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Critical Rhetoric and Collaboration: Missing Principle #9 and ProfsDoPop.com

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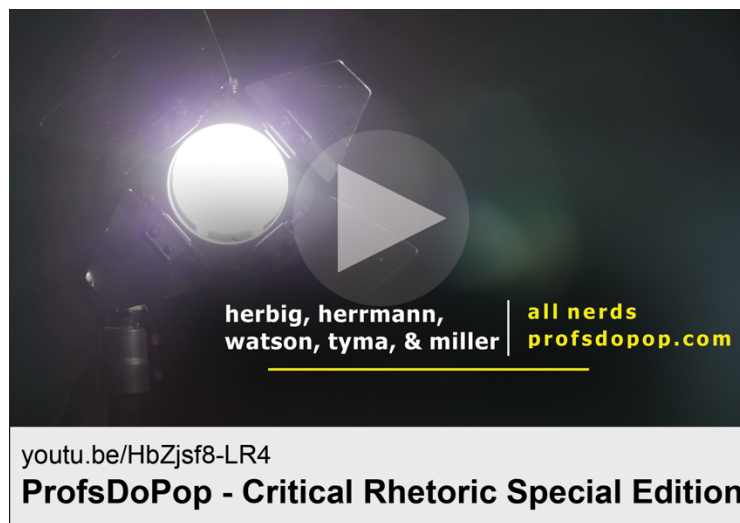
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As part of this Special Section on critical rhetoric, this article examines the role of collaboration in the future of critical rhetoric. Building on McKerrow's original eight principles of praxis, the authors advocate for a missing ninth principle that reflects the need for critical rhetoric to be a shared venture across both individual projects and larger discourses. As an example of this type of work, they provide ProfsDoPop.com, an academic, online blog designed to bring academic sensibilities and concepts to popular audiences through the critique of popular culture.

Keywords: rhetoric, popular culture, public, online, praxis, blog, fragment, performance, media

Thirty years ago, when McKerrow (1989) first outlined the theory and praxis of critical rhetoric, he created eight principles to guide the approach. In his discussion of "Principle #2. The discourse of power is material," he writes:

Participants are not passive bystanders, simply absorbing ideology and having no power to alter its force or its character. Ideology is a property of the social world, but agents have the capacity to interact in that world to modify the discourse. (p. 102)

Then, in his reflections on "Principle #8. Criticism is a *performance*" (emphasis in original), he argues that "The act of performing, within the context of our expertise as critics/readers of the social condition, moves the focus from criticism as method to critique as practice" (p. 108). McKerrow's focus on critical rhetoric as practice is extended by McGee (1990) to include the fact that "text construction is now something done more by the consumers than by the producers of discourse" (p. 288). In between McKerrow's discussions of principles 2 and 8, he also builds a strong case for seeing rhetoric as material, doxastic, and polysemic. Recently, McKerrow (2016) reiterated these eight "principles of praxis . . . as ways of conceiving of the rhetorical act and as potential indices to consider when beginning critique" (p. 258). Built on these principles, McKerrow's discussion of the critiques of freedom and domination are grounded in their existence as social forces that can be understood, broken down, altered, or even destroyed based on how we craft our understandings of them in discourse. Do we, for example, accede, struggle against, disregard, or reformulate our understandings?

These foundational perspectives on critical rhetoric created a space for those who wished to see criticism move beyond the distanced commentary that had been the practice of rhetorical criticism. Critical rhetoric was marked by how it connected the skills of critical thinking that could be found in previous works with the tools of critical engagement that allowed praxis to stand side-by-side with theory. There is a reason why those who engage in discursive critique as well as field methods and participation in rhetoric often build their reference lists out of the work started by McKerrow. It is his positioning of the critic as a performer inside discourse that motivates this type of work. Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook (2015) even built a "participatory critical rhetoric" on the perspectives espoused by McKerrow. Herbig and Hess (2012) showed how "convergent critical rhetoric" could integrate the skills of ethnography and filmmaking into the practice of criticism. McKerrow (2016) lauded these works as important extensions of critical rhetoric. Part of what makes these extensions and directions in critical rhetoric possible is what McKerrow anticipated all those years ago:

critical rhetoric is not a method; it is an orientation. Whether your tools are a keyboard, a voice recorder, or a camera, what ultimately matters is the contribution your critique makes to our understandings of the worlds in which we participate.

In the tradition of Foucault's (1972) argument that knowledge is a product of discourse, critical rhetoric interrogates "how discourse came to be" (McKerrow, 2016, p. 263). Rather than approach texts or documents as discrete, isolated monads, critical rhetoric treats them as woven together with other ideas, influences, and symbols. In his argument about the fragmented nature of contemporary discourse, McGee (1990) argues:

The result is that today no single finished text could possibly comprehend all perspectives on even a single human problem, let alone the complex of problems we index in the phrase "issues of the day." The only way to "say it all" in our fractured culture is to provide readers/audiences with dense, truncated fragments which cue *them* to produce a finished discourse in their minds. . . . In my vocabulary, the problem calls for the skills of a rhetorician. (emphasis in original, p. 288)

The fact is that by teaching students about social phenomena such as "dog whistles," we are training them in the skills of critical rhetoric. By training them to sort through what is actually "fake news," we are putting critical rhetoric into practice. However, the discourses of critical rhetoric are still incomplete. Populations are underrepresented. Marginalized peoples are still unheard. According to Chávez (2015), incorporating these voices will force us to rethink our pasts, presents, and where we can go in the future. To have a better, more inclusive understanding of our worlds and the discourses within them, we need more people to be engaged with the ideas and perspectives of critical rhetoric and more people to contribute to its growth.

As we search for greater inclusion and engagement with critical rhetoric, what is implicit across both the extensions and critiques is a fundamental principle we believe is missing from McKerrow's initial conception: "Principle #9: Criticism is Collaborative." When we say collaborative here, we do not mean that every essay written by rhetoric scholars needs to be coauthored (however, a little more coauthoring would not hurt). No, what we mean is that critical rhetoric is necessarily a shared enterprise. If ideology is a product of language that spreads through material discourse, can be seen in doxa, and can be changed by those interacting in the social world, then it is also something that we—not I—do. Importantly, the principles on which critical rhetoric is based position the critic as a participant in discourse, not a separate or distinct commentator.

In that tradition, we five came together to help create a space where this type of collaboration is possible, while also modeling the behaviors that reveal both the outcomes and the obstacles to public collaboration. The goal of our joint venture, ProfsDoPop.com, is to create a space for scholarly discourse that uses the texts and techniques of popular culture to help us bridge the perceived divide between academic and popular discourses. The collaboration among the five of us is often filled with both conflict and coordination. It is made difficult by time, duty, and location, as well as the various factors that influence our identities. However, our work is made better by our efforts to work together, as we learn from each other.

Therefore, in this article, collaboration has two distinct-yet-intertwined connotations. The first is the collaboration among five people with different backgrounds, strengths, and positions. The second is a broader conception of collaboration that is the foundation of what we consider to be Principle #9. In their collaboration, McKerrow and St. John (2009) write:

Critical rhetoric functions as a form of critique, one committed to the analysis of the integration of power and knowledge. It is informed by a fluid *telos*—purpose, goal, end state—one for which the phenomenon observed, in the cultural and power-based conditions in which it occurs, is precisely the field of operation itself; moreover, this is not an independent or putatively fixed *telos*, and not one of a static rhetorical observer. (p. 327)

This statement, read in tandem with McKerrow and St. John's argument that a social actor is an effect and a causal agent simultaneously, leads to the realization that we exist inside discourses that will continue to influence and change both "I" and "we." In an almost Bakhtinian sense (1981, 1984, 1986), the dialogues in which we live our lives are changing us as well as the world around us. It is a world constantly unfinished and in need of reflection and assessment. We would like to treat our collaboration as a microcosm for the type of collaborative work that is possible when we position ourselves, as advocated by McKerrow and McGee, as critics inside discourse. Our work has led to both public and private discussions that enrich our research, our classrooms, and our relationships. It has allowed us to collaborate on projects and ideas beyond just writing for journals. Therefore, our goal with this article is to explore the additional "Principle #9: Criticism is Collaborative" and the role that it can play in the future of critical rhetoric through an examination of our work on ProfsDoPop.com.

Collaborative Critical Rhetoric: What is ProfsDoPop.com?

A finite answer to the question that heads this section would be disingenuous, but an exploration of the site and our goals is important to understanding this project as an outgrowth of critical rhetoric. For instance, some might compare our site to PopMatters.com. According to the PopMatters Staff (2018) "about" page, "since 1999, PopMatters has been providing smart readers with sharp, entertaining writing on a wide range of topics in pop culture, offering a refuge from the usual hype and gossip" (para. 1). We invite this comparison. Herbig (2016) has even argued that "what I would like rhetorical scholars to discover is the power in the rhetorical form of popular culture and create scholarship in those forms" (p. 103). The format of our site should seem familiar. The voice should be accessible. What makes it unique is the orientation: critical rhetoric. In fact, on the site, we describe our mission:

ProfsDoPop.com functions as a link between popular culture fans/fandoms and popular culture scholarship. We are here to highlight and advocate for different perspectives, from both fans and academics alike. We are here to exchange ideas, translate and interpret scholarship for wider audiences, to question, and to complicate these worlds in hopes of a deeper understanding of the roles that popular culture plays in our lives. (2018)

One of the important dimensions of a website is that it can function simultaneously as an interconnected space for discourse and an evolving text that is finished in the moment and changed the next. The articles

created for ProfsDoPop.com are expected to change and evolve through how they are distributed, commented on, circulated, ignored, or even rewritten.

Just as McKerrow (1989) proposed critical rhetoric as an orientation that could allow scholars and researchers more flexibility and insight, we believe researchers should not be constrained by traditional publishing methods and practices. The tools available to us continue to increase and evolve; why not embrace those within the academy? For that reason, we are building a site that looks more like and distributes content similar to that created within popular culture. Working with a professional journalist and webmaster, Alix Watson, has allowed the professors involved with this project to think in new ways of message creation, distribution, and interaction. For instance, on top of blogging and vlogging ourselves, we have sought out on-camera interviews with other scholars as well as attendees at popular culture conventions. We have explored academic comics and visual art as another means of content distribution. As we continue to grow, we look to create more interactive modules for the site and find ways to connect more through moderated discussions. We have even attempted a simultaneous, across-the-country, binge-watching of the second season of *Stranger Things* in hopes to continue to refine our interactions with each other and popular culture. Whether it is building games or apps or leaning on what comes next, we ultimately envision our site as a space to explore the creation, distribution, circulation, and collaboration that can come from these types of outlets. For us, it is a commitment to the idea that criticism is performance.

We have employed popular culture as a starting point for our discussions. According to Fiske (1989), "popular culture is not consumption, it is culture—the active process of generating and circulating meanings and pleasures within a social system" (p. 23). Because popular culture and discourse are so inexorably interwoven, it provides both the content and the context for interrogation of social meanings. As Herrmann and Herbig (2015) note, discourses in popular culture can, for example, reify hegemonic narratives and understandings, such as the supposedly proper way to be masculine. On the other hand, popular culture can also undermine hegemonic understandings of masculinity. What is important to recognize is that popular culture, because it is so widely distributed and well-known, allows for a common entryway or gateway for rhetorical critique. Utilizing popular culture means there are fewer barriers to entry for those (both academics and laypersons) to join the ongoing conversation.

Herbig and Herrmann (2016) talk about popular culture as a space of "connection and conjunction" (p. x). In instances of both relation and conflict, there is opportunity for us as scholars to both examine and participate in ways that allow us to reimagine the discourses of domination and freedom. McKerrow (1989) challenges rhetorical (and, in the broader sense, all communication scholars) to accept and take on the charge that, "the focus of a critique of domination is on the discourse of power which creates and sustains the social practices which control the dominated. It is . . . a critique of ideologies, perceived as rhetorical creations" (p. 92). For instance, what is the Super Bowl? In the lead-up to Super Bowl LII, Herbig examined the rhetorical significance of the Super Bowl in relationship to violence and masculinity, while Tyma reflected on community, fandom, and consumerism. All of these are different perspectives that people can bring to this singular, yet annual event. By recognizing the power and the ubiquity of popular culture (as text, artifact, event, and practice), this most-common aspect of our lives *becomes* the very discourses of domination and freedom that McKerrow not only recognizes but calls for scholars to explore and interrogate through a rhetorical lens.

To do so, the performance of criticism is about invention. Not arbitrary invention, but what McKerrow (2016) describes as “seeking to ‘invent’ the object of critique out of the varying ways in which symbols influence people” (p. 257). Undertaking this type of criticism means acknowledging that how one person assembles bits of discourse will be different from how another does so. Part of our process of becoming ProfsDoPop.com entailed an understanding of our unique positionalities, arising from different orientations toward our discipline, each with different perspectives and narratives that inform our process to invention. Herrmann is an organizational communication scholar and ethnographer who examines power, narrative, and discourse. Watson has a background in journalism, production, and public relations and does not primarily work within academe. Tyma labors at the crossroads between communication ed/pedagogy and critical media studies. joda considers herself a scholar/practitioner and transmedia artist working at the intersections of race, gender, fandom, affect, kinship, and the public sphere. Our resident critical rhetorician is Herbig. He is drawn to the questions that reevaluate social structures, while also building critique with tools such as a camera, a microphone, and a light kit.

Working together, we build on the work of ethnographers (e.g., Conquergood, 1991; Krizek, 2003; Makagon & Gould, 2016), autoethnographers (e.g., Bochner, 2014; Ellis & Adams, 2014; Goodall, 2008), performance scholars (e.g., Callafell, 2010; Pelias & Van Oosting, 1987), popular culture scholars (e.g., Sellnow & Sellnow, 2001; Stern, Manning & Dunn, 2012), fandom scholars (e.g., Coppa, 2014; Jenkins, 2006, 2012; Reagle, 2015), as well as media scholars (e.g., Dunn & Guagdagno, 2012; McLuhan, 1964/2011; Ong, 1982), plus each of our own individual built-in literature repositories. Our hope is that we can build a sensibility both in exploration and presentation that accounts for scholarly insight and audience accessibility.

When the ProfsDoPop.com project was first emerging, it was informed by the desire to develop a collaborative—not communal or consensual—understanding of the world around us. Each of the collaborators in the project come to it from diverse (though similar, given the subject of inquiry) ideological and discursive spaces. Each of the rhetors constructs her or his argument from a unique perspective, allowing for myriad narratives to intersect at a point of articulation (Fisher, 1984). This resultant topos provides a “playground” that each of us can use in seeking to understand and to work through our own ontological and epistemological lenses. As scholars, we know the power of popular culture. We use it in our classrooms. It is often the common exemplar that connects us with our students. We need to build on the sense of identification it can create.

To be honest, we are still exploring the limits and potentials involved in our endeavor, something many scholars and researchers are undoubtedly familiar with. It might be easy for people to say: you have a blog, so what? Anyone can have a blog. But what we are trying to cultivate is more than just a blog—more than clicks. Who are we trying to reach beyond the self-serving nature of our own interactions on ProfsDoPop.com? Our endeavor inevitably begs a host of questions. To begin with, what do we mean by “audience”? The term often positions the individual as a passive watcher. It also reifies the idea of the individual as a consumer. Those approaches seem counterintuitive to what we are trying to accomplish. The dilemma here, as has been argued before, is that audiences are rarely passive (Jenkins, 2017). Scholars often seem to forget there exists a long history—from reader-responses to uses and gratifications, to fandoms, to polymediation—that frames “consumers” and “audiences” as active participants (Iser, 1978;

Levy & Windahl, 1984; Morley, 1993; Tyma, Herrmann, & Herbig, 2015). Individuals interact and participate with popular culture, although there is a large spectrum regarding how deeply individuals immerse themselves (Herbig & Herrmann, 2016).

This does not just confound who we address. It also impacts how we create. If we are to believe that rhetoric can be constitutive, then we must also believe in both the active and identificatory power of what we do as critical rhetoricians (Charland, 1987). At the center of ProfsDoPop.com is the question: how can we blend our diversity of experiences, backgrounds, and approaches to make something coherent? To discuss this, we must first give a little background. This project began with the intent to create a documentary film, but we quickly realized that the scope of what we were trying to accomplish was both broader and more in-depth than a single story. We also recognized that the skills the members of our team possessed would be underutilized as a film alone. Over time, we have also had to address factors such as gender, race, class, sexuality, education, accessibility, and others, recognizing that they may function as both unrecognized biases and as highly charged emotional issues. Our biases limit our contributions as individuals, and our emotional triggers sometimes encourage us to leap before listening. However, in the process of acknowledging those things, we have really worked to use them to our advantage. Therefore, what we traditionally think of as the clear approach to making something more coherent, “fewer cooks in the kitchen,” is actually antithetical to the path we would like to take. As ProfsDoPop.com grows, so too shall the people we incorporate onto our team—just as the future of critical rhetoric requires that we incorporate more voices and subject positions into our way of seeing.

So, what we have learned is to find a way to interact as well as act that is sustainable as we grow and develop our project. For instance, as part of our site we have incorporated a section for scholarship about popular culture. The goal of this section is to bring the work of other academics to the people accessing the site by creating links to academic articles. Part of our intention here is to comment on that academic content itself, through introductions, summaries, blurbs, and so on, so those visitors to the site who are not steeped in academe can understand the frameworks and the ongoing conversations and join the critique. There are also barriers to this type of accessibility. Most people believe that it is jargon and methodological complexity that prevent people from exploring academic content. However, we have found that it is more about access and form. As noted earlier, one of the important aspects here is to break down barriers and to engage those who are not necessarily trained scholars in rhetoric or discourse or, more broadly, trained in communication as a discipline.

Given all the opportunities we have for crafting a message, another question we had to ask was: what does it mean to blend what we know with what we want to say? One example of this can be seen in our thread about Marvel’s *Iron Fist* on Netflix. Each of us had taken a little time to watch the whole series, as it aligns with a major part of many of our discussions: the construction of comic book universes and the various markets/products/discourses within those universes. We originally starting chatting about it via Facebook Messenger. Those of us who watched the series began reacting to it based on our own rhetorical groundings. For Tyma, I was first speaking from the nostalgic quasipurist position regarding the adaptation of subject matter from one media format to another and the choices that might or might not be made there. I then shifted to the discussion of cultural appropriation and the way it so easily occurred when the title was first created. Other team members went their own directions. For Herrmann, I was concerned with the weak

characterization and personal narrative of the protagonist, compared with the other Netflix Marvel heroes. The character of Iron Fist was ineffectual, comparable with one of the CW series *Arrow*. It is at the intersection of these different discourses that a collaborative rhetorical moment is constructed that allows us to critically dissect the given artifact (*Iron Fist*) through a heterodox collective lens.

Although we do critique the show as the weakest of the Netflix Marvel series (itself a rhetorical argument about Marvel series in general), the discussion turned to other important topics, including the appropriation of Asian culture. This discussion was not planned out, but these particular critiques emerged through our participative conversations in real time. Our discussion is merely a part of the larger rhetorics surrounding Marvel and *Iron Fist* (both the character and the product). As such, our rhetorical work here is not only collaborative, but also processual and unfinished. Perhaps a better term would be “unfinalized” in the Bakhtinian (1981) sense of the word. We will likely return to *Iron Fist* and our commentary about it as the Netflix Marvel Universe expands into *The Defenders* as well as new seasons of *Jessica Jones*, *Daredevil*, *The Punisher*, and *Luke Cage*, or if it moves from Netflix to Disney’s proposed streaming service, and so on. One of the ProfsDoPop.com team members (Herrmann) refers to ongoing process/product paradoxes in terms of Karl Weick (1988), who noted, “How can I know what I think until I see what I say?” (p. 307).

Building on our belief in discourse as process, ProfsDoPop.com not only provides us a space to collaboratively critique a specific artifact or genre of artifacts, but also to bring our own discussions to the overall collection. This provides each collaborator the ability to critically examine an artifact that has come to light in near-real time while acknowledging their critique as ephemeral and open to revision. Rather than working through the publication process, the ProfsDoPop.com platform allows this particular group of rhetors to examine, again, the “mundane” spaces that exist all around us with significant commentary and insight. Whether Herrmann is reflecting on his experience meeting Felicia Day, or joda is considering her own connection to St. Patrick’s Day, each of us rhetorically explores these specific realities to critically understand the world(s) that these realities construct around and through us.

In many ways, you can see the type of work we are doing as an expression of what Ellingson (2009) calls “crystallization.” It is a process and a product with integrated-yet-distinct outcomes. Crystallization necessitates seeing past the dichotomies of what counts and what does not count toward locating different expressions of research and content. It involves embracing our own subjectivity while also contributing to different mosaics of knowledge. It is . . . collaborative.

The Challenges of Moving Forward with a Collaborative Approach to Critical Rhetoric

Ultimately, we argue for “Principle #9: Criticism is Collaborative” because the future of critical rhetoric is in how we engage praxis. As critical rhetoricians, we need to embrace the tools made available to us and engage people in ways that expose hegemony and undermine the discourse formations. McKerrow (2016) argues that “intervention as a means of remedying social ills demands no less from us than understanding how we come to be in this time and place, with these sets of attitudes toward events, ourselves, and others” (p. 263). Our current time and place necessitates a different form of engagement, changing meanings of events and evolving notions of what is meant by relationships. As critics, individually and together, we can seek ways to investigate relations of power that inhibit removal from domination (a

freedom from) or that constrain the emergence of new ways of being in the world (a freedom to). We need to frame our work as a contribution that acknowledges subject position, background, and voice. We need to be aware that our assembly of the discourse is one approach and not the only approach. We need to recognize that there are holes and flaws in what we create, but when combined with the work of others, we can improve our understandings. So, in that spirit, we would also like to discuss some of the obstacles and lessons we have gleaned from our work together so far.

The first and most-significant challenge we have confronted contradicts the *Field of Dreams* cliché, “if you build it, they will come.” We built it, but we struggled to get the word out beyond our circles and fought the time constraints of our varied responsibilities. We have entered an always-on, polymediated existence, where getting the word out becomes increasingly difficult. The “fight for eyeballs” is a struggle when on YouTube alone, five billion videos are watched everyday (Alexa, 2017). We believe part of this is because we are still primarily working with and through text—words on a screen. As ProfsDoPop.com develops, we will be adding other forms of media that we anticipate will increase our visibility to both academic and nonacademic audiences.

One of the biggest obstacles to collaboration is often working with collaborators. Suffice to say, while we still have dreams of what we can accomplish at ProfsDoPop.com, it is currently more practical and more expedient for us to work in a largely Web- and text-based manner, especially because of our geographically disparate locations and our commitment to more traditional professional obligations (e.g., grading and attending committee meetings). In the future, Watson still hopes to follow several ProfsDoPop.com members around a convention or two and produce a short video interrogating their experiences within those spaces. How does Tyma’s experience differ from that of Joda’s? What does it mean to be a *blerd* [black + nerd] and a woman within those spaces versus being a white woman, versus being an older white man? And how do we have these conversations with each other in a constructive way? These physical spaces of fandom are arguably still constructed in such a way as to be discriminating against those who do not fit into the stereotypical perception of a white fan boy (Reagle, 2015; Reinhard, 2013).

Another challenge we have confronted is a lack of terminology and definition to our endeavor. Promotion and tenure committees, graduate advisors, institutional review boards, and deans enjoy projects that they can easily grasp and connect with the public, but will they consider those projects sufficient or applicable when granting someone tenure or promotion? Publishing the results of surveys of cosplayers, findings from interviewing fans of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or doing an ethnography at DragonCon works in the institutional model, but this approach often lacks the designed infrastructure of peer review or external approval. Saying, “We are doing collaborative research on popular culture that includes five scholars with five different backgrounds from five different institutions, using rhetorical, documentary, and ethnographic research processes, which will all become part of a collaborative polymediated project,” is often met with blank stares and sometimes blanker smiles. Therefore, creating a community of scholars committed to doing this work means finding a way to establish the institutional value of what we are doing.

Given the lack of definition and the general scope of what we are attempting to accomplish, another obstacle has been making the project sustainable. An interesting (read, “frustrating”) result of such an open-

ended, intentionally roughly defined academic project has been the difficulty to be awarded grant funding through the usual suspects. A confounding paradox is created here, where the idea of collaboration (often a checklist item for grant applications), and the recognized—even celebrated—diaspora of voices and positions that this project offers, has become one of the very reasons that this critical project is not always seen as worthy of funding. Oddly enough, the very fact that ProfsDoPop.com is trying to understand cultural realities that are shaping the broadest of conversations—the popular—is exactly what funding sources would rather NOT be connected with. A key benefit of these consequences—at the critical and activist level—is that we have been able to tackle essential topics (e.g., the death of entertainment icons, #MeToo, the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election) in real time and without financial oversight, and, as can be the case, hegemonic overreach.

While popular discourse tells us that “nerd” culture is becoming more and more accepted—and has become part of the zeitgeist—there is still arguably a hierarchy within spaces of fandom. What does it mean to perform nerdism correctly? Who decides these rules? Who manages these spaces? Who are the gatekeepers? Whose voices are privileged? Whose are marginalized? Although the data from these experiences can (and should) be used to construct a formal article, just as important to us at ProfsDoPop.com is the process of gathering the data, reacting to our experiences, responding to each other, and being upfront with the process of interrogating not only our experiences within these spaces, but also with the academic process itself.

Because of these challenges, ProfsDoPop.com exists in a liminal space between good idea and difficult product. It is a purgatory that sees posts less and less often as these complications and complexities weigh on our time and our minds. I think it is fair to say, for all of us, that we see the value in and need for collaboration, but the processes and incentives of academic life make it challenging to perpetuate. The writing of this article was a long process and publishing it will take longer; and we hope that ProfsDoPop.com will be there when it is finally released. However, either way, this type of work is important and we would like to see it continue.

For all of these reasons and with all of the lessons we have learned in mind, we believe that a collaborative approach is an essential addition as scholars expand the reach of critical rhetoric, especially within the social media world we inhabit. Whether it is collaborating on a single project or bringing multiple projects together to get a fuller understanding of a phenomenon, discourse, idea, speech, film, and so on, we must not consider ourselves as sole contributors; rather, our intent is to create conditions that bring more people into our endeavors. While we continue to expand our methodological boundaries, we must not forget that critical rhetoric is an orientation to practice. The approach to this practice is therefore just as important as the products. Ultimately, if “the critic gives voice to his or her own ideological commitments in the act of evaluating the discourse of others” (McKerrow, 2016, p. 254), that voice must address those discourses and be heard to have an impact in altering them. We are committed to highlighting those contributions and venerating that commitment in our work.

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