

ABSTRACT

DESIGNING CULTURAL RHETORIC(S): RESEARCH AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF CULTURALLY SITUATED PERSUASION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In this thesis, I argue for the use of cultural rhetoric(s) as a method for critical engagement with social change through the investigation of systems of persuasion within a given culture, and the construction of alternative rhetoric(s) of social action from within researchers' communities of study. I ground this argument in my experiences as an activist researcher with a union for academic student employees at a large multi-campus state university system during which I both formulated and utilized cultural rhetoric(s) to investigate problems within the union around the rhetorical deployment of certain key terms and their interaction with the material conditions of myself and my fellow workers and activists. Ultimately, I argue for cultural rhetoric(s) as a methodology for helping to *enact* social change, rather than as a passive heuristic, through the exploitation of critical junctures in cultural rhetoric(s) that might be exploited to grant increased agency to community members.

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