Special Issue Call for Papers
Race, Ethnicity, and Technical Communication: Examining Multicultural Issues in the United States
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Despite electing its first African-American president, Barack Obama, and in the process, ushering in what some have called a national discussion on race, the United States is not a postracial society. Rather, it is still a society that produces racial constructs and experiences racism on a variety of levels. Even though (or quite possibly because) racism and racial conflicts still exist, many of us avoid topics of race, ethnicity, and culture in our daily conversations.

Thus, it is not surprising to find this same reticence in technical communication research and literature. In July 1994, JBTC published a special issue on workforce diversity, which was an effort toward embracing discussions of multiculturalism and technical communication in the United States. Since then we have seen an encouraging number of academic articles that discuss gender and international technical communication; still, few discuss technical communication as it relates to race and ethnicity within the United States. Thrush made this case 13 years ago in her seminal article “Multicultural Issues in Technical Communication,” in Staples and Ornatowski’s Foundations for Teaching Technical Communication. She pointed out that “as little as we know about technical communication in other countries, it is startling how little research has been done on subcultures within the United States . . . . This includes African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Asian-Americans as the largest groups of American-born minorities” (p. 172). Unfortunately, there was still little research in this area in 2004 when the article was reprinted in Dubinsky’s Teaching Technical Communication: Critical Issues for the Classroom. Recent scholarship responding to Thrush’s call includes Bank’s Race, Rhetoric, and Technology: Searching for Higher Ground and Williams’ forthcoming From Black Codes to Recodification: Removing the Veil from Regulatory Writing. Both monographs address African-Americans’ use of technology and genres of technical communication within the United States. Johnson, Pimentel, and Pimentel’s “Writing New Mexico White: A Critical Analysis of Early Representations of New Mexico in Technical Writing” and Madison’s “Instructions, Visuals, and the English-speaking Bias in Technical Communication” address the representation of Latinos in U.S. technical communication. With this research, these and other scholars move beyond arguments about the importance of multicultural issues in the United States and technical communication to highlight the unique ways that people of color in the United States use or invent technical communication.

The editors of this special issue ask its contributors to join this discussion by applying a critical lens to the technical communication field while addressing issues such as race, ethnicity, and
language diversity in the United States. Specifically, we are looking for contributors interested in addressing questions such as the following:

- What are the ethical and pedagogical implications of analyzing technical communication artifacts created primarily for consumption or use by ethnic minorities in the United States?
- In this era of the Obama administration, how are issues of language diversity addressed in technical communication?
- Considering the United States’ proximity to Mexico, how do issues of Latinos (e.g., border issues) affect the business and technical communication field locally or globally?
- How do issues of blackness, Chicanoness, Latinoness, Indianness, whiteness, or any other kind of culturalness affect and become represented in business and technical communication?

And we hope that contributors will address some of these themes:

- an examination of how racial constructs manifest (both subtly and explicitly) within business and technical communication
- the role of technical communicators in perpetuating—and resisting—racial constructs (both as passive producers and as consumers of racial constructs in business and technical documents)
- the role of non-English languages and nonstandard English dialects in business and technical communication
- the (in)effectiveness of colorblindness in business and technical communication

We invite manuscripts that interrogate the representations of race and ethnicity in technical communication and its effects on society. Submissions may be qualitative, quantitative, historical, or discourse analytical, but must systematically analyze data or texts that address one or more of the preceding questions or themes. Manuscripts should conform to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Manuscripts for article-length studies are typically 25 to 35 double-spaced pages (not counting the References section). The deadlines for submission are as follows:

- proposals (250 to 500 words) indicating the purpose, rationale, and approach of contributions: February 1, 2011
- submissions (full manuscripts): March 15, 2011
- accepted manuscripts revised for publication: July 1, 2011
- scheduled publication of issue: July 2012

Please direct questions or abstracts to the guest editors: Miriam F. Williams at mfw@txstate.edu and Octavio Pimentel at Octavio.Pimentel@txstate.edu.