywords were identified in the assignment explanations.
- The keywords and frequency of keywords from the course descriptions were categorized by type and aggregated.
- For each assignment, a qualitative description of the assignment was generated that identifying the overall character of the elements analyzed.

The information gleaned from assignment analysis worked on two levels. First, I developing a data-driven understanding of the design of service course assignments. I was especially interested in how the assignment positions its goals and how that correlates to key skills, abilities, and knowledge identified in the assignment explanation. Second, those insights were correlated with course objectives to gain insight into how the assignment fits into the overall course design.

Textbooks

The course materials dataset also includes a selection of five TPC textbooks:

- Anderson, P. V. (2017). *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach* (9th edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Gurak, L. J., & Lannon, J. M. (2018). *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace, Loose-Leaf Edition* (4 edition). Pearson.
- Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2017). *Technical Communication Today* (6th edition). Boston: Pearson.
- Markel, M., & Selber, S. (2018). *Technical Communication* (12th Edition). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Tebeaux, E., & Dragga, S. (2017). *The Essentials of Technical Communication* (4th edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

Sampling for the textbooks was purposive, based on reviewed literature (Melonçon, 2019) and based on responses to interview questions concerning textbooks in the administrator interviews. Five of the most frequently used textbooks were selected.

Textbooks were analyzed for the following elements:

- Introductions/Prefaces
- Tables of Contents
- Any exercise/assignment associated with a writing task

My goal in looking at these elements was to identify the following characteristics:

- What topics are covered in the textbook?
- Are there similarities in topics between textbooks?
- What types of assignments (to include exercises) are presented in the textbook?
- Are there similarities in the types of assignments between textbooks?
- What overall themes, goals, and characteristics are emphasized in the textbook?

- How do the themes, goals, and characteristics compare between textbooks?

To answer these questions, I performed the following actions:

- Review of the table of contents identifying topics covered in the book chapters
- Topics covered in each chapter were aggregated
- Identification of the types of assignments/exercises included in the textbook
- Types of assignments/exercises were aggregated
- Review of three assignments/exercises of each type
- Composition of a qualitative description of each type of assignment/exercise
- Assignment/exercise descriptions were aggregated
- Composition of a qualitative description of the major themes, goals, and characteristics of the textbook based on review of the preface/introduction

My goal in analyzing the textbooks was to compile a description of assignments in key TPC textbooks and integrate those descriptions into the larger context of the service course as it it taught. By identifying and comparing the overall themes, goals, and characteristics of each textbook I noted the similarities and differences of the purposes of each book. These purposes were put in conversation with analyses of syllabi and assignments to reveal a contextualized view of a) field-wide attitudes toward the service course; and b) how assignments enact and reflect those attitudes.

Interviews with Program Administrators

Interview questions for program administrators focused on three areas of programmatic interest. Several questions addressed the service course program, its scope, and function. The interview then moved on to curriculum-centered questions that addressed course and assignment design, to include how assignments were selected and who was involved. The final topic covered

was staffing. These questions asked administrators to describe how decisions are made about staffing their service courses. Staffing questions also addressed the professional backgrounds of service course instructors and the program administrators' professional development protocols.

Questions about assignments focused on type and selection process, but also looked at curriculum standardization versus instructor discretion, as well as connection between course goals and assignments. One question asked for administrators to identify a favorite assignment--one that most effectively achieves outcomes and benefits students. In asking for a favorite assignment, the goal was to correlate specific assignments to the skills, knowledge, and/or abilities the administrator most values in service course instruction.

If the syllabi and assignments represent extant course artifacts, the questions put to program administrators work to glean insight into the process surrounding their development and use, to include the motivations behind their design and presentation to students. By asking questions that speak to program, course, and staffing concerns, the interviews provided data that integrates the service course assignment into a larger programmatic and disciplinary context.

Once the interviews were complete, I created a spreadsheet for interviews of each type. Once spreadsheet was keyed to the program administrator questions, the other to the textbook author questions. I listened to each interview, taking notes on each question, and then composed a qualitative description that identified the major themes and topics discussed.

Interviews with Textbook Authors

Interview questions with textbook authors focused primarily on assignment/exercises, asking about the different types of assignment/exercises, their goals and objectives. Questions also asked about the creation of the assignments/exercises, where the material came from and whether anyone other than the author was involved. To add context, questions also encompassed

issues of audience--i.e., who is using the book--as well as how the author believes the book is being used in the classroom.

Similar to the program administrator interviews, the goal of the textbook author interviews was to glean information concerning the author's attitude toward the assignments/exercises in the textbook, as well as the process of their creation. Information about target audience for the textbook and its use in the classroom serves to situate the textbook and its assignments/exercises within the larger programmatic network. Textbooks are used in many service course classrooms, which means they are used during the process of completing assignments, some of which are included in the textbook itself. Understanding their authors' rationales behind their decisions speaks not only to the impact of textbooks on service course assignments, but also to disciplinary views on what is important in service course instruction, to include assignments.

Conclusion

This study employs thematic analysis as a "useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights" (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017, p. 2). As a qualitative mixed methods study, this chapter works to establish trustworthiness as a function of "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). Measures taken to ensure trustworthiness are listed below associated with each of the steps in my study protocol. As noted above, the second step, generating initial codes, was deleted from the protocol since my approach to thematic analysis employs questions as the initial thematic framework and initial coding was not necessary.

Establishing Trustworthiness in Thematic Analysis (Nowell et al., 2017):

1. Familiarizing with the data: Extended engagement with data, to include notes concerning the data and potential themes
2. Searching for themes: Diagramming themes and making detailed notes to build connections and conceptual hierarchies between themes
3. Reviewing themes: Returning to data for referential adequacy
4. Defining and naming themes: Documenting theme naming process
5. Producing the report: Describing coding, analysis, methodological and analytical decisions

This study was systematically designed with a realist epistemological alignment that focuses on observable phenomena evidenced in both textual course materials and interviews. The mixed qualitative methods corpus of course materials and interviews were analyzed using a modified protocol for thematic analysis. The modification stemmed from the use of questions as the thematic basis of analysis. The questions were developed based on research and practice in service course programmatic work and served as the guiding analytic framework. This study serves a model of the type of empirical research currently absent from TPC literature.

Chapter 4. Findings and Results

The following chapter describes the findings and results of my study. The goal of this chapter is to describe in detail the data of the following types:

- Syllabi collected from program administrators
- Assignment descriptions collected from program administrators
- Interviews conducted with program administrators
- Textbooks commonly used in service course curricula
- Interviews with textbook authors

These data shed important light on some of the current practices of assignment design in the service course. This baseline information provides the field a starting point from which it may glean more in-depth knowledge about the practices of building the service course and the role assignments play in this process. I offer these data to help move the discussion of service course programmatic scholarship forward. Programmatic scholarship is vitally important to the field, and, as this study evidences, research into service course program administration and assignment design reveals the necessity of doing this work.

Syllabi

In analyzing syllabi, I look at the following topics and work to answer the following questions:

- Objectives

    - What types of course objectives/goals/SLOs, and assignments do the syllabi include?
    - What is the frequency of occurrence of each type?
    - Are there trends in the occurrence of each type across the syllabi?
- Course descriptions:
    - What keywords occur in course descriptions?
    - Are there trends in the occurrence of keywords across the syllabi?

Objectives

From the program administrators, I collected 17 syllabi, three of which did not list course objectives. Of the 14 syllabi in which course objectives were named, Table1, below, categorizes the objectives by category with occurrences. The categories are listed in order from most to least frequent.

In analyzing the course materials, I began with the syllabi and, specifically, course objectives. I first reviewed all the objective statements in the syllabi collected from program administrator interviewees and labeled the objectives by type. After reviewing the types I had identified, I aggregated the objectives into categories that characterized the main goals and concepts represented by the objective statements. Table 1 below lists the objective categories I identified with descriptions.

I introduce these categories first because, in addition to using them to categorize the course objectives, I use these categories to analyze syllabi keywords, assignment objectives, and assignment keywords, allowing me to make connections between the syllabi and assignment data. Thus, in much the same way that educators are taught to use outcomes and objectives to

help guide their courses (Marsh, 2007), I am using objectives as a way to guide syllabus and assignment analysis in this chapter.

Table 1. Course Objective Categories, Descriptions, and Occurrences in Syllabi

Course Objective Categories	**Description**	**Occurrences**
Rhetorical Principles	Includes rhetorical principles--e.g., rhetoric, audience , purpose, context	14
Document Design	Includes document design, document organization, and structure.	12
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	Includes goals that involve writing--technical/professional or workplace, as well as characteristics of this writing, e.g., style, tone, concision, clarity, etc.	10
Collaboration	Includes collaboration, team work, and other group work	10
Genre	Includes all references to genre or the characteristics of specific genre--e.g., genre, memo, executive summary, etc.	9
Research	Includes research and related concepts--e.g., research, findings, methods, etc.	9
Ethics	Includes reference to ethics and values	8
Writing Process (Drafting, Editing, Revising)	Includes reference to the writing process--e.g., drafting, revising, editing, proofreading	7

Table 1. (Continued)

Presentations	Some syllabi included a separate objective for presentations, requiring a separate category for presentations beyond Genre.	5
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	Includes references to disciplines in general and also specific elements of disciplinary contexts and conventions	6
Electronic Writing/Social Media	Includes reference to electronic discourse and social media--e.g., blogs, websites, social media	4
Using Technology	Includes reference to using or analyzing technology--e.g., specific applications, information literacy, internet tools	4
Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving	Includes reference to problems, problem-based learning or tasks, and problem solving	3
Visuals	Some syllabi included a separate objective for visuals, requiring a separate them beyond Document Design	2
Cultural/Global Context	Includes reference to cultural or global issues--e.g., globalized culture, cross-cultural design	1
Legal Issues: Copyright, Fair Use, etc.	Includes reference to legal issues--e.g., copyright, fair use, etc.	1
Service Learning	Includes reference to service learning activities and course content	1

Of the syllabi that had objectives, the top seven objectives categories are Rhetorical Principles, Document Design, Professional/Technical Writing, Collaboration, Genre, Research and Ethics. Rhetorical Principles occurs most often. Fourteen occurrences of Rhetorical Principles in the 14 syllabi with objectives reflect that every syllabus that listed objectives included one that was focused on Rhetorical Principles. This suggests service course designers see rhetoric as fundamental to the success of the course. Document Design is the second most common objective. This finding suggests a consensus about the importance of document delivery and format. These findings also align with other field-wide programmatic work on program outcomes at the undergraduate level (Clegg et al., 2019) and with a study that looks at the service course across institutional types (Melonçon, 2019). In both of these other studies, rhetoric, design, and writing were at the top of the outcomes results.

As an objective describing a focus of the course, Professional/Technical and Workplace Writing could suggest an emphasis on the fact that service courses are writing courses that are, in my corpus, most commonly are offered by English or writing departments. However, it is important to note some syllabi included style, tone and related descriptors (e.g., clarity, concision) in writing-related objectives. Again, this suggests an emphasis on delivery.

Collaboration as a top-five objective suggests consensus within the corpus that working in groups is a valuable workplace skill--a finding supported by the assignment data described below. Research, too, appears to be a skill valued in the service course classroom. Ethics is emphasized in some syllabi, and not in others, but, as the data will show, an emphasis on ethics does not carry over into assignments.

Of the less common objectives, it is interesting to note that inter/transculturalism and globalism was uncommon, although globalism is a common characteristic of discussions of the

professional context. Also interesting, use of technology and problem-solving were not common, although these elements occur often in assignments, as the assignment data will show.

Course Descriptions

The second variable I looked at in the syllabi were keywords found the in course descriptions. The text of course descriptions is material to this study because it includes text that is added to the course catalog, making it an institutional record of the purpose of the course communicated to students. The course description also communicates the curriculum designers attitude toward the course, adding context to the objectives, emphasizing, in addition to what the student should expect to learn about the subject matter and how they will go about learning it, any overarching themes of the course and the designer's orientation toward the material.

All 17 syllabi collected from program administrators included some text that discussed content and goals on which the course would focus. In selecting keywords, I considered major concepts and idea. I did not select words and phrases that simply identified deliverables or class activities. For example, I selected a word like "report" only if it referred to the purpose or role of a report in the workplace, rather than describing a report students would create as a deliverable in an assignment. My goal in selecting keywords was to develop an understanding of the course ideology, the attitude of the course toward its subject matter and objectives. From the course descriptions, I identified 127 keywords. Table 2, below, lists keywords categorized by Objective Categories, arranged from most to least frequent occurrence. I have included only the categories that arose in the keywords. Categories not occurring are discussed after the table.

The categories most commonly occurring in the syllabi keywords are Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.), Rhetorical Principles, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, and Genre. Keywords identified with these categories

total 69 % of the 127 keywords analyzed. Three of the five most common course objectives were included in the top five keyword categories, specifically, Rhetorical Principles, Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.), and Genre. However, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, the 10th most common category occurring in objectives, was the third most common category in course description keywords. Since this category includes words and phrases that pertain to specific disciplines (e.g., engineering, business, etc.), as well as the workplace (e.g., "your profession," "professional interactions"), the frequent occurrence of Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions in keywords suggests an effort in the descriptions to connect course content with the students' disciplines and interests.

Table 2. Course Description Keywords by Course Objective Categories

Course Objective Categories	**Number of Occurrences**
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	35
Rhetorical Principles	24
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	18
Genre	10
Document Design	7
Writing process (Drafting, Editing, Revising)	6
Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving	5
Ethics	4
Collaboration	2
Research	2
Electronic/Social Media/Writing	2
Presentations	1
Using Technology	1

Interestingly, some common categories in syllabus objectives occur infrequently in the course description keywords. The absence of alignment between course descriptions and objectives suggests a disconnect between what students are being asked to learn in the course and how the course is described to them. Collaboration (tied for third most common course objective) and Research (sixth most common course objective) each were represented by 2% of keywords, while Ethics (seventh most common objective) was represented by 3% of keywords. As the analysis of assignments will show, Collaboration and Research are often represented in the assignment descriptions; however, Ethics does not often occur. This pattern, as will be discussed later, suggests that while ethics are identified as important enough to warrant and objective, this priority does not carry through to assignment descriptions or to assignments.

Assignment Analysis

The materials about assignments are from two sources: the information on the syllabi and assignment descriptions forwarded by the program administrators. Of the 17 syllabi I gathered, all listed information on assignments within the context of the syllabi. In addition, I received 32 assignment sheets from 12 programs.

Assignment Information from Syllabi

- Assignments
    - What are the types of assignments listed in the syllabi?
    - Are there trends in the types of assignments listed in the syllabi?

The third variable I considered in the syllabi was the type of assignments included in courses. In the 17 syllabi collected, 91 assignments were listed. They are categorized by type in Table 3 below in descending order from most to least frequent occurrence.

Table 3. Types of Assignments Listed in Syllabi

Type of Assignment	**Number of Occurrences**
Report	26
Proposal	11
Presentation	11
Employment Documents	8
Correspondence	7
Instructions	5
Rhetorical Analysis	4
Technical Description	2
Uncategorized (Student Choice)	2
Visual Redesign	2
Website	2
Evaluation	1
Project Description	1
Visual Aids	1
Profile of Research Community	1
Scientific Essay	1
Social Media Strategy	1
Abstract	1
Reflective Writing	1
Portfolio	1

The top seven types account for 80% of the total assignments listed in the syllabi. These top seven types include reports (29%), proposals (12%), presentations (12%), employment documents (9%), correspondence (8%), instructions (5%), rhetorical analysis (4%). The rhetorical analysis assignment often entailed rhetorical analysis of another genre, for example a lab report or proposal. Six of the seven top assignment types are represented in the assignment descriptions collected from program administrator interviewees. These assignment types are analyzed below. The other 15 assignment types account for the remaining 20% of the total assignments.

Reports represent nearly one-third of all assignments included in the syllabi. I have broken out the type of reports students are assigned in Table [4] below.

Table 4. Reports Included in Syllabi by Type

Type of Report	**Number of Occurrences**
Progress	6
Recommendation	5
Informational	5
Uncategorized (Student Choice)	4
Feasibility	2
Usability	2
Research	1
Lab	1

While progress reports occurred most often, in the syllabi reviewed, progress reports commonly are ancillary to larger collaborative assignments, which tend to be reports themselves. For example, a large, collaborative report assignment would require submission of periodic

progress reports. Progress report also may be combined with another genre, like a presentation. For example, during the course of a final collaborative, formal report assignment, students may be asked to present a progress report.

After progress reports, recommendation and informational reports are most common. Based on review of the syllabi, the informational report may be short and informal or long and formal, whereas the recommendation reports almost always are long and formal. Uncategorized reports refer to assignments in which the type of report is left to student choice, often based on the students discipline.

Assignment Descriptions

In analyzing assignments collected from the program administrator interviewees, I answer the following questions:

- What types of assignment were collected?
- What is the ratio of individual to collaborative assignments?
- How many assignments include objectives?
- What types of assignment objectives do the descriptions include?
- What is the frequency of occurrence of each type of assignment objective?
- Are there trends in the occurrence of types of assignment objectives?
- What keywords occur in the assignment explanations?
- Are there trends in the occurrence of keywords across the assignment descriptions?
- How can the assignments be characterized based on all analyzed elements taken in sum?

From the program administrator interviewees I collected 32 total assignments. The assignment types collected are listed in Table 5 below.

Table 5. Assignment Types Represented in the Assignment Description Corpus

Assignment Types	**Number Collected**
Reports	8
Presentations	5
Proposals	4
Scenario-Based Problems	3
Visual Re/Design	3
Instructions	3
Correspondence	2
Employment Documents	1
Self-Evaluation	1
Survey Design	1
Technical Description	1

In my analysis of the syllabi, the report was found to be the most frequently included assignment type. In the corpus of assignment descriptions, the report also was the most frequently occurring assignment. Beyond the report, of the remaining 24 assignments, the most frequently occurring assignment types align with five of the top six assignment types identified in the syllabi. Keywords associated with these assignment types will be analyzed in more detail below.

Table 6. Ratio of Individual to Collaborative Assignments

Individual or Collaborative Assignment	**Number of Occurrences**
Individual	16
Collaborative	16

Considering the entire corpus of assignment descriptions, I also looked at the ratio of individual to collaborative assignments. The results of this inquiry are detailed in Table 6.

In the corpus I collected, the ratio of individual to collaborative assignments collected was exactly 50/50. This finding supports the claim that collaboration is a key priority in service course design, which also is supported by the fact that Collaboration is tied for the third most common course objective identified in the syllabi.

I next considered assignment objectives. Of the 32 assignments included in the corpus, only 10 included explicit objective statements, leaving approximately two-thirds of the assignments without objectives. I analyzed the frequency of the remaining third that included objectives using the Course Objective Categories applied to the syllabi. The results of that analysis are detailed in Table 7 below. The results are listed from most to least frequently occurring categories.

Categories Writing Process, Presentations, Cultural/Global Context, and Service Learning did not occur in any of the assignment objectives. Rhetorical Principles occurs in almost 20% of the assignment objective statements. After Rhetorical Principles, the most common objectives are Using Technology and Research. While Research was the sixth most common syllabus objective, Using Technology was the 12th most common and only occurred once in the 127 syllabus keywords. Research, too, was uncommon in the syllabus keywords, occurring only twice. These findings suggest that, while valuing Rhetorical Principles remains common, a disconnect exists between the goals of courses, the way we describe courses to students, and the skills and abilities emphasized in assignments. This disconnect is further discussed in Implications.

Table 7. Assignment Objectives Categorized by Course Objective Categories

Course Objective categories	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	11
Rhetorical Principles	8
Using Technology	6
Research	5
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	2
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	2
Electronic/Social Media/Writing	2
Collaboration	1
Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving	1
Visuals	1
Legal Issues: Copyright, Fair Use, etc.	1
Ethics	1

While only 10 of 32 assignments included explicit objective statements, all of the assignments included assignment explanations that describe what the assignment asks students to do and what course content is being emphasized in the assignment. To analyze assignment explanations, I first analyzed 271 keywords selected from all 32 assignments. The analysis categorized the assignment keywords using the Course Objective Categories previously applied. The results of this analysis are detailed in Table 8 below.

Presentations and Legal Issues did not occur in the assignment keywords. The first 9 categories represent 88% of all keywords. Genre predominates the assignment keyword list with nearly 40% of occurrences. Rhetorical Principles maintains a high position among categories.

Document Design and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing are top five among course objectives and in the assignment keywords. However, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions is the fifth most common assignment keyword category, but was the 11th most common category when course objectives were analyzed. The attention to genre and disciplinarity may suggest an emphasis on practical workplace application in assignments; however, it also is possible that, taken in sum, the assignments analyzed place greatest significance upon the deliverable, the actual document being produced in a specific genre. This idea may be supported by the fact that Document Design, with its emphasis on delivery and format, and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, with its emphasis on the production of text (or communication), are the third and fourth most common category.

Table 8. Assignment Description Keywords by Course Objective Category

Course Objective Categories	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	50
Rhetorical Principles	47
Document Design	32
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	32
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	21
Research	19
Visuals	17
Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving	11
Writing process (Drafting, Editing, Revising)	10
Using Technology	8
Collaboration	6
Electronic/Social Media/Writing	4

Table 8. (continued)

Cultural/Global Context	4
Ethics	2
Service Learning	1

After analyzing all assignment keywords together, I analyzed assignment keywords based on assignment type. I selected the top seven assignment types in my assignment description corpus, as these types were represented in the top 10 assignment types in syllabi, and because the assignment description corpus contained at least two of each assignment type. I further limited my results to the top five most frequently occurring Course Objective Categories, since my sample size for each type of assignment was small and only larger numbers of occurrences could be seen as significant. The results of this analysis of keywords by assignment type is detailed in the tables below.

Table 9. Report Assignments Keywords Categorized by Course Objective Category

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	21
Rhetorical Principles	12
Research	14
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	10
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	8

Reports composed 25% of all assignments in the assignment description corpus. Of the categories represented in report keywords, Genre was represented most often, with Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing and Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions also in

the top five categories. Rhetorical Principles and Research represent the second and third most frequently occurring categories.

Table 10. Presentation Assignments Keywords Categorized by Course Objective Category

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	10
Research	8
Rhetorical Principles	5
Document Design	5
Visuals	4

Presentations composed 16% of the assignments included in the assignment description corpus. Of the categories represented in the presentation keywords, Genre was the most frequently occurring category, with Document Design and Visuals represented as the fourth and fifth most frequently occurring categories. Research and Rhetorical Principles are the second and third most frequently occurring categories, respectively.

Table 11. Proposal Assignments Keywords Categorized by Course Objective Category

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Rhetorical Principles	7
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	3
Electronic/Social Media/Writing	3
Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving	3
Genre	2

Proposals compose 13% of the assignment description corpus. Unlike the previous two assignment types, Genre is the fifth most common category among the keywords, with Rhetorical Principles represented as the most frequently occurring category. Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, Electronic/Social Media/Writing, and Problem-Based Learning/Problem Solving fill in the top five categories, each with three references or 11% each of the total proposal keywords.

Table 12. Scenario-Based Problem Assignment Keywords Categorized by Course Objective

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	6
Rhetorical Principles	6
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	5
Document Design	3
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	3

Scenario-Based Problem assignments compose 9% of the assignment description corpus. These assignments can be characterized by the problem scenarios presented to students. Students are tasked with addressing the problem scenarios by composing technical and/or professional communication in a genre of their choice, generally informed by the students' discipline. Among the scenario-based problem assignment keywords, the Genre and Rhetorical Principles categories occur with equal frequency, with each category representing 20% of the total keywords. Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, Document Design, and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing complete the top five categories.

Table 13. Instructions Assignment Keywords Categorized by Course Objective Category

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Genre	8
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	7
Rhetorical Principles	5
Visuals	3
Problem-Based Learning/Problem Solving	2

Instructions compose 9% of the assignment description corpus. Genre again ranks as the most frequently occurring category, with Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.) second most common. Rhetorical Principles represent the third most frequently occurring category, and Visuals and Problem-Based Learning/Problem Solving occur fourth and fifth most frequently, respectively.

Table 14. Visual Re/Design Assignment Keywords Categorized by Course Objective

Course Objective Category	**Number of Occurrences**
Document Design	9
Genre	4
Cultural/Global Context	4
Rhetorical Principles	3
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	2

Visual Re/Design assignment compose 9% of the assignment description corpus. These assignments ask students to either design or redesign a visual-heavy document, such as a web page or a brochure. Document Design is the most frequently occuring category, representing

nearly 30% of the total assignment keywords. Genre is the second most frequently occurring category, tied in references with Cultural/Global Context. Rhetorical Principles occurs fourth most often among Visual Re/Design assignment keywords, and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing occurs fifth most often.

Table 15. Correspondence Assignment Keywords Categorized by Course Objective

Course Objective category	**Number of Occurrences**
Rhetorical Principles	4
Genre	3
Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.)	2
Writing process (Drafting, Editing, Revising)	2
Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions	2

Correspondence assignments comprise 6% of the assignment description corpus. These assignments ask students to compose correspondence genres (i.e., email, letters, memos) sometimes in response to problem-based scenarios. Rhetorical Principles is the most frequently occurring them, followed by Genre. Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, Writing Process, and Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions complete the top five categories.

A review of the analysis of the seven assignment types reveals a significant pattern. The categories of Genre and Rhetorical Principles occur in all seven keyword groups. This fact suggests that, within specific assignment types, assignment descriptions emphasize rhetorical concepts such as audience and purpose, and also foreground specific genres, ostensibly the genre on which the assignment focuses. In addition to Genre and Rhetorical Principles, occurrences of Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, Document Design, and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing pervade the top five categories. This finding aligns

with the analysis of all assignment description keywords, in which Genre, Rhetorical Principles, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, Document Design, and Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing composed the top five categories among all keywords. Findings from the analysis of specific assignment types also support the observation that, while at face value, prioritizing rhetoric and genre in assignments may seem like intuitive assignment design, that idea is complicated by the frequency of delivery, format, and style-driven categories. As will be discussed in more detail the next chapter, the assignments included in the corpus suggest an emphasis on genre, style, and delivery. This emphasis suggests, when the assignment is presented to students, the production of the deliverable may eclipse an emphasis on core skills and abilities, like rhetorical principles, or critical and reflexive thinking. In the course of completing the program administrator interviews, the issue of balancing genre-based courses with skills, concepts, and abilities, like rhetorical principles, arose, as will be discussed below. These findings intersect with Meloncon (2019), Boettger (2014), Schreiber et al. (2018).

The above findings reveal several trends. The first major finding correlates Course Objective Categories between syllabus and assignment objectives and keywords. Fourteen of 17 syllabi included objectives. The most common objective categories in course objectives were Rhetorical Principles, Document Design, Professional/Technical Writing, followed by Collaboration, Genre, Research, and Ethics. By comparison, the most frequently occurring keywords in the course descriptions were Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.), Rhetorical Principles, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, Genre, Document Design, Writing Process (Drafting, Editing, Revising), and Problem-based Learning/Problem Solving. The frequent occurrence of Professional/Technical/Workplace

Writing, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions with Genre and Document Design could suggest an effort to connect course content to students disciplines and interests, rather than emphasizing course content or focus.

Only 10 of 32 assignment descriptions included objectives. The significance of the exclusion of objectives from assignment descriptions is discussed below and in Implications. However, the 10 assignments that included objectives were analyzed. The top three most common objectives were Genre, Rhetorical Principles, and Using Technology, followed by Research, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, and Writing. Rhetorical Principles remains a constant; however, while this sample size is small, it is a relevant finding that the analysis of assignment objectives positions Genre in the top spot, with Document Design, Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.), and Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions appearing third through fifth most often. These findings align with findings in the analysis of the assignment keyword descriptions, which also reflect an emphasis on genre, writing, and document design. Taken in sum, these findings suggest that, while rhetoric persists as a core objective, assignments tend to emphasize genre and delivery.

The analysis also revealed trends in the less common objectives across data types. Collaboration was tied for third most common course objective, but only occurred in 2% of both course description and assignment keywords. Research, which was the sixth most common course objective, occurred in 2% and 7% of the course description and assignment keywords, respectively. Similarly, Ethics was the seventh most common course objective, but occurred in only 3% and 1% of the course description and assignment keywords, respectively. This finding suggests that, while collaboration, research, and ethics are seen as priorities meriting a course objective, they are not being emphasized in assignments. In the case of collaboration, the data

reflects that 50% of the assignments collected are collaborative, so students are doing collaborative activities, but approaches to collaborative work and collaborative strategy may not be explicitly taught. Similarly, research may be part of the requirements of assignments, but research strategies may not be scaffolded into assignments. In the case of ethics, it appears the subject is viewed as important enough to warrant an objective, but this value is not carried through as a topic to be covered in assignments.

Findings relative to assignment types reveal the top seven types of 22 total types reflect 80% of the assignments submitted by administrators. Those top seven types include Report, Proposal, Presentation, Employment Documents, Correspondence, Instructions, and Rhetorical Analysis. This finding suggests a corpus-level consensus on the types of assignments considered most effective in service courses. The remaining 20% of assignments include 15 different types, which suggests that decisions about assignment design vary widely outside consensus types. This finding becomes particularly relevant in discussions of administrator interviews below.

Program Administrator Interviews

Program administrator interviews were conducted with 14 administrators from R1 and R2 universities. I also conducted an interview with a Senior Lecturer (full time non-tenure track faculty) at an institution with no centralized service course administration. Below are the five most significant trends that emerged from my discussions with the administrators:

- Working with Other Stakeholders
- Genre vs. Rhetorical Principles-Based Curricula
- Standardization vs. Flexibility
- Relationship between Course Objectives and Assignments
- Professional Development

These themes provide insights into the administrative approach to the service course and assignments, and indicate areas where the field can improve, which is further developed in the final Implications chapter.

Working with Other Stakeholders

Several of the questions I asked (See Appendix A for the full list of interview questions) dealt with whether and how stakeholders outside the service course(s) home department contributed to course and assignment development. This question was designed to solicit responses regarding the program administrator's level of collaboration with stakeholders outside the department, to include faculty from served departments (e.g., engineering), professionals in the workplace (e.g., professionals working for companies who agreed to offer internships), and/or alumni. This information provides insight into whether and how much administrators are leveraging outside perspectives in making programmatic decisions, and making connections between curriculum and the workplaces students will enter when they graduate.

Only one department reported regular interactions with an interdisciplinary curriculum development board. This respondent also said her department maintains contact with alums and includes professionals in the workplace on an advisory board. Conversely, four interviewees report that curricula are developed with no extra-departmental involvement at all. Seven interviewees report consultations with served departments (i.e., the departments that service courses serve) in the past or informally and/or irregularly. However, the nature of these interactions with served departments is complicated by a knowledge gap between what service courses do, or what TPC is. As one respondent states:

> "It gets a little bit difficult working with other stakeholders across the university who may not value instruction as much in some of these newer technologies or might not

> understand why a professional writing course would bring in and focus on them because that's not necessarily what students will be practicing in obvious ways in their final design capstones in engineering. So we have to weigh the importance of what we're hearing about students informal communication practices once they leave a university with the other demands of making sure they're prepared to do some of these long formal genres." (R11, 22:50)

This respondent expresses a feeling of disconnect between what is valued by service course administrators working in TPC and what is valued by other departments when developing curriculum. But disciplinary disconnections are not the only obstacles faced by administrators attempting to forge productive working relationships with other departments, as this respondent reports:

> "Whenever I talk with people on campus and they learn where I'm from and what I do, they always say something along the lines of, 'Wow, that's really important; I wish our students could write better,' but then it comes to that point where it's like they're not willing to make a commitment. Um, so maybe a service course could help their students...They realize it's an important thing for their students to be able to do, but they don't want to require them to do it. They don't want to make a change to their curriculum so that they have to take the class...I think we're not doing as good of a job communicating with faculty about what we do and why it's important. I think the students are getting it; I think faculty in other departments don't." (R2, 23:59)

This respondent touches on another core aspect of enrolling other departments in service course curriculum development and administration: the effort required to foster productive working interdisciplinary relationships. Establishing connections between departments requires not only

time and resources that can be difficult to secure, but also the desire to communicate clearly and openly with extra-departmental staff. This respondent highlights the challenges of making those connections while illuminating their importance.

Stakeholders such as faculty from other departments and industry professional are valuable resources with information that can inform curricula design, specifically types of assignments, and skills and abilities that are most relevant to the workplace. That information would benefit administrators making decisions about the types of assignments that should be included in the service course, and the skills and abilities those assignments should emphasize. As the foregoing shows, the departments surveyed have limited contact with other stakeholder groups, and yet the course materials data reflects an 80% consensus in the first seven types of assignments included in syllabi. This suggests that service course programs are getting information about what assignments to include in curricula from a source other than stakeholders, with whom administrators do not consistently engage, or scholarship, as the dearth of programmatic scholarship attests. The textbooks reflect a consensus of content covered. It is possible that administrators are using textbooks to inform their curricular decisions. It also is possible that administrators are leveraging informal communication channels in selecting assignments. However, neither one of these options is ideal. I spoke with a small set of textbook authors, but the people with whom I spoke stated that decisions about their exercises and textbook themes were largely informed by the authors' experience and individual perspective. I did not ask about how they selected content. More research into how textbook authors select content would be required to determine whether outside sources or research inform those decisions, but if administrators are using textbooks to inform their decisions about assignments, that research should be done. And, while communication channels between scholars can yield

insights, in the absence of data from sources in outside disciplines and the workplace, or data reflected in systematic studies and scholarship, administrators cannot create a reliable knowledge base. Without outside information and systematic research, well-intentioned scholars may be exchanging information based exclusively on best practices and conventional wisdom.

As will be developed in Implications, communicating with other stakeholder groups when administering a service course program is vital to ensuring multiple perspectives from multiple contexts are involved in curriculum development; however, developing productive lines of communication and fostering meaningful working relationships with other stakeholders remains a quandry. Regardless of the challenge, including the perspectives of stakeholders outside a home department can connect curricula to the service course's site of study, the workplace.

Genre vs. Rhetorical Principles-Based Curricula

A significant theme that emerged in the program administrator interviews concerns how curricula are oriented, around genre or around the rhetorical skills or abilities that, when applied, develop documents. The distinction is nuanced. The service course is a workplace writing course and many of the genre's being taught are those students may encounter in the workplace. However, the workplace is not one place or one thing, and many students come from different disciplines and will have very different workplaces. This observation suggests that students might best be served by learning rhetorical skills and abilities that can be applied in any workplace.

It could be argued that genre can not be taught without also teaching the rhetorical skills and abilities necessary to create the document--for example, rhetorical principles that highlight purpose and audience. The two sides of the argument are not mutually exclusive, but the

question is one of emphasis: does the class as a whole, do the assignments, foreground genre as an end in itself, or do the assignments highlight the development of rhetorical skills and abilities that, when applied in practice, facilitate production of documents in specific genre. The tension between genre- and rhetorical principles-based classes boils down to a question of what is most valuable to students, and, as will be discussed below, the way the instructors are teaching the course. The argument for genre asserts that the service course is a writing course that should ask students to create practical documents appropriate for the workplace as a context. The argument for rhetorical skills and abilities asserts that accentuating these skills and abilities gives the student the means to enter and be effective in any workplace environment regardless of discipline.

Genre-based arguments were reflected in respondents' statements such as, "Students should get experience/practice with genres used in the business world." (R7, 37:00). This respondent reported that they would say their department's curriculum is genre based; however, they pointed out that teaching genre can be varying degrees of sophisticated and that it is possible to teach a nuanced understanding of genre. However, the respondent acknowledged that they thinks some instructors focus on genre as an end in itself. As another respondent highlights,: "What I don't like about genre is it's very 'stand alone'; it's not very dynamic, and I don't think it really mimics what a tech writer would do on a daily basis." (R5, 24:27). Discussion of genre among interviewees reflect the sentiment that genre is fundamental to service course instruction, but the role it plays in curricula can be contested and is informed by the orientations and experience of the instructors teaching courses. Specifically, to teach rhetorical principles, an instructor must have knowledge of those principles, which inexperienced instructors or instructors from other disciplines may not have.

As this argument enfolded through the interviews, staffing concerns again revealed themselves, as they did with the textbook author interviews. Inexperienced teachers may be focusing on genre because it is a concrete way to explain assignments, as one respondent observes: "I think that's why [instructors] latch onto the resumes, because that's a very concrete thing...and they know what that means. That's why we get hung up on that assignment." (R8, 35:00). Another respondent also points out:

> "We call [our assignments] communication problems, because we were trying to emphasize that you use these skills in this course to solve communication problems, to solve needs in whatever field you're in...but in some ways I think it's just more confusing, especially for [non-TC] majors...I think that ultimately [genre] is how students view it--you know, what's the final product, what do I have to turn in, and that's how they see the course...And I think it's also very hard for new instructors...to figure out what they're teaching if they aren't teaching them how to write a proposal or a resume, because they don't have that experience, either." (R8, 39:00, 40:30, 42:10)

This respondent describes the moves her program has made to orient toward a skills/abilities-based course, but she expresses reservations, stating that a avoiding genre-based language may be confusing to both students and inexperienced instructors. At issue is whether emphasizing skills and abilities can be justified considering that teaching to genre can help instructors deliver a consistent course to students, as this respondent highlights:

> "One of the strengths of the course that I also see as a weakness at the same time is that the course is genre based, which is a strength in that if you're not familiar with tech writing and you are having to understand, wrap your head around, these kinds of projects, then genre can really help with the instructors. It can also help make sense with the

students, but the weakness of that is [you miss] really understanding the rhetorical context, the social situation, really thinking strongly about audience orientation." (R5, 23:45)

That this issue of genre vs. rhetorical skills/abilities is endemic in service course curricula is supported by the course materials data that consistently evidenced Genre and Rhetorical Principles as categories that predominate in the assignment descriptions. These facts suggests a tension between genre and skills, and the fact that style and delivery categories like Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing (including Style, Tone, etc.) and Document Design tend to occur most frequently after genre and rhetorical skills could be interpreted as evidence that the balance tends to tip toward genre when designing assignments. This issue will be further explored in Implications.

Standardization vs. Flexibility

Two questions specifically focused on the issue of standardization and uniformity of service course curricula. Ten of 15 interviewees report various levels of standardization. Most commonly, interviewees state that instructors must teach to program-determined objectives, with varying degrees of instructor discretion over the specific assignments taught. Also extant in the interviews is a trend of high standardization for inexperienced instructors moving toward increased flexibility as instructor experience increases.

What makes this theme significant, as evidenced even by the foregoing paragraph, is that standardization is most commonly tied to instructor competence. When curricula are standardized, most interviewees commented on balancing flexibility for instructors. However, they generally acknowledge that some measure of standardization is necessary to ensure curricular coherence. And two interviewees who recently increased standardization stated that

the decision to standardize was precipitated by a lack of coherence within the curricula that was causing enrollments to drop and students (and their respective departments) to express dissatisfaction.

Again, then, a curricular issue--in this case, standardization--is tied to faculty concerns. At the heart of this issue is the need to balance instructor freedom with the need to deliver a consistent product to all extra-departmental stakeholders that responsibly serves the needs of students.

Interestingly, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the three interviewees who report no standardization and total instructor flexibility in curricular development submitted the three syllabi that lack any explicit course objective statements. Further, these syllabi list assignments that deviate significantly from the assignments most commonly reported in the majority of the syllabus corpus. These finding suggest that standardization in some form, even if only in course objectives, can have material impact on the ability of the class to deliver relevant course content and a consistent experience for students.

Standardization also is tied to staffing issues. Interviewees from these programs also report no professional development resources at all for any faculty, or only for graduate students. As such, instructors in these programs are not regularly engaging with program administrators, which precludes impactful communication between instructors and administrators regarding curriculum design, implementation, and experience in the classroom. Course materials reflect no internal guidance on what to teach, and these syllabi reflect the least consistency and the most deviance from consensus assignments. Further, the lack of professional development precludes discussion of the direction of the program, suggesting that, if these programs are evolving, they are not evolving along a coherent trajectory. While this situation is reported in a minority of the

programs studied (three of 15), it tellingly reflects the relationship between programmatic decisions (i.e., standardization), curricular artifacts (i.e., syllabi), and faculty/staffing concerns (i.e., professional development). The roles of both objectives and professional development are discussed in more detail below.

Relationship between Course Objectives and Assignments

Interviewees were asked if they feel the relationship between course goals and assignments is adequately explicit. Every interviewee except one (14/15) reported that course objectives are explicitly tied to assignments.

Of the departments surveyed, only one interviewee stated that her program "[takes] the learning objectives for the course and spread[s] them out throughout all of the assignments" (R8, 19:40). This statement bears out in the course materials received from this program. The assignments have objectives and those objectives are verbatim iterations of the course objectives. This situation is unique in my data, but I point it out as illustration of the purpose of the question I've asked. Objective statements explicitly communication course and assignment goals in clear, succinct language. Aligning objective statements between courses and assignments provides an explicit connection between what students should take away from the class and what they're doing on a daily basis in class. This question drives toward a connection between a curricular why and what. And it is the explicit nature of these statements that makes them important. Objective statements are vital directives for instructors and guides for students. So it is a salient data point that, while all but one of the interviewees claim there are explicit connections between course goals and assignments, only 10 of 32 assignments (31 %) included objective statements, and three of 17 syllabi had no course objectives. Fundamentally, then, there can be no explicit connection between course and assignment objectives because, often, no objective statements

have been made. The group of 14 out of 15 administrators claiming an explicit connection between course objectives and assignments include two of the three interviewees in departments without centralized oversight over the service course program, and from whom I received syllabi with no course objectives and assignment descriptions with no assignment objectives. Again, while these two departments represent a minority of the programs surveyed, in the absence of administrative oversight or guiding principles like objectives, making explicit connections between course objectives and assignments appears problematic.

However, in answering in the affirmative, respondents stated that connections are made in practicums that graduate students take, or that they are implicit in the way the curriculum is designed, but, despite these claims, many acknowledge that connections must be made by the instructor and they cannot be sure what goes on in class, as this respondent articulates in response to the question regarding whether connections are explicit:

> "I'd like to think so; we have the learning outcomes mapped onto the assignments...so the instructors know, but I can't guarantee that students are getting all that because I'm not in the classroom with the instructors...That's the instructors purview." (R3, 46:00)

This type of response was common among interviewees, and while it is true that no administrator can be 100% certain what is happening in all service course classrooms at a given time, there are measures to be taken that can help instructors to make connections. Explicit assignment objectives that connect directly to course objectives is one way. Another is professional development. As will be discussed below, many of the programs studied offer little in the way of professional development, especially to contingent and non-tenure faculty. If program administrators cannot guarantee that essential connections are being made by instructors, increased support and engagement with those instructors can guarantee that they are not only

better prepared to make connections, but more empowered to communicate with administrators if they have questions and feedback about those connections.

While heaping such significance on objective statements might seem reductive, the respondent statement below illustrates powerfully not only the consequences of foregoing objective statements, but also the ways in which a lack of objectives can be symptomatic of larger curricular problems. The respondent making this comment comes from a program with no curricular oversight. The syllabi and assignments this interviewee sent included no objectives. In discussing use of a textbook as a guide for the course, the respondent made the following statement:

> "Formatting is a huge thing for me when it comes to these sorts of documents...and I tell the students on the first day, one of the things there going to get from my class is really they're going to improve a lot on attention to detail and they're going to be much more meticulous, and, when it comes to formatting stuff, I don't spend time in class going over, like, how something should be formatted. One, because I think that'd be really boring and because of that I don't think they'd get much out of it; it'd just be me pointing to things in the book and saying, notice this." (R13, 17:50)

This respondent is identifying a core course goal--formatting--and then relating that he doesn't teach his students formatting in class because it's boring. He tells his students they should achieve this ostensibly key course goal by reading the textbook. Because the syllabus has no objectives, the relative role of formatting in the course goals is unknown, and because the assignments have no objectives, no accountability to teach students formatting manifests in day-to-day instruction. The viability of a formatting course objective is an open question, but the pertinent point of this example is that building connections between course goals and

assignments matters, and objective do that work--in clear, succinct statements that direct both instructors and and students toward those vital connections. Objective can be discussed in professional development settings, but they also persist when administrators are not there to help facilitate instructor expertise. Designing curricula to include interconnected objectives provides actionable benefit to both instructors and students.

Professional Development

The fact that three of the four major themes above were significantly influenced by staffing concerns illustrates the extent to which professional development remains a major issue for program administrators. Participants consistently raised the issue of faculty and staffing as influencing a majority of programmatic decisions about which they were asked, from curriculum design, to standardization, to textbook selection, and, of course, professional development, itself. In addition to questions not specifically focused on professional development in which staffing arose as a factor, respondents were asked to directly address their staffing situation and professional development efforts. Respondents generally attitudes toward professional development are presented in Table 16.

Of the 15 respondents, one stated generally that they had no professional development and didn't need any; two stated that they offer no professional development and would like initiate a program; five stated that they do some, but would like to do more; and seven stated that they do some and feel that their professional development program is sufficient. In general, respondents acknowledge that more is done to support graduate students than contingent faculty, including full-time non-tenure track and adjuncts. But whether they acknowledged a need for

more professional development or stated that they believed their professional development was adequate, their discussions of professional development evidence remarkable resonance.

Table 16. Interviewee's View of Professional Development Opportunities

View of Professional Development Opportunities	**Number of Respondents**
No professional development; No need	1
No professional development; Would like to initiate a program	2
Some professional development; Would like to do more	5
Some professional development; no need for more	7

Of the respondents who stated that they are satisfied with the professional development work done in the program, responses generally speak to having experienced faculty and/or a stable faculty pool. For example, one respondent stated:

> "Being able to have people with us for the long term is really important because, you know, any time you start something brand new, you're not very good at it...Having that stability to where people talk from experience of really having done this for a long time, it's really invaluable and then having those people also be excellent mentors and excited to work with new people we bring in is also really exciting." (R11, 44:35)

While this respondent reports that her department is both experienced and stable, obviating the need for more involved professional development, her statement acknowledges that inexperienced instructors require support. Other interviewees' statements reflect that most of their departments are not in a position of stability and experience, as this respondent characterizes her department.

Of the interviewees who acknowledge the need for professional development, whether they believe their program is sufficient or not, speak to the inexperience and diverse background of their faculty, as does one respondent:

> "The faculty that are staffing the courses do not have training or background in tech writing. A lot of them are those that have degrees in literary studies that might have taught a first year writing class when they did their graduate work...but they don't know anything about the theories, histories, and practices of the discipline, and so they have to come into these courses and wing it and figure out as they move along, what do they need to deliver while also being authentic to their training, but also understanding that there is a knowledge gap in place." (R5, 7:30)

The inexperience and diverse backgrounds of service course faculty leads to issues with effective and appropriate course instruction, as one respondent points out: "There are full-timers who just, you know, pick a inspirational business book...[e.g., *Seven Steps of Highly Successful People*] and teach it as a textbook." (R7, 15:55). That these types of curricular decisions creates a clear need for professional development is supported by one respondents statement: "No one ever showed me a document that was like, these are the things that you absolutely must achieve in [the course]; it was more of like a catch as catch can sort of thing." (R13, 13:32). A statement such as this brings into high relief the vital role professional development can play in a service course program.

While many respondents acknowledge the need for professional development, many also produce a litany of reasons why professional development is challenging. Most compelling in my interviews was what presented as striking indifference, as when one respondent stated, "Adjuncts

don't complain about pay because they already have full time jobs...Adjuncts like to say, 'I teach at [a university]." (R1, 50:30). This attitude illuminates an extremely damaging position to take toward faculty as human resources and reflects an endemic labor crisis in the field.

However, expressions of that type of deleterious indifference were rare in my interviews. A more common obstacle to professional development speaks to insufficient time and resources:

> "We could do a little better job of coordinating. People get busy and half way through the term everybody's not talking to each other about what's going on in the course, so I think communicating about that a little bit better, maybe visiting people's classes a little bit more, could be useful." (R2, 25:19)

Demands on faculty were another common impediment to instituting professional development, as one respondent illustrates:

> "In the department as far as working with students on writing, I think we could do more, and I would like to do more but I'm asking my colleagues who are already teaching 3-4 or 2 plus research to take time out to plan it and deliver it, and my faculty who are teaching 72 to 96 students a semester to attend brown bags, well, I have to be careful with how much I'm asking people to do." (R3, 59:00)

Organizational culture, too, inflects attitudes toward professional development, as one respondent related:

> "A lot of the folks who are teaching these courses for us have been here for years, and years, and years, and the sort of departmental culture is that you don't really mess with the full-timers, you don't tell them what to do, you can engage with them and encourage

> them to do things, but you know people here kind of are you know, I think, correctly concerned about alienating the full-time instructors...There's just not a lot of energy around trying to manage them." (R7, 20:13)

Regardless of the reason departments offer limited professional development resources, this neglect not only impacts the quality of service course instruction, it also engenders a marginalized population, as one respondent represents:

> "There's a lot of resources for those freshman comp classes because they're so important and they're taught by some less-qualified individuals; for [the service course], there's really not a lot out there. I'd say, like, 90-95% of how me and my peers approach this course and change the course is just talking to one another...but we have to do it all ourselves. There's not a designated time or place where we can go and get that sort of stuff." (R13, 37:14)

This statement not only clearly represents a sense of isolation, it illustrates a fact about people writ large--they will come together and they will find a way. For disenfranchised faculty who are getting by with minimal support, that way may not be in the best interests of the faculty, the program, or the students. Further, faculty is a vital resource for gleaning first-hand information about the student experience and the impacts of curricula. As the foregoing illustrates pointedly, faculty are enrolled in the programmatic network and those connections are intimately bound to curricular decisions. Service course programs cannot afford to eschew responsibilities to professional development. The connections between faculty, assignments, courses, and programs are already there. Failure to legitimize those connections within administration impacts deleteriously service course program function.

Textbooks

Chosen for the frequency of their use in the syllabi I reviewed, the following textbooks were selected for analysis:

- Anderson, P. V. (2017). *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach* (9th edition). Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Gurak, L. J., & Lannon, J. M. (2018). *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace, Loose-Leaf Edition* (4 edition). Pearson.
- Johnson-Sheehan, R. (2017). *Technical Communication Today* (6th edition). Boston: Pearson.
- Markel, M., & Selber, S. (2018). *Technical Communication* (12th Edition). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Tebeaux, E., & Dragga, S. (2017). *The Essentials of Technical Communication* (4th edition). New York: Oxford University Press.

The analysis of textbooks included review of the textbooks and interviews with three authors. These textbooks were analyzed to answer the following questions:

- What topics are covered in the textbook?
- Are there similarities in topics between textbooks?
- What types of exercises are presented in the textbook?
- Are there similarities in the types of exercises between textbooks?
- What overall themes, goals, and characteristics are emphasized in the textbook?
- How do the themes, goals, and characteristics compare between textbooks?

Of the five textbooks, all but Tebeaux and Dragga (2017) are longer texts with more developed content. The Tebeaux and Dragga (2017) is, per the preface, designed to serve as a handbook rather than a complete course in TPC.

Topics covered in all five textbooks addressed similar fundamental issues, although those topics may be presented in different orders. Fundamental principles of rhetoric and technical/professional communication began each textbook. All textbooks also address document design and the writing process, and also cover specific genres, to include reports, proposals, correspondence, instructions, employment documents (e.g., resumes and cover letters), and presentations. Style and tone are discussed in all textbooks. Anderson (2017) and Johnson-Sheehan (2017) address research in TPC in separate sections.

Thematically, each book emphasizes different core concepts. Three of the five textbooks communicate explicitly that rhetorical principles are the focus of the book. Anderson (2017) states in his preface that the textbook is fundamentally reader-centered, by which he means that the effectiveness of communication is measured by reader response, and the reader should be at the center of writing decisions. Gurak and Lannon (2018) theme their text around adapting to communication situations, and a focus on audience and purpose. Markel and Selber (2018) foreground attention to rhetorical principles, organizational and cultural contexts, and attention to changes in the field of TPC. Tebeaux and Dragga (2017) open their preface with the statement, “No one wants to read what you write” (p. xvi), which exemplifies the need to make a clear point immediately in TPC, and typifies the practical nature of the book--giving students the information they need to create effective documents in a concise handbook. While the theme isn’t explicitly rhetorical, rhetorical principles are foregrounded in the preface. Johnson-Sheehan (2017) themes his textbook around innovation and entrepreneurship. In the preface, Johnson-

Sheehan (2017) characterizes these values as needing to develop faster, cheaper and more efficient processes and products, emphasizing creativity, leadership, persuasion, and collaboration as hallmarks of this new trend. Johnson-Sheehan asserts that innovation and entrepreneurship are essential characteristics of workers in all disciplines, from business to the sciences and engineering.

The analysis of textbooks also includes exercises. Exercises here are defined as activities included in the text, usually at the end of the chapter, that ask students to engage with chapter content and perform an action or activity, or create a communication artifact. To identify connections between assignments and exercises, the analysis of the textbook exercises themselves focused on identifying the exercise's structure, goals, and pedagogical modality (i.e., collaboration, editing, writing). Interview questions addressing exercises were designed to identify the purpose and scope of exercises, as well as their role in the classroom. Interview questions addressing exercises were designed to identify the purpose and scope of exercises, as well as their role in the classroom relative to assignment. A discussion findings connecting exercises to assignment is developed below.

Exercises in the five textbooks also reflect some similarities. All include exercises that ask students to apply concepts explored in book chapters. All texts also include individual and collaborative exercises. Anderson (2017) also has designed exercises that ask students to use online resources to use the skills/abilities discussed in book chapters, and the "Apply Your Ethics" exercises examine ethical issues relevant to chapters. Gurak and Lannon (2018) created exercises that ask students to apply chapter concepts in a global context, and the "Digital and Social Media" exercises contextualize concepts through digital and/or social media applications. Johnson-Sheehan (2017) includes "Revision Challenges" in his exercises, in which students must

revise a sample document for a specific purpose or to address specific editing issues. Both Johnson-Sheehan (2017) and Markel and Selber (2018) provide students with scenario-based "Case-Studies." Johnson-Sheehan's (2017) Case Studies are scenario-based, but explore issues of ethics and/or navigating organizational culture. Johnson-Sheehan's Case Study exercises ask students to take action or respond to the scenario in writing. Markel and Selber's (2018) Case Studies prompt students to create documents in response to the provided scenario. Outside of the Case Studies, Markel and Selber (2018) do not categorize their exercises. Tebeaux and Dragga (2017) do not categorize their exercises, either. Both ask students to analyze or create documents.

Collectively, the textbooks reviewed suggest several trends. Although the specific themes and goals may be different, the majority of the texts focus on rhetorical principles as central to developing the skills and abilities required to communicate effectively in the workplace. They emphasize rhetoric in the chapter content and in the exercises. However, a significant amount of space in these textbooks is devoted to discussing specific genres of workplace writing. The top five genres listed in the syllabi collected from program administrators (Reports, Proposals, Presentations, Employment Documents, Correspondence) are included in all of the textbooks analyzed. This finding that aligns with the fact that nine of 15 administrators interviewed either required a textbook, or require instructors to select one from a vetted list. As previously discussed, this finding also speaks to the theme of Working with Other Stakeholders. In the absence of contact with outside stakeholder groups such as faculty from other disciplines, industry professionals, and alumni, the consensus in genres appropriate for service course assignments could be informed by the genres included in textbooks, genres which, as is noted below, may be selected by authors based on experience.

Exercises included in the textbook follow a general pattern, as well. All textbooks include exercises that the end of chapters that prompt students to apply concepts explored in the chapters. These exercises may be individual or collaborative. Three of five textbooks include a type of exercise that focuses on collaboration. Exercises ask students to analyze or engage with both content and sample documents, or to generate documents, often in response to scenarios or problems. Given their purposes and scope, the end-of-chapter exercises appear to be designed to facilitate class discussion and supply instructors using the textbook with content focused on concepts in the book that they can use in their day-to-day classroom activities. As discussed below, this claim is supported by the interviews with textbook authors.

Textbook Interviews

Interviews were conducted with three authors who wrote three of the five textbooks analyzed. These interviews addressed the audience for and purpose of textbook in order to establish how the authors wanted or thought the book was being used. The remainder of the questions focused on the exercises is the textbook, how they were developed, the role they play in the text, and how the authors see them used in the classroom.

Two of the three authors stated that their textbooks were written to be primary texts that could serve to define an entire course. These authors stated that they believed the book was most commonly used by inexperienced teachers. The third author stated that his book was designed to be supplemental or serve as a handbook. This author stated that the book was intended for use by experienced teachers. In general, the longer textbooks include more robust content that can be used to define an entire course. As one respondent stated, "We're moving to where the book is more important, it has to have everything, because otherwise students get lost" (T2, 17:12). This

quote also speaks to the intended audience. The interviewees who wrote larger textbooks stated that they believed the texts were more valuable and most often used by inexperienced instructors. This view is echoed by administrative interviewees. As one respondent stated, "The newer the instructor, the bigger the book." (R4, 10:25). Both textbook authors and program administrator interviewees asserted that newer instructors appreciate having access to longer chapters and supplemental material. This content helps with pacing and ensures instructors have material to teach.

As noted in the textbook analysis, similarities exist between all textbook exercises. All three textbook authors stated that the exercises were designed to generate discussion in class. They are supplemental activities that can be done individually or collaboratively (depending on the book or exercise) to help instructors delve into the material in the chapter.

However, the authors had different perspectives on the significance of the exercises and how they integrate into the book pedagogically. One author stated that the exercises should facilitate an “active learning classroom” (T2) in which students are working to solve a problem or complete a project during class time. Another interviewee stated that his goal for the exercises was to provide diverse pedagogies to accommodate instructors various needs, as exemplified by the following:

> "There were 30 reviews of [the previous edition of the text] that I looked at. I have to say, 30 people wanted 30 different things...If you put together a set of ancillaries that are all along the same line, you're going to lose a lot of people. My lesson in revising for [current edition] was to accommodate as many pedagogies as you could possibly imagine." (T3, 44:02)

Of significance to this study is the reference to exercises as “ancillary” content, suggesting that exercises are not a major focus of the textbook.A finding that aligns with statements above that exercises occupy the role of class activities, rather than key content of text. In further discussions of exercises, the third interviewee emphasized the importance of exercises that are practical and applicable to actual workplace writing. This author noted, "You may get a great [exercise] in a course by being very specific about what you want, but that's unlikely to occur on the job." (T1, 22:05). The author is parsing the type of work done in a classroom from the work done in the workplace. His statement suggests that targeted assignments, focused on specific skills or deliverables, developed for the classroom may not be relevant in the work world. For this author, workplace relevance and practical skills drove exercise design.

In regard to creation of the exercises, all three authors said they created the content of the exercises exclusively based on their own experience and priorities, and with no input from outside stakeholders inside or outside the academy. One author said he had not considered a direct connection between chapter objectives and exercises. The other two authors said connections between chapter objectives and exercises were made through concepts developed in chapters and highlighted in exercises, but that connections were left implicit. This decision was made so that it could be left to instructors whether and how to make connections explicit in class. This decision speaks to the relationship between intended audience for the exercises and their goal. Two of the three authors felt that the exercises were valuable for instructors, to ensure that they had productive content for class. One of the three authors stated that the exercises were an opportunity to connect with students: "[Exercises] are where we get to interact with the student and where we challenge the students to think about what we've been telling them in the rest of

the chapter" (T1, 14:22). This dichotomy between content for instructors and content for students speaks to the duel audiences authors must negotiate in composing textbooks.

This concept of negotiating a dual audience of instructors and students is reflected in the program administrator interviews, as well. Program administrator interviewees report that many programs require newer instructors to use text; more experienced instructors can opt not to use a textbook. Most of the textbooks identified in syllabi and interviews are larger, more complete texts that can be taught as a complete course. Many administrators stated that new instructors tend to follow the textbook closely. Both authors and administrators are aware that the textbook benefits instructors who are inexperienced and require more content as they learn what should be taught in the service course

The interviews reveal that assignments and exercises overlap in that they are activity-driven, but diverge in that assignments are major course projects designed to achieve course goals, whereas exercises ask students to apply discrete concepts or skills that may be useful in scaffolding assignments, but are not designed to be built into assignments themselves. Textbook authors stated that, while assignments may be available in supplemental materials, no support is provided for leveraging exercises in scaffolding or building assignments.

Similarly, it is left to instructors whether and how to make connections between chapter objectives and exercises explicit in class. These decisions not to make connections between exercises and assignments or course content explicit are at odds with statements that the larger textbooks are designed for inexperienced instructors, as this type of instructor may know how to scaffold an assignment or draw connections between major topics and activities.

The above findings, taken together with the consensus assignment type finding, suggests textbooks used as a one-size-fits all solution to classes taught by inexperienced teachers may be problematic. While the textbooks analyzed provided ample content, the vital work of a) designing assignments that apply that content; and b) making connections between content and applications or activities is not extant in textbooks. Further, the surfeit of content can be as much a hindrance to curriculum design, as it can a help new instructors. Presented with extensive content, inexperienced instructors may not have the knowledge to make prudent choices about which and how much content to include in a course, and, in the absence of a clear course trajectory, instructors may emphasis discrete exercises or production of deliverables over achieving overarching course goals and outcomes--an issue also discussed relative to genre vs. rhetorical skills and abilities.

Looking at the above concerns, the findings of this study support the observation that all of these issues could be addressed through considered assignment design and thoughtfully instituted professional development program. Creating clear course objectives, applying them in assignment objectives, ensuring that those objectives balance emphasis on genre and rhetorical skills would ensure that assignments align with the course goals. And talking with instructors about how to take those course materials and make connections in class between course materials and discussion would help instructors make decisions about what content to include in the day-to-day activities they do in class. Most saliently, the above recommendations would benefit a program whether or not an instructor uses a textbook. As such, my claim here is that textbooks can be useful for supplying content to inexperienced instructors but cannot, as this study suggest they often are, be used as all inclusive courses between two covers. Even when a program uses

textbooks, attention still must be given to the themes discussed in this chapter, and to the programmatic network.

Conclusion

The research study design was set up to gather data about the service course and assignments from different perspectives. I was deliberate gathering both written materials (syllabi and assignment descriptions) and interviews with administrators to develop a holistic view of the ways in which the ideology of a program informs the service course and its assignments. Matching this information with an analysis of most commonly used textbooks and interviews with textbook authors added more depth my understanding of the factors that influence curricular design. As the interviews with administrators revealed, many programs require and rely heavily on textbooks to shape their service courses. Insight into textbooks and their creation informs my understanding of yet another factor in the creation of service course curricula, and interviews with textbook authors yields insights into the motivations and goals underpinning those texts. Taken in sum, my dataset reveals a view of the service course assignment that is contextualized by multiple programmatic forces in which it circulates.

A summary of major findings includes the following:

Of the syllabi collected, the most common course objective categories were Rhetorical Principles, Document Design, Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, Collaboration, Genre, Research and Ethics. These categories represent the outcomes most valued in the corpus. In comparison, the most commonly occurring categories in the course description keywords were Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, Rhetorical Principles, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions, Genre, and Document Design. The predominance of categories emphasizing the

workplace, disciplinarity, and delivery suggest that course descriptions privilege connecting students' disciplinary interests to course content over course focus or outcomes.

Of the types of assignments listed in the syllabi, the top seven of 22 assignment types represented 80% of the total assignments included in courses. The top assignment types were Reports, Proposals, Presentations, Employment Documents, Correspondence, Instructions, and Rhetorical Analysis. Despite the fact that administrator interviews reflect that very few departments consult outside stakeholders when designing curriculum, and little scholarship exists that discusses assignment types in the service course, the fact that consensus exists suggests that administrators are making decisions about which assignment types to use by accessing other information sources, possibly textbooks and possibly informal communication with other administrators. As this study suggests, working with other stakeholders provides useful perspective on the skills and abilities valued by other disciplines and in the workplace, and more systematic, empirical research might help administrators make more informed decisions about assignments to include in the service course.

Only 10 of 32 assignment descriptions included explicit objective statements. This finding runs counter to statements made by all but one of the administrator interviewees that, in their programs, connections between course objectives and assignments were adequately explicit. When asked about the ways in which connections were established, many interviewees stated that connecting course objectives and assignments was emphasized in pre-term orientations or practicums, largely attended by graduate students. However, several interviewees also acknowledged that there was no way to be certain that instructors were making connections because the presentation of material was the instructors' responsibility and administrators do not have information regarding day-to-day course instruction, and they were not engaging in regular

classroom observation. While this finding bears on the professional development discussion below, it also points out the potential benefits of including objectives in assignments. Objectives represent explicit guiding statements that not only provide clarity for students, but can be leveraged by instructors to inform decisions about scaffolding assignments and selecting activities to present to students in class. Aligning course objectives to explicit assignment objectives is a relatively simple and straightforward way to build into a program increased structure and coherence.

Another finding related to objectives speaks to issues of standardization and flexibility in curriculum design. Ten of 15 interviewees report various levels of standardization. Most commonly, interviewees state that instructors must teach to program-determined objectives, with instructors allowed discretion over assignments. In general, standardization of curriculum was highest for inexperienced teachers. Interviewees reported that the decision to standardize was based on the need for coherence within the program, and an expectation that inexperienced teachers required structure and course content to teach. The need for some level of standardization is supported by the fact that the three interviewees who report no standardization and total instructor flexibility in curricular development submitted the three syllabi that lack any explicit course objective statements. Further, these syllabi list assignments that deviate significantly from the assignments most commonly reported in the majority of the syllabus corpus, and also include assignment descriptions that have no assignment objective statements. These finding suggest that standardization in some form, even if only in course objectives, can have material impact on the ability of the class to deliver relevant course content and a consistent experience for students.

While less than one-third of the assignments collected included objective statements, all included assignment explanations, which were analyzed based on keywords. Genre represented 40% of occurrences. Rhetorical Principles was the second most common theme, followed by Document Design, Professional/Technical/Workplace Writing, Disciplinarity/Disciplinary Conventions. Rhetorical Principles consistently ranks in the top most common categories, reflecting a consensus value for rhetorical concepts. However, emphasis on genre, along with document design, delivery, and disciplinarity may suggest a privileging of the genre-based deliverable over the development of rhetorical skills and abilities. This finding aligns with statements made by interviewees that acknowledge the importance of rhetorical skills and abilities to service course curricula, while also recognizing that genre gives both instructors and students a concrete concept and deliverable on which to focus in class. The data analyzed in this study exposes the tension between genre and rhetorical principles in assignment design, meriting further study, as will be discussed in Implications.

Staffing concerns arose in interviews in almost every question discussed. Programs take staffing into consideration when making decisions about curricular standardization, cohering programs by connecting course to assignment objectives, and whether to emphasize genre for concrete focus or emphasize rhetorical skills and abilities that require knowledge and experience to teach. As a programmatic force, staffing resonates throughout the processes that created the course materials I analyzed, and the needs of instructors were central to textbook authors in creating content. This study brings into high relief the many ways staffing is imbricated throughout the programmatic process, and, as such, professional development is a vital issue. Many interviewees characterized faculty as inexperienced, from other disciplines, and/or largely contingent, and acknowledged these facts as programmatic concerns. However, interviewees

variously valued professional development, from offering none and seeing no need for it, to offering some and wanting to do more; however, almost half did some--usually orientations, practicums, or mentoring--and did not see the need for more. The foregoing highlights several ways in which professional development, or its absence, impacts program operation, and yet, interviewees supply a number of reasons why instituting professional development measures is problematic, from indifference to contingent labor issues, to insufficient time and resources, to resistance within organizational culture. Regardless of the reason, statements from the interviewed instructor, who comes from a program with no professional development resources, reveal a marginalized population with no resources and no communication with or connection to programmatic operation. Professional development has the potential to materially influence many aspects of programmatic operation and directly impacts curriculum development and deployment. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the field can ill afford to minimize issues of staffing and professional development.

As alluded to above, in the final chapter I place these findings into larger field-wide conversations by discussing the implications for TPC and suggesting potential next steps for research in this area.

Chapter 5. Implications

Programmatic Network

This project began with questions about the odd amalgamation of roles the service course assignment is asked to play. It exists in a course for which there is no major; it teaches students of diverse background, and serves disciplines that do not know what TPC as a discipline is or does; it is taught by instructors of equally diverse background and experience; it's focus is a workplace that is at once diverse, evolving. Seen as such, service course assignments merit study. This portrait of the service course assignment has illuminated the connections inherent in a network of forces. Assignments sit at the axletree of a web of factors influencing service course administration. These associations suggest a means of understanding and improving service course assignment design, and also can help administrators to do there work, while highlighting the ways in which the service course manifests and shapes TPC disciplinary identity.

By constructing a research methodology designed to put the service course assignment in a programmatic context, the data analyzed here revealed that the assignment is connected to program, course and staffing concerns. These connections visualize a programmatic network described by Figure 2. By comparison, Figure 1 illustrates the more conventional linear model of programmatic process.

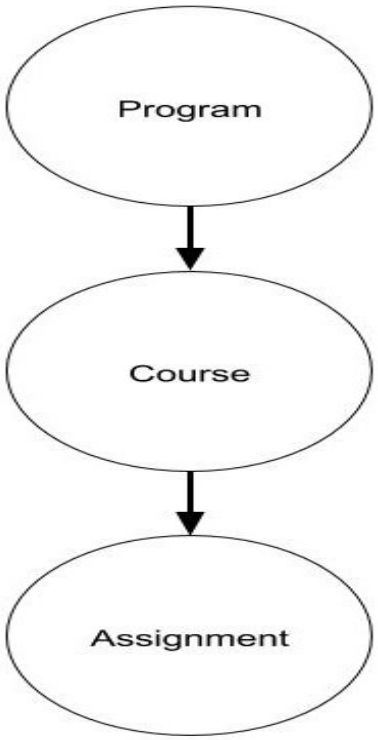

Figure 1. Linear Model of Programmatic Process

As Figure 1 illustrates, assignments often occupy a role in programmatic work that relegates them to an endpoint in the programmatic process. Once program and course goals are defined, assignments become a concern in a linear, top-down process. This linear approach rarely accommodates recursive processes that allow assignments to inform creation or revision of program and course goals. Additionally, as this study suggests, assignment design may receive limited to no administrative attention. Assignments may be created by instructors with little input or review at the program level that would put assignments in conversation with program and course outcomes. In some programs studied, assignments are handed down or passed between instructors with little attention paid to broader programmatic practices and goals. Often, the attention assignments receive occurs only at the time of assessment, when student deliverables, or the products of assignments, are reviewed to see whether program goals are being met. But this linear model reveals that no connection has been made between program goals and

assignments at the time of assignment design. Because program goals may or may not have informed the creation of the assignment, the deliverable assessed may or may not be reflective of programmatic agenda. As such, the efficacy of assessment is limited.

The one-way, top-down model also applies to staffing issues. Program administrators initiate contact with faculty most often when they first begin to teach the service course. These interactions generally include an introduction to service course curricula. Assignments or, in departments that ask instructors to create assignments, assignment design is a topic discussed. However, these meetings with inexperienced instructions tend to be characterized by orientation to the program and its expectations, with information passing unidirectionally from administrator to faculty. In many of the programs studied, once this initial orientation phase is complete, professional development opportunities are few, irregular, or informal.

Although the above description characterizes the role of the service course assignment in the programs studied, the analysis of gathered data reveals the ways in which assignments are imbricated throughout programmatic work. The themes discussed above highlight the points of contact between assignments and program and course related concerns, Further, despite ambivalent attitudes toward professional development among interviewees, staffing issues also are deeply connected to decisions about assignments. The programmatic network featured in Figure 2 reflects these connections, positioning the assignment at the center of program goals, course goals, and staffing issues.

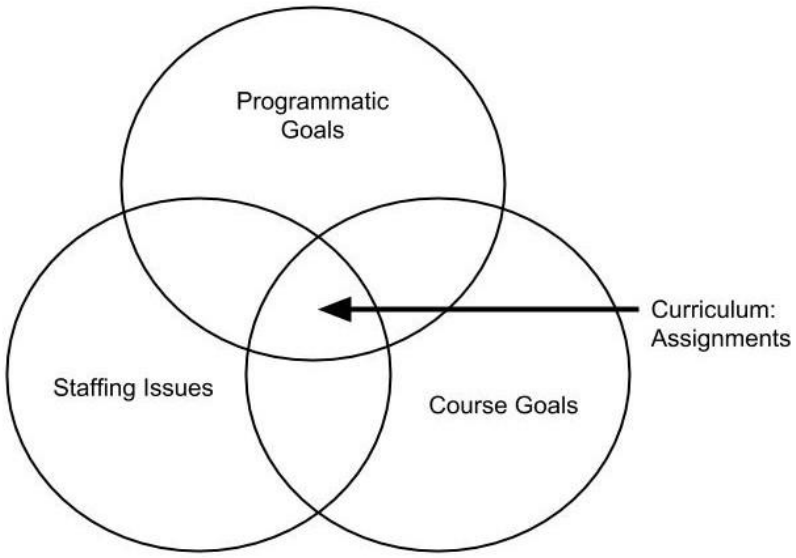

Figure. 2. The Service Course Programmatic Network

The connections in the programmatic network operate bidirectionally and recursively. From a programmatic standpoint, this recursivity affords administrators the opportunity to develop assignment objectives to align them with programmatic goals prior to initiating assessment practices that review student deliverables. And the results of assessment could be used to further refine curricula. Similarly, a recursive dynamic between course and assignment objectives ensures that the assignments students are producing sufficiently enact the skills, abilities, and knowledge students should be achieving as stated in course objectives. And, recursively, as assignments evolve to reflect changes in the workplace or stakeholder expectations, or advances in field-level trends, course objectives could be revised to align outcomes with class activities and deliverables. As a focus of professional development, assignments can create a conduit for bidirectional flow of information between the faculty who interact with curricula and students on a daily basis and administrators who are making decisions

about the direction of the program. These interactions of illustrative of the programmatic network's impact when applied to program administration.

The above examples represent a call to leverage the programmatic network consciously, critically, reflexively and recursively when approaching service course administration. Schreiber and Melonçon (2018) identify the need within the discipline for a deeply sustainable programmatic perspective that builds critical reflexivity into program administration. The programmatic network described here represents an instantiation of the programmatic perspective they describe. This contextualized analysis of the service course assignment manifests the ways in which connections between forces extant in service course administration can build and maintain a sustainable program.

The implications the programmatic network resonate within TPC as a discipline. The service course is a TPC standard bearer, representing the knowledge TPC values to the technical and professional disciplines that it serves, and having as its focus the type of workplace communication fundamental to TPC scholarship. Study of the service course yields insight into the process by which disciplinary values are enacted in curricula. This study suggests, for example, that rhetorical principles are essential to service course instruction. This finding appears to align with contemporary TPC scholarship; however, the findings that suggest an emphasis on genre, style, and format are reminiscent of TPC values that may have diminished in popularity within the discipline. The programmatic network updates assignment design strategies, affording the inclusion in assignments of newer ideas that more accurately reflect the needs of current students and the contemporary workplace. Reassessing the ways in which assignments allows reevaluation of the way values manifest in curricula, opening the door to

study that can benefit administrators and contribute to a deeper disciplinary understanding of both the service course and the field.

The programmatic network leverages "not only communicative skills and disciplinary knowledge," but also "trained vision and bodily skills required to perform the tasks of technical communicators" (Fountain, 2014, p.195). The programmatic network is a practice, as well as a process that "occurs through repeated exposure to the activities and setting where technical communication happens, as well as repeated practice with the objects of those settings" (Fountain, 2014, p.195). As a curricular artifact, the service course represents TPC disciplinary values, but it also is a site of practice, a workplace in itself in which TPC values are enacted. To practice service course administration is to embody disciplinary practices through the programmatic network. Just as "entering a discipline or profession requires inculcation in the ways of knowing and being valued by that domain" (Fountain, 2014, p.195), to inhabit the programmatic network enacts TPC disciplinary values through workplace practice.

Implications

Having identified findings and discussed results, this chapter develops the implications of this study, situating them within the larger context of service course administration and TPC disciplinary concerns. The chapter recalls the most significant themes emerging from my research and contextualizes them in answer to my original research questions, which serve as subject headings below. The questions addressed include the following:

- How can a contextualized analysis of service course assignments lead to more effective and impactful assignment design?

- How can learning about service course assignments enrich our understanding of service course program administration?
- How can learning about service course assignments theorize a programmatic perspective that facilitates a discussion of the service course as a function of TPC disciplinary identity and values?

The data explored in the previous chapter revealed the connections between service course program administration, course and assignment design, and staffing issues. Answering the questions above further forges those connections, building a programmatic network that describes the interconnected nature of factors fundamental to the service course. The implications elucidated here situate the service course assignment in both administrative and disciplinary contexts, laying the groundwork for theory-building moves with implications for the field that suggest further research.

Impactful Assignment Design

Implicit this question is the claim that a contextualized analysis of the service course can lead to effective and impactful assignment design. Contextualized analysis encompasses consideration of the object of study--assignments--not only in themselves, but relative to the factors that influence their creation, as well as the factors assignments influence when deployed within a program. The contextualized analysis employed in this study aligns with St. Amant's (2018) "systematic approach" (p. 142) to researching the contexts of the various stakeholders invested in the service course with the goal of "developing or revising the technical communication service courses for the contexts of their own institutions" (p. 143), which this study's methodology accomplished by obtaining course materials from the administrators I

interviewed about their programs. Where St. Amant (2018) identifies institutional, programmatic, departmental, and instructional/classroom stakeholder contexts as relevant to the overall service course dynamic, this study focuses on program, course, staffing, and assignment contexts. Like St. Amant (2018), this study approaches the service course from the standpoint that administrators "must often address the expectations of stakeholders representing different contexts within the same institution" (p. 142). A conscious, critically reflective awareness of context allows administrators to face "the challenge [of] determining how these contexts affect the class" (St. Amant, 2018, p. 142). A contextualized analysis of assignments also sees service course assignments as artifacts of disciplinary knowledge. Contextualizing the service course assignment visualizes the forces that act on and are acted upon by assignments as they circulate within programs and the discipline. This work highlights that assignment design is not done in isolation. Beginning with assignment design centers the discussion on the assignment, but also initiates the work of interrogating a view of assignment design as a discrete or finite step in programmatic operations.

Genre- vs. Rhetorical Principles-Based Curricula

Of significance in the genre vs. rhetorical principles discussion is the fundamental question of the purpose of assignments in the service course. To reduce the question to a binary for illustration purposes, assignments can emphasize production of a deliverable in a specific genre, or assignments can emphasize the key rhetorical knowledge and abilities which students then apply to the production of a deliverable in a specific genre. In emphasizing the genre-based deliverable, the former type of assignment teaches students the practical production of a specific document, with the underlying assumption being that experience with specific types of documents will help the student tackle writing tasks in the workplace. The latter approach

operates from the standpoint that teaching students rhetorical knowledge and abilities gives them the cognitive resources to negotiate a variety of workplace tasks, regardless of the specific genre they may encounter. The assumption underpinning this approach is that the workplace is a diverse and evolving environment, and as such, giving students a knowledge base that can be applied in any environment will be maximally beneficial in the workplace.

The data supports that genre is consistently emphasized as one of, if not the most frequently mentioned themes in both objectives and keywords in the assignment descriptions. Additionally, several interviewees described their service courses as genre-based, although some respondents were, to varying degrees, uncomfortable with the extent to which genre was emphasized in their courses. Of the course materials, only three of 32 assignments were not defined by the production of specific genres (i.e., Scenario-Based Problem assignments), and these assignments, too, resulted in the production of specific genres, albeit of the students' choice. The emphasis on genre, placed in conversation with the fact that the other most common categories occuring in the assignment descriptions focus on document design, writing, and disciplinary conventions suggests that, in this corpus, the majority of assignments are designed to emphasize genre--specifically, the creation of a deliverable of a specific type. A reason for this finding is suggested by the interview data. Several interviewees stated that teaching to genre gave inexperienced instructors a concrete focus with clear criteria for evaluation the emphasis on which made decisions about day-to-day course content simpler. A similar perspective on genre was voiced by one interviewee whose program was not genre based. They stated that their assignments were designed to emphasis not genre, but "communication problems" as a way to foster rhetorical thinking, but they also reflected that this approach may be confusing for instructors and students, whereas genre-based assignments give instructors and students a

tangible deliverable on which to focus. Of significance is the fact that the decision to emphasize genre over rhetorical principles in assignments may not be motivated by a pedagogical grounding in the best interests of the students, but necessitated by contextual factors--specifically, accommodating the abilities of inexperienced faculty.

While the needs of inexperienced faculty are a practical concern the consideration of which can lead to a genre-based curriculum, the question of whether emphasizing genre in assignments is in the best interests of students is legitimate. A genre-based curriculum must consider seriously which genres would be most useful to students. Some research has been done to identify genres relevant in the workplace. Blythe, Lauer, and Curran (2014) survey of TPC alumni includes genres written and valued in the workplace, and Droz and Jacobs (2019) surveyed industry professionals to learn how genre, specifically email, is used in the workplace (Droz and Jacobs, 2019). However, these studies do not connect workplace practices back to the classroom and assignment design. Identifying relevant workplace genres does not speak to how those genres may be impactfully integrated into assignment designs, or how designers may build a bridge between classroom and workplace. Genre-based assignments that emphasize the deliverable may not achieve resonance outside the classroom. In this study, several interviewees expressed the concern that an emphasis on genre was "static" or "flat," and may not best serve students when they enter the workforce. Brady and Schreiber (2013) argue that reflective practices can be directly tied to workplace practices, and, within this context, genre can be reduced to a means of codifying skills and abilities, which precludes "looking ahead to how this knowledge might be reimagined and applied in new ways or reconfigured and reinvented for new contexts such as the workplace" (Brady and Schreiber, 2013, p. 346). Genre-based assignments

designed to emphasize production of a deliverable run the risk of being reductive and lacking applicability to workplace contexts students are likely to encounter when they graduate.

Including rhetorical principles in assignment design builds in an awareness of context and inculcates rhetorical knowledge and abilities that can be applied to multiple work situations. This study evidences that rhetorical principles are consistently valued in service course curricula. Rhetorical Principles occurred in the top three categories in all seven of the most common assignment types analyzed. This finding suggests that assignment designers are aware that teaching rhetorical knowledge and abilities that focus on audience and purpose is useful to students. One interviewee stated that they saw it as a strength of their program that the service course was a focus on rhetorical knowledge and abilities rather than genre. Another stated that they saw the rhetorical knowledge taught in their course as giving students transferable abilities that would be applicable across disciplines. While rhetorical principles are valued in service course curricula, designing assignments to emphasize rhetoric is, again, tethered to the contextual factor of staffing. Instructors need support and resources to develop the knowledge required to teach rhetorical principles, and assignments need to be designed to help instructors bring rhetoric into the classroom.

Approaches to assignment design that balances genre with other knowledge and abilities would help administrators design assignments that contextualize genre from a rhetorical perspective in a way that is accessible to instructors. Limited scholarship focuses specifically on the genre of the resume, which was the fourth most common assignment type in the syllabus corpus. This work examines approaches to the resume that add depth to instruction of the genre by highlighting its reflective-reflexive characteristics (Randazzo, 2012), foregrounding research (Randazzo, 2016), and emphasizing disciplinary discourse (Fillenwarth, McCall, and Berdanier,

2018). The scale of this research is small, and its scope is narrow, but this work does suggest an awareness within the field that genre instruction could be updated to ensure that individual genres obtain a significance for students beyond simply the form and function of the document itself. More of this type of research would help assignment designers include rhetorical principles that contextualize genres within the workplace.

Genre-based assignment design is predicated upon the premise that the genre has workplace relevance and offers students practical experience with the writing tasks they will be asked to do upon graduation. Rhetorical principles can help contextualize genres, increasing assignments' workplace applicability. As Dubinsky (2018) notes, "Using [rhetorical] questions when confronting any text...will provide the means to help that text 'speak' about the person or entity that created it, the purpose behind its creation, and some information about the role it plays in the larger social context" (p. 34). Although Paretti's (2006, 2008) work focuses on the senior design capstone in engineering, her position on the instructor's role in establishing and engendering an understanding of "authentic communication" in such courses is relevant to the service course. Assignments that emphasize rhetorical principles represent situated learning opportunity that illustrates how documents form genres and become the "mediating artifacts" that are used to address problems. Paretti (2008) observes the difficulty in mimicking the workplace in the classroom because students continue to recognize the teacher as the audience. She argues that successful instruction is not about making school look like work, but developing a metacognitive approach that helps students see the contextual issues (p. 495) that they will face in the workplace. Rhetorical principles add context to workplace tasks like genre-driven deliverables and can anneal an instructors' enactment of the assignment with the assignment's

content. Further, an assignment designed to help instructors teach rhetorically also helps create a highly contextual classroom environment.

Genre-based assignments that do not emphasize rhetorical principles lack the context necessary to give assignments workplace relevance, and also cannot help instructors to leverage rhetorical concepts in classroom instruction. When students are not properly situated in this metacognitive approach, Paretti (2008) argues, writing tasks become something that simply fulfills the requirements of the course rather than the tools for furthering the project and keeping it on task (p. 500). Students often perceive that real audience to actually be the faculty member (Paretti, 2006). In a similar vein, when considering the tasks and deliverables of a service course, assignments can provide authentic learning and a gateway to the workplace or they can be seen as tasks to serve faculty and administrative interests. Without a grounding in rhetorical principles, an emphasis on genre and production of a deliverable is more likely to be seen as simply a classroom exercise, rather than a window into the work world.

It may seem that a rhetorical principles-based curriculum would be advantageous, the question is not so simple. Teaching rhetorical principles requires that instructors possess a knowledge of those abilities, and inexperienced instructors or instructors from non-TPC backgrounds may not be confident in such knowledge. Designing for genre gives inexperienced instructors and students a concrete deliverable on which to focus, something they can create that achieves a specific purpose. Further, as one respondent pointed out, there are nuanced approaches to teaching genre--of course, the more sophisticated the approach to genre, the more sophisticated an instructor's understanding of genre must be. Henze (2018) addresses teaching genre in the TPC classroom. He encourages teachers to see that "[g]enre isn't so much a topic to teach as it is a way of conceptualizing writing as part of the larger system of resources and

activities of a workplace" (Henze, 2018, p. 86). Assignments can build in nuanced approaches to genre grounded in rhetorical principles that facilitate awareness of context and engender workplace relevance. However, the findings of this study evidence that, in practice, the nuanced, rhetorical view of genre is not consistently represented in assignment corpus. What this study reveals, then, is that impactful and effective assignment design benefits from careful consideration of the emphasis placed on genre and rhetorical principles. Nuanced instruction on genre is possible, and rhetorical principles are one way to add context and workplace relevance to genre instruction. However, thoughtful assignment design is required to balance genre with rhetorical principles, and doing so requires attention paid to more than just the assignment in as a stand-alone entity. This study evidences clearly that service course assignment design must take into consideration the needs of instructors, ensuring that assignments not only facilitate development in students of the skills, knowledge, and abilities that meet course outcomes, but that, in so doing, they are designed to be teachable by the instructors who will bring the assignments to the students. If instructors are not prepared to teach rhetorical principles, genre assignments may be flattened in rote production of deliverables.

The issue of preparing teachers to teach is addressed in Professional Development, below. Also addressed below is the need for further research into assignment design for genre and rhetorical principles, specifically, the need to research both effective assignment design that balances genre and rhetoric, and assignment design that impactfully leverages classroom modalities to the role of genre in the workplace--essentially, designing assignments that connect classroom and workplace using genre and rhetoric.

Relationship between Course Objectives and Assignments

Objectives are explicit statements of learning outcomes. On the programmatic level they often are used for program assessment. Very little scholarship discusses the use or development of outcomes or objectives. Maid (2005) discusses applying course outcomes to programs, making an argument for TPC programs to adopt the WPA Outcomes Statement originally developed for First Year Composition. In his work, he discusses a service course at his institution as an example. Subsequently, Maid and D'Angelo (2012) acknowledged a programmatic disunion signaling the the WPA-based programmatic outcomes needed revision, which they accomplished by mapping the outcomes onto course curricula, and changing their capstone assessment practices. In other scholarship, outcomes are used to structure results of studies, but are not explicitly discussed as curricular artifacts (Selfe, 2007; Randazzo, 2016).

For purposes of the study, objectives represent explicit statements of what the students should learn. In program assessment, artifacts of assignments are compared to outcomes in a process that ensures the program is meeting its stated goals. As previously noted, however, this assessment process is forensic. It considers completed assignments only as a means of gauging the present success of the program. Objectives can be leveraged more proactively if coherence exists between objectives at the programmatic, course, and assignment level, which the recursive nature of the programmatic network enables. If objectives are aligned at all three levels in an ongoing, reflective process, program assessment could reflect that coherence. For example, developing assignments in conversation with program goals would ensure that the assignments used in assessment were a reflection of those programmatic goals. Further, the assessment process could be used not only to assess whether students were achieving outcomes, but also to assess whether the outcomes are effectively communicating to students, as well as whether

outcomes reflect programmatic values and priorities as the program and the workplace evolve. Leveraging coherence in objective statements throughout the programmatic network facilitates a reflexive critical reciprocity that engenders programmatic sustainability over time.

In addition to the work that assignment objectives can do cohere a program, objectives are useful to instructors. As explicit statements of the goals students should achieve, they serve as guides that can inform decisions about approaches to scaffolding an assignment, and materials to present on a day-to-day basis in class. Aligning assignment objectives with course objectives helps instructors make connections between course goals and assignment activities.

The participants in this study appear to support that connecting course objectives to assignments statements is important, as all but one interviewee stated that these connections were adequately explicit in their curricula. However, connections between course and assignment objectives are not commonly evidenced in the assignments collected from interviewees, as less than one-third of the assignments analyzed included explicit objective statements. In discussing how connections between course objectives and assignments were established, most interviewees stated that connections were emphasized in orientation-style meetings for incoming teachers or in practicums attended by graduate students. However, many interviewees stated that they could not be certain that the connections were being made because that work is done in classrooms by individual instructors and most programs were not engaged in regular instructor observation programs. This trend in the interviews points not only to the potential benefits of more structured professional development, as will be discussed below, but also to the positive impact of including in assignments explicit objective statements that align with course objectives. Including assignment objectives in assignment design would give instructors guiding statements that connect course goals to daily class activities. Objectives also help frame assignments to

balance work on the development of rhetorical knowledge and abilities while creating deliverables in specific genres, a study implication described above. By creating assignment objectives that align with course goals and emphasize in proportion to course goals rhetorical skills, like audience awareness, and metacognitive skills, like critical reflexivity, as well as practical skills, like document design and writing style, assignment objectives provide a pedagogical framework for the instructor that facilitates assignment instruction beyond simply creating a document in a specific genre.

A disconnection between course goals and assignments means a disconnection between objectives students are supposed to achieve in the course and the things they are doing in class on a daily basis. Adding objective statements that align with course goals communicates to students how they benefit from doing the work they are asked to do, but, perhaps more significantly, it affords an opportunity to communicate to faculty how assignment instruction works to achieve core outcomes, and it does this work in on an ongoing basis, after orientations and practicums have ended. Assignment objectives serve to make more effective instructors even in programs with limited professional development opportunities. Impactful assignment design takes into consideration the needs of instructors to have clear statements of goals as they make decisions about how to teach an assignment. Clear assignment objectives help with pacing of day-to-day activities to make sure classes are moving students toward the achievement of concrete goals as they complete assignments. Programmatically, as well, aligning course objectives with assignments objectives ensures programmatic coherence from program to course to assignment goals. By aligning assignment and course objectives at the design phase of the programmatic process, administrators in the assessment phase can evaluate more effectively whether a program is achieving outcomes because the assignments they are evaluating were

designed to cohere with programmatic goals. The deliverables are the products of assignments designed to achieve the goals being assessed. Outcomes of assessment, then, can include not only whether assignments are achieving goals, but whether those goals are best serving students. Building such reflexivity into the programmatic process facilitates sustainability. Adding aligned assignment objectives benefits administrators, instructors, and students, and facilitates a coherent program.

Summary: Impactful Assignment Design

This study suggests that service course assignments can be made more effective and impactful by carefully considering the balance between emphasizing the development of rhetorical knowledge and the production of documents in a specific genre. While rhetorical principles may be applicable in any workplace writing situations, and, therefore, may be best suited to students' diverse professional and disciplinary contexts, genre-based assignments--assignments that focus on production of a deliverable--offer students practical experience with workplace writing tasks. Further, inexperienced instructors may find teaching to a specific genre more concrete, and these types of assignments do not require specialized knowledge of TPC, which instructors may not possess. However, an overemphasis on genre may not best serve the students' needs based on their professional outlook, and may not adequately achieve course outcomes that focus on the development of rhetorical knowledge and abilities. The dynamic between genre and rhetorical principles illustrates a need within the field for more research into connections between workplace practices (both rhetorical and genre-related) and assignment design. Negotiating this challenge encompasses issues of staffing and course goals, as well as assignment design.

The implications of including explicit assignment objectives similarly touches on issues of staffing and course goals, as well as programmatic concerns in a discussion of impactful assignment design. Objectives that align with course goals can provide guidance for instructors that can help inform decisions about materials to provide and concepts to emphasize when teaching students. In addition to ensuring that assignments work to achieve course goals, assignment objectives can foster coherence on a programmatic level, which allows for assessment practices that are both reliable and reflexive. Illustrative of the impact of assignment objectives is the role they could play in negotiating the emphasis of rhetorical principles and genre in assignments. Thoughtful attention to objectives could not only frame an assignment to balance the development of skills and the production of documents, but also can serve to develop in instructors an increased sense the relationship between knowledge and abilities and document production in technical and professional communication, while helping instructors make decisions about materials and activities that enact objectives on a daily basis.

Most salient in the above discussion of impactful and effective service course assignment design is the role of context, specifically that assignment design does not exist in a vacuum. Impactful and effective assignment design is maximized by taking into consideration the forces that articulate to the assignment--course goals, programmatic concerns, and, especially, staffing. This premise of the inherently networked assignment is reflected in the programmatic network, and discussed in more detail in the following section, which focuses on program-level concerns, but in no way is limited to them.

Enriched Service Course Program Administration

Assignments often are ancillary concerns of program administration. Unless an administrator is engaged in program assessment or a curricular redesign, assignments generally

are not at the forefront of the programmatic agenda. However, assignments can significantly influence program-level decisions. While many interview respondents stated that instructors design their own assignments, even this hands-off approach to assignments resonates within a program. The sections below highlight some of the roles assignments play in program administration, and illuminating how deeply the assignment is imbricated in programmatic decisions.

Standardization vs. Flexibility

Standardization of a service course occurs when administrators require that certain elements--from course objectives to a complete course--be taught in all sections of a course. Instructors that have flexibility can design their courses at their discretion. Historically, Russell's (2002) treatment of writing in the disciplines touches on the issue of uniform curricula, but beyond broad statements like Russell's, TPC has not actively engaged in scholarly work or research studies on standardized or uniform curriculum. In the interviews conducted, some standardization most often was reported. The most common level of standardization required instructors to teach to specified course objectives, with flexibility in the assignments included in the syllabus. Assignments often were designed by instructors and then shared with the instructor community via a medium like a website or common Learning Management System (LMS) shell (e.g., Canvas or Blackboard). When questioned about the reason for gradations of standardization, most interviewees privileged the value of giving instructors some freedom to make decisions about their courses. Consistently, administrators reported that new or inexperienced instructors were more likely to teach a standardized curriculum. Requirements for new instructors ranged from being asked to teach a prescribed syllabus to being given several sample syllabi as models. Instructors might teach directly from a sample syllabus or use the

samples to develop their own syllabi. In such cases, assignments would be selected from the ones included in the sample syllabi, and no central repository of assignments is maintained.

In discussing decisions about standardization, interviewees explain choices relative to the issue of program coherence. Standardization ensures that programs are providing to students a curriculum that satisfies program goals and gives students the knowledge, skills, and abilities the program values. While interviewees consistently state a desire to accommodate instructor flexibility, the need to deliver a consistent product that satisfies the goals of the program, to include serving the needs of students and extra-departmental stakeholders, motivates moves toward standardization. Of significance to this study, then, is that the issue of standardization--a distinctly programmatic curricular concern--is inextricable, once again, from issues of staffing. Programmatic goals and the interests of stakeholders outside the department are not the sole decision criteria when approaching issues of standardization. The needs and knowledge of instructors, as well as the value of instructor flexibility, significantly inform administrator decisions regarding whether or how much to standardize curricula.

Another significant finding relative to standardization is revealed in the analysis of syllabi and speaks to the issue of curricular coherence within a program. Three interviewees stated that their programs require no standardization, with complete instructor flexibility for curriculum design. The course materials sent from these three programs included syllabi that lacked not only assignment objectives, but also explicit statements of course objectives. The lack of objectives for assignments was a finding extant in two-thirds of all assignments collected, regardless of the level of standardization, but the lack of course objectives was specific to the three programs that lacked any standardization and afforded instructors total flexibility. While the two facts are not causally correlatable, an absence of course objectives illustrates tellingly the

absence of coherence within these programs. Without course objectives, connections between courses or to program goals are unlikely to exist. The absence of course and assignment objectives suggests that students taking these department's service courses cannot be guaranteed a consistent experience, and that, as discussed above, there is little guidance for instructors as they design assignments to achieve program or course goals.

In addition to the absence of course objectives, and reflective of the lack of coherence within a program, the assignments listed in the syllabi from programs with complete instructor flexibility deviated significantly from the most common assignment types listed in the other syllabi in the corpus, often represented assignment types unique in the corpus, such as designing an online survey. While the fact that the top six assignment types in the collected syllabi represented 75% of all assignments listed does not mean that these types of assignments represent a field-wide consensus on the assignments that should be taught, the statistic does suggest a consensus of common types of assignments associated with the service course within the corpus, especially considering that all six assignment types were consistently represented in the textbooks analyzed. As such, deviation from the predominant assignment types suggests a lack of guidance for instructors in terms of access to or regard for both programmatic and field-wide perspectives on service course goals and curricula.

This claim is supported by statements made by all three interviewees in programs with total instructor flexibility that no structured or consistent professional development was available to instructors. These findings represent a minority of my data, and the occurrence of no objectives, divergent assignment types, and the absence of professional development opportunities may not be correlative. However, the facts are illustrative of the types of issues that can arise within programs with no standardization. The findings of this study suggest some

standardization of service course curricula facilitates the stability and coherence in a program that benefits instructors and increases the satisfaction of extra-departmental stakeholders and students. And most significantly to this study, the question of standardization and flexibility once again effectively illustrates the connections between program, course, assignments, and staffing issues.

The discussion of standardization above raises the questions of how and who makes decisions regarding which objectives and assignments should be included in service course curricula. Also as noted above, the frequency of occurrence of specific types of assignments does not mean that the programs using those assignments did research on which assignments to use or talked with service course stakeholders within or without the department. The challenge of working with other stakeholders is described in the next section.

Working with Other Stakeholders

As a course concerned with workplace writing that serves any of a number of departments within an institution, while situated within a home department, the service course serves a number of stakeholder groups, all of which can contribute meaningfully to the development of service course curricula. Until recently, scholarship addressing relationships with outside stakeholders has been scarce. Recently, the benefits of forging relationships with outside stakeholders are explored by Veltsos and Patriarca (2017). Within the home department, faculty and service course instructors can offer input and foster cohesion within a program. Departments outside the home department can offer a perspective on the skills and practices valued within the students' disciplines. Stakeholders outside the academy include professionals in the workforce and, for departments with TPC majors, program alumni. These groups can provide insight into

the professional writing tasks and abilities most relevant in a contemporary workplace. The perspectives of these groups situate service course assignments in context, putting the tasks students are asked to do in conversation within larger academic and professional communities that are material to designing effective curricula that achieves the goals of the course.

Perhaps leveraging these stakeholder groups to design more impactful assignments seems intuitive, but it is not easy. As noted in the previous chapter, only one of the interviewees I spoke with stated that their department maintained an interdisciplinary curriculum development board and had established contact with alumni and professionals in the workplace. No other interviewees reported contact with stakeholders outside the university, and four reported no contact at all with departments outside the home department. The majority of interviewees reported extra-departmental contact in the past, informally, or irregularly. An actual exchange of course materials (e.g., review of a syllabus) was infrequent. Many respondents stated that they relied exclusively on student evaluations and the lack of contact from outside departments to confirm that their service courses were satisfactory to other disciplines.

There are several possible reasons why collaboration with other stakeholders is infrequent. Time and effort must be put into building relationships with stakeholders, and a number of factors serve as obstacles to forging working relationships. People in the home department, like all departments within an institution, are busy and time is a precious commodity. Further, departmental faculty may not understand value of the service course within the department. Home departments may not see the value of allocating time and resources to the service course in the same way it allocates resources to, for example, First Year Composition. And in served departments, outside the home department, faculty often want their students to improve their writing, but don't understand TPC as a discipline or curriculum. As one respondent

quoted in the previous chapter notes, other departments may not see alignment between how service course curricula fosters the development of skills and abilities that are considered important within TPC as a discipline and the types of writing (i.e., genres) these outside departments would like to see student creating. Outside departments, too, have limited time and resources to foster relationships.

Service course administrators also must put time and effort into fostering relationships with people in the workforce, these people may be alumni, or people at organizations with which students engage in internships, or professional organizations with whom service course administrators form relationships. Regardless of the source of the connection, doing the work of establishing and maintaining connections outside an institution requires systematic and consistent attention.

However, the value of these relationships to service course curricula is significant. Collaboration within a department helps cohere a program and raises the visibility of the service course, helping to secure departmental resources. Allocating programmatic resources to bring the service course to the attention of departmental faculty can result in a return of greater resource availability for the service course program.

Fostering working relationships with other departments leads to insight into what the other disciplines value and the skills they expect their students to possess. Building relationships with other departments also helps develop an understanding between served departments and TPC faculty that facilitates more effective communication. Over time, disciplines can develop more productive lines of communication, and, like all lines of communication, they are two-way, resulting in increased mutual understanding. The benefit is not simply the development an understanding of the conventions of other disciplines, but also an increased understanding of

how communication operates between disciplines. The service course is an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise, and fostering interdisciplinary relationships on an administrative level can yield insights into the interdisciplinary aspects of service course curricula.

Similarly, maintaining relationships with alumni and developing relationship with industry professionals connects service course curricula to its main site of inquiry, the workplace. Establishing this connection yields insight into practical skills and abilities that will be useful to students when they enter the workforce. The perspective of working professionals not only fosters an understanding of the contemporary workplace, but, if tracked over time, affords the observation of trends that can help curriculum designers anticipate the types of knowledge and concepts that could be valuable to students in the future. Considering the myriad benefits to service course curricula resulting from fostering relationships with outside stakeholders, this study's finding that few departments are actively engaged in those relationship reveals a gap in administrative practice. Fostering relationships with outside stakeholders would better ground programmatic decisions in workplace practices, an invaluable insight for administrators, one worth the time and effort required to establish relationships with other stakeholders.

Summary: Enriched Program Administration

On a programmatic level, a contextualized view of service course assignments visualizes connections between factors administrators often consider discreetly when making programmatic decisions. In making decisions about the standardization of curricula, at issue is not only the coherence of the course or being able to deliver a consistent curriculum between course sections, administrators take into consideration the ability of instructors to effectively teach assignments. They also must balance instructor flexibility, ensuring that the assignments being taught are in

line with programmatic goals, while leveraging the inventive potential of faculty as a resource for creating new assignments and exercises.

Administrators also negotiate connections with service course stakeholders. While building these connections takes time and effort, the benefits of this work include not only forging a link between assignments, the workplace and departments served, but also the fostering of insight into interdisciplinary communicative practices. These interdisciplinary communication skills can be useful in constructing a curriculum for students of diverse disciplinary backgrounds who will be asked to communicate with multiple audiences of various backgrounds and expertises when they enter the workforce. Most significantly, foregrounds the interconnected nature of service course work. No programmatic decision exists in isolation. Decisions resonate through a program from the design of a single assignment through to activities in the workplace.

Heretofore, discussions of the service course assignment have described the practical implications of contextualizing the assignment in the programmatic network. The next section integrates the practical implications of this study into a disciplinary context, discussing how the TPC as a field can benefit from increased attention to the service course and its assignments.

TPC Disciplinary Identity and Values

The service course represents a significant point of contact between TPC as a discipline, other disciplines, and the workplace. Assignments taught in the service course are both reflections of and statements about what matters to TPC as a discipline. This section explores the contributions that study of the service course assignment makes to the field (See e.g., Kynell-Hunt and Savage, 2003, 2004).

Professional Development

This study lays bear the importance of staffing issues in a the service course's programmatic network. However, professional development receives very little attention in scholarship. Of the limited scholarship that approaches issues of professional development, the majority deals with online instruction (Grover et al., 2017; Melonçon, 2017; Rodrigo and Ramirez, 2017; Bay, 2017). In this study, staffing contributed significantly to the major themes emerging from the data. All but the work of building relationships with service course stakeholder groups outside the program reflect the need to take staffing into consideration. In the discussion of emphasizing genre vs. rhetorical principles, while some respondents acknowledged the value of teaching assignments to focus on rhetorical abilities that can be applied to any workplace writing task, genre was equally frequently acknowledged as representing a concrete product with a clear purpose that is easier for inexperienced instructors to teach. Exploring whether assignments are explicitly connected to course objectives reveals a complex web of factors orbiting around issues of staffing, to include whether instructors are being given the information they need to make connections, how they are being given this information and in what contexts, who is designing assignments, how those assignments are being reviewed to ensure that course goals are being met, and the ways in which assignment objectives can contribute to helping instructors achieve course goals. The question of standardization vs. flexibility in service course curriculum raised the issue of the need to cohere a program and ensure that instructors, especially inexperienced instructors, were teaching curricula that satisfied program goals and that the program is giving a consistent product to stakeholders including students and the faculty of other departments, while giving instructors the freedom to make decisions about their classes. These themes represent a pattern revealing the imbrication of

staffing issues throughout service course programmatic work. They also highlight the way connections between staffing and administration are conducted through the assignment. The service course assignment functions as a node directly connecting staff to myriad other administrative concerns operating at the program and course level, hence its position at the center of the programmatic network.

And yet, despite an awareness that many decisions take into consideration the need to give faculty the necessary resources to insure effective instruction and accommodate the backgrounds and abilities of the faculty pool, interviews with administrators reflect that professional development of faculty is not as high a priority as the influence of staffing concerns on decision making would suggest. Of the 15 interviewees, one stated generally that they had no professional development and don't need any; two stated that they offer no professional development, but are interested in starting a program; five interviewees stated that they offer instructors some professional development opportunities, but would like to do more; and seven interviewees stated that they engage in some activities and they feel that their professional development program is adequate. The types of activities those with professional development provided included practicums, orientations, brown bag-type meetings, and mentoring programs. Two programs maintained electronic resources (a website and a Canvas shell) in which course materials were hosted and to which all instructors had access. Of these options, many programs offered one or more of the types of professional development activities intermittently, rather than in a structured professional development program designed to ensure consistent support for all types of faculty. Most respondents acknowledged that more support was available for graduate students than contingent faculty--to include full-time non-tenure staff and adjuncts--although answers to questions about the composition of faculty pools revealed that contingent faculty

made up the majority of staff. Overall, the data suggest that administrators know instructors need support, but many programs are not routinely providing it.

Respondents offered many reasons why professional development was not a higher priority. One respondent stated that their faculty pool was stable and that their department did not have high turnover, therefore professional development was unnecessary. Implicit in this in her statement is a tacit assumption that if the department did have more inexperienced instructors, professional development might be more important. For most departments, a significant volume of new and inexperienced instructors is the norm. However, what is most significant about the respondent's claim is the assumption that experienced instructors do not require support. Curricula evolve over time, or should evolve, to follow advancing scholarship and the changing workplace. The absence of professional development suggests that changes to the curriculum are either not being made or not being adequately communicated. Further, the reciprocal exchange of ideas and information between administrators and faculty cannot happen if those groups are not engaging with each other on a regular, structured basis. As such, a stable faculty pool does not obviate the need for regular professional development. Reciprocal interactions with faculty are fundamental to the sustainable programmatic perspective.

Respondents who acknowledge the need for professional development point to their faculty's lack of teaching experience and diverse, non-TPC backgrounds. This situation is far more prevalent than the stable, experienced faculty based described above. And many interviewees acknowledge a gap between what they believe is appropriate service course curriculum and what inexperienced instructors or instructors educated in other disciplines will use to build a course, such as the respondent who observed an instructor using the popular business book *Seven Steps of Highly Successful People* as a textbook. Another interviewee stated

that instructors must rely exclusively on each other when making decisions about curriculum construction.

These data points are illustrative of the consequences of inadequate professional development; however, interviewees offer many reasons why professional development is not made more regularly available. The most common of those reason is insufficient time and resources. Respondents reported that they, themselves, are busy, and they also report being uncomfortable with requests that make demands on their colleagues' time. This response was especially common when discussing adjunct faculty. Interviewees observed that adjuncts may have many demands on their time and may be teaching multiple sections or at multiple institutions, and there are ethical implications of asking them to participate in professional development activities for which they are not being paid. These concerns are valid and the issues in play in their creation are complex, but accepting them as a standing justification for limited professional development engenders negative programmatic consequences. The conflicting attitudes reflected in acknowledging the need for professional development, but eschewing the implementation of a professional development program negatively impacts organizational culture, as is evidenced by one respondent's comment that long-standing precedent within the department precludes making demands on the time of full-time instructors based on the length of time they have been in the department, making a professional development plan untenable.

While the issue of professional development is challenging, avoiding the issue can compromise the quality and consistency of service course curricula, and also risks marginalizing faculty populations, as is suggested by the comment of one respondent who states that full-time instructors in their department have only each other to rely on when developing or changing curricula. Asking faculty to go it alone when it comes to curricular development in a department

populated by intelligent individuals with experience in the field is as least as ethically problematic as making requests for the time of contingent faculty.

This study evidences that professional development is vital for service course program function and assignments sit at the nexus of the network of factors staffing impacts. Instructors disseminate curricula. Facilitating their knowledge and fostering their confidence is fundamental to the success of the service course. And that direct experience with the impact of assignments also establishes instructors as invaluable resources for ongoing programmatic review and revision. Professional development opens lines of communication that lead to an exchange of information and experience for both instructors and administrators, thereby strengthening not only curricula, but the program overall.

The findings of this study suggest that professional development programs in service course administration are insufficiently serving faculty need, especially for contingent faculty. Confirmation of this finding is suggested by the dearth of TPC scholarship focused on professional development. The implications of neglecting professional development are disciplinary. Service course administration is a workplace site for a discipline that studies workplaces. If those who study workplaces neglect stewardship of our own places of work, the integrity of that work is compromised. As a discipline, TPC is obligated to take responsibility for the people who contribute to the operation of our workplaces. This study cannot speak to a remedy for the contingent labor problem, which is addressed below, but it does speak to the need for and benefits of instituting structured and consistent professional development practices. Professional development supports the employees we have. As TPC scholars, we are well aware of the need to give employees to tools they need to do their jobs. If we can’t do that for our own

employees, then our capacity to credibly create curricula that prepare students to enter the workforce as self-reflective and ethically aware employees is compromised.

Empirical Research

As previously discussed, little scholarship is published specifically focused on service course. Of the works that have been published, only a few studies are empirical in nature (e.g., see Warnock et al., 2017). The insights gleaned from this study illustrate the value of empirical research in service course scholarship.

The Course Objective Categories used in this study illuminate disciplinary values (e.g., Rhetorical Principles, Disciplinarity, Problem Solving, Ethics), as well as practical principles (e.g., Genre, Writing Process, Using Technology, Research, Collaboration). Applying these themes systematically to the course materials yields an informative perspective on what we are telling students they should know about workplace writing, which, manifestly, illuminates what matters to the assignment designers and program administrators who make choices about how to represent TPC as a discipline to students.

However, the value of this study was not limited to what could be learned by the analysis of the course materials. The interviews conducted with service course administrators allowed analysis of the course materials to be put in a programmatic context. The administrators interviewed sent in the course materials analyzed allowing tenable connections to be drawn between the programs discussed in interviews and the syllabi and assignments used in those programs. This contextualized view of the assignments made the development of the programmatic perspective at the heart of this study tenable. Essentially, analysis of the course materials and interviews yielded insight into programmatic operations from multiple nodes, at

the program, course, assignment, and staffing levels. Without an empirical methodology, claims that spoke to those levels would have been unjustifiable.

The methodology used in this study was designed to analyze service course assignment in the context in which it exist. Empirical methods enabled connections between textual data and interviews in a way the yielded a more nuanced understanding of how assignments circulate within a program. Further, the empirical approach encompassed course materials and interviews from 15 institutions. The insights yielded by analyzing programmatic artifacts from multiple institutions, while not wholly generalizable, increase the tenability of my claims about the network in which service course assignment circulates. Teaching case studies of the kind common in programmatic scholarship provide anecdotal data valid only within the specified context. More empirical studies of which this work is an example would produce more systemic analyses of service course programs, yielding a field-wide perspective on the service course and the ways in which it reflects and constructs disciplinary values.

Future Research

This project reinforces the value of studying the service course assignment, but research into the service course assignment is a nascent line of inquiry. The ideal impact of this study would be to to encourage other TPC scholars to turn their attention to the service course. To that end, the following describes several research projects that could emerge from this project.

Staffing and Professional Development Issues

Perhaps the most important theme to emerge in this analysis concerns the thorny issue of professional development. It is a thorny issue because TPC does not exclusively have a professional development problem. The field has a labor problem that gives rise to issues of

professional development. As previously noted, TPC's labor problem was beyond the scope of this study, but in future research, it is not. To return to a vital statistic, 87% of all service courses are taught by contingent faculty (Melonçon and England, 2011). Contingent faculty are rarely discussed in literature. However, unless that changes, unless discussions of contingent labor in the service course are both direct and honest, future research matters little. An understanding of the service course's labor situation is necessary if we are to develop plans to train the instructors who teach the course. TPC needs always to be aware of the teaching labor behind our curricular initiatives (Melonçon, 2014; Melonçon, 2018; Melonçon & England, 2011; Melonçon et al., 2016; Melonçon, 2017; Melonçon 2018, Melonçon, 2019; Melonçon et al., forthcoming). Discussions of curricula are attenuated if we do not consider labor issues and review who is teaching TPC courses.

The local situation at USF is representative of many institutions. Unusual only its size, 95% of our service courses are taught by contingent faculty (with contingent faculty teaching 90% all undergraduate curricula). Beyond the 8-10 graduate students in Rhetoric and Composition who teach the service course, the other 40+ instructors have no background and training in TPC as an academic discipline, and only few instructors may have had a job where they wrote for a brief period of time. Importantly, no single cause is responsible for our professional development problem. The service course practicum we offer is limited to graduate students. Further, it attempts to fully prepare graduate students to teach in a single semester, after which professional development is both informal and optional. The informal and optional professional development workshops are poorly attended by the contingent faculty who lack disciplinary training in TPC. Even some of the contingent faculty who hold service course administrative roles do not have a TPC background. Taken in sum, what should be clear is that

problems with professional development are inextricable from problems with labor, at this institution and many others.

Most administrators interviewed acknowledged that professional development is important, but they supplied many reasons why implementing a structured, consistent professional development program was challenging. However, no one with whom I spoke identified labor as a the source of these challenges. The most common reason given was constraints of time and resources, which are, of course, key factors that cannot be discounted. These limitations are very real, but, as this study shows, the potential benefits of instituting professional development practices are equally real. Future research, then, would delve into approaches to professional development that are sustainable, effective, and time and resource efficient, and that address the different types and kinds of problems pointed out in this section. This research would leverage the programmatic network to ensure both reflexivity and recursivity were a part of any professional development program piloted, and, as part of the programmatic network, labor would be a primary focus.

Contextualized Genre

One of the major themes to manifest in analysis of both the course materials and interviews concerned designing assignments for the production of genre-driven deliverables. Future research would ask what a contextualized, genre-based assignment would look like. Specifically, how does an administrator design an assignment that contextualizes genre with rhetorical principles, thereby situating genres within workplace practices? Genre-based assignments are common, and it is easy to argue that they are reductive and not consistently useful to students once they enter the workplaces of their respective disciplines, but, as one respondent said, nuanced approaches to genre exist, although a certain level of disciplinary

knowledge is required to teach them. According to Boettger's (2014) study, students' understanding of genre increased with explicit instruction in generic convention of those genres. Although the study may be seen as structured to achieve a specific result, Boettger's work highlights the need to research how we teach genre in the service course. Boettger (2014) did not show whether students retained genre-related knowledge after the class, information which, if confirmed, would argue for shifting of pedagogical practice away from a rhetorical focus to one explicitly focused on conventions. When my data is read alongside Boettger's (2104) study and other limited research in the field (Read & Michaud, 2018; Melonçon, 2018), the question arises about the type and kinds of research that is needed into assignment construction and pedagogical delivery in the serviced course. The fact remains that genre is a staple of workplace writing and writing in a genre affords opportunities to practice elements of style and document design that is expected in a technical and professional writing class. Questions for future research, then, ask what is the role and significance of genre in service course assignments; to what extent and in what ways should rhetorical principles be emphasized in assignment design; and what does an effectively contextualized genre-based assignment look like and how can the assignment's effectiveness be assessed.

Site for Transfer

The impact of assignments on students was beyond the scope of this study. However, further research also needs to be done to study transfer from academia into the workplace. While TPC and Writing Studies scholarship reflects some work in this area (Beaufort, 2007; and Dias & Paré, 2000 ; Winsor, 2003), and limited studies from alumni perspectives after being employed in the workplace (Whiteside, 2003; Wilson and Dyke Ford, 2003; Blythe, Lauer, and Curran, 2014), the field would benefit from a more rigorous understanding of how well the

content of TPC courses, and the knowledge students gain while taking them, transfer into students' lives (e.g., see Schnoll, 2017). Accordingly, TPC scholars could engage in research studies designed to examine how well students are transferring knowledge from TPC courses (e.g., the service course) into their own majors (e.g., Ford, 2004) or to examine how well students are transferring the knowledge from our courses to the workplace upon graduation (e.g., see Schieber, 2016).

Using the service course as one of the primary data points, information from alumni would begin to help programs understand how to improve, refine, and/or change their current curricula to better prepare students for a future that is increasing defined by cross-cutting skills (e.g., problem-solving, organization, leadership, and communication) and for a workplace that, as previously noted, does not yet exist. A key question in a research study focused on assignments would ask students and alumni about the assignments that most significantly impacted them, since previous research has shown that assignments can affect students in meaningful ways (Eodice, Geller, and Lerner, 2016). Framing a transfer study around meaningful assignments could help the field understand what resonates with students as a measure of meta-cognitive learning. This research would help to craft impactful assignments that are both meaningful to students and that meet learning objectives for the course.

Theory Building

Compared to the voluminous quantity of research on administration in composition, TPC scholarship reflects an inattention to the practice and theory of administrative work. Historically, TPC always has administered full degree programs, as well as the service course (e.g., see Adams, 1993; Connors, 1982, Kynell, 1999), but even with this heavy administrative load, TPC has not produced a body of scholarship around programmatic administration. This dearth of

theoretically rich scholarship means that TPC is well-poised to build theoretical models that guide programmatic development. While the foregoing proposed research projects are of practical import for service course administrators, a final suggestion for future research involves building a theory based on the programmatic network.

The programmatic network has practical implication for service course administrators that have been explored above, but fundamental to the programmatic network as described is its reflexive and recursive nature. The programmatic network is as much a process as it is an artifact of programmatic work. Conceptual models like GRAM (Schreiber and Melonçon, 2018) and St. Amant's (2018) contextualized course design operate as helpful heuristics that, in application, inform practice. A theory of program administration would create an "ideological network of interpretation" (Melonçon and Scott, 2018, p. 11) that would help the field think through questions of program administration. While TPC scholarship includes limited theoretical work, like Watts (2017), which focuses on theoretical concepts tied to assessment only, the programmatic network could be developed into a holistic model of program administration. The concept of the network is useful because it takes into consideration a number of actors and helps to make connections between stakeholders that are material to programmatic sustainability. While TPC has long been concerned with ensuring that curricula align with administrative expectations, the programmatic network also serves to establish connections between academic programs and field-wide trends.

The roles of practice and process within the programmatic network have resonance with the concept of praxis, as previously explored by scholars (see e.g., Miller, 1989; Pope-Ruark, 2014). A theory of the programmatic network could could consider how praxis, situated among its nuanced definitions, would inform programmatic development that has often been based on

practice. This theory could address how techne (Scott and Melonçon, 2017) could be put into a stronger conversation with praxis in an administrative context. A future project is to explore the ability to embody or realize administrative practice through the processes inherent in the programmatic network.

Conclusion

This study endeavors to accomplish three goals: to systematically examine the service course assignment by contextualizing it among the administrative practices; to highlight how the service course assignment can be leveraged by administrators to improve administrative operations; to visualize a programmatic network that conceptualizes the service course to foreground its relevance within the field of TPC. As a conceptual model of the service course, the programmatic network, with assignments as its nexus, evidences a programmatic perspective engendering both practical and disciplinary impacts. Examining the service course from a programmatic perspective does not mean examining a service course for a single program. It means examining how the service course as a disciplinary artifact can and should inform programs and larger issues of the field, in general. As this study evidences, connections between programmatic forces already exist, they simply are not being leveraged advantageously by administrators or the field. In this sense, the programmatic network, as a programmatic perspective, is always already looking inward at programs and outward at both industry and academic practices. In examining the service course from a programmatic perspective, this study works to bring programmatic research into conversation with sustainable growth and sustainable identities.

Over a decade ago, Hart and Conklin (2006) sought to establish a new metaphor for technical communication. They sought to replace the bridge metaphor for technical

communication. They stated, "…at one time many technical communicators referred to themselves as a 'bridge' between technology experts and technology users. 'Bridge' was a model for technical communication, and many found it to be a powerful way of communicating the intermediary or advocacy role played by technical communicators" (Hart and Conklin, 2006, p. 396). Instead, Hart and Conklin argued, technical communicators' role is more accurately one of performance, facilitation, managing interpersonal relationships, and strategic negotiation than crafting deliverables. They describe technical communicators' "increasing involvement in planning a facilitating communication *processes*, not just products, increases the importance of interpersonal skills and the need to collaborate effectively with representatives of other disciplines" (Hart and Conklin, 2006, p. 413). The programmatic network is a process that facilitates sustainable administrative practices. As a deeply sustainable programmatic perspective, the programmatic network puts the work of service course administration into conversation with disciplinary identities.

This dissertation is titled "Nobody Wants to Read What You Write." Taken from the Tebeaux and Dragga (2017) textbook, it speaks to the need for concision and structure in technical and professional writing. Within the context of service course administration, these words speak to disciplinary inattention to the service course. If this study accomplishes one thing, my hope is that it illuminates the value to TPC as a discipline of reading--and writing--about the service course.

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Appendix A: Program Administrator Interview Questions

Program Questions

1. What is the scope of your service course program? What types of service courses do you offer?
2. How many students do you serve in a year?
3. What departments do you serve? Did you involve them in program development? If so, how?
4. What would you identify as the programs greatest strengths and weaknesses. What are you most proud of? What would you most like to change?

Curriculum Questions

1. Do you use a textbook? If so, which one and how did you choose it?
2. How closely do you follow the textbook?
3. What types of assignments are included in your service courses?
4. How did you choose them? Who was involved? (Including stakeholders outside the department and the institution)
5. Do you have a uniform curriculum?
6. How standardized are your courses? How much instructor discretion is built into curricula?
7. Do you feel that the relationship between course goals and assignments is adequately explicit?

8. What would you identify as your course(s) greatest strengths and weaknesses. What are you most proud of? What would you most like to change?
9. In your opinion, what is the best assignment--the one that most effectively achieves outcomes and benefits students?

Faculty/Staffing Issues

1. How many instructors teach the service course(s)?
2. What is the breakdown of your faculty by type (i.e., tenure line, FT tenure track, types of contingent faculty: FTNT, VI, adjunct, etc.)?
3. Who are your instructors? What are their scholarly/academic backgrounds?
4. What resources are available to assist with faculty professional development (in- or outside the department)?

Appendix B: Textbook Author Interview Questions

1. Who do you think is using this book? What types of instructors? What types of institutions?
2. When writing the book, was the primary audience those who would use the book throughout the course as a primary text, or was the audience intended to use the book as a supplement?
3. What do you think is the role of the exercises included in the book? How do you hope they are used in the classroom?
4. What goals or objectives do you want the exercises to achieve? Does the text include different types of exercise with different objectives?
5. How did you generate content for the exercises? Did you involve any other people/stakeholders in your exercise design?
6. What was your rationale in establishing connections between chapter goals and exercises? Do you feel the relationship between chapter goals and exercises is explicit?
7. What's your favorite exercise or type of exercise? The one that most effectively achieves your goals for the book and/or most significantly benefits students?
8. Did the publisher place any restrictions on or make requests for specific exercises?