

# Can we laugh together? Humour in EDI

Presented by Ky Sargeant (she/they)

IKB Library



# Setting expectations

- ▶ Laughing is allowed, encouraged even
- ▶ My intent today is to try and make the world of DEI/Education a little less stuffy
- ▶ I will still be citing a little bit of scholarship though



# Land Acknowledgment

I'm presenting here today on the traditional, ancestral, and stolen (unceded) lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətəʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

How can we uphold Indigenous ways of knowing?

# Who am I?

## Ky Sargeant (She/they)

- ▶ **PROFESSIONAL EDI CONSULTANT  
& EDUCATOR**
- ▶ **2023/24 UBC EDI SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE**



# Who am I?

## Ky Sargeant (She/they)

- ▶ **PROFESSIONAL EDI CONSULTANT & EDUCATOR**
- ▶ **2023/24 UBC EDI SCHOLAR IN RESIDENCE**
- ▶ **PROFESSIONAL(?) STAND-UP COMEDIAN**



# What's the point?

## What's the point of Education?

**To make people learn**

**-Ky Sargeant  
(EDI Scholar btw)**

# What's the point?

## What's the point of Comedy?

**To make people laugh**

**-Ky Sargeant**

**(Professional Comedian btw)**

# What's the point?

**What's the point of Education?**

**What's the point of Comedy?**

**To communicate a perspective**



# The point

## Who's perspective?

(This is the part where we talk about power)

# Let's watch some comedy!

## Clip of opening joke in Matt Rife's Special on Netflix: "Only Fans" as an example of Punching Down (CW: Domestic Violence)



# Let's watch some comedy!

**Clip taken from early in Hannah Gadsby's Special on Netflix: "Nanette" as an example of Punching Up (CW: Homophobia)**



# What is Power?

[By power] I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower

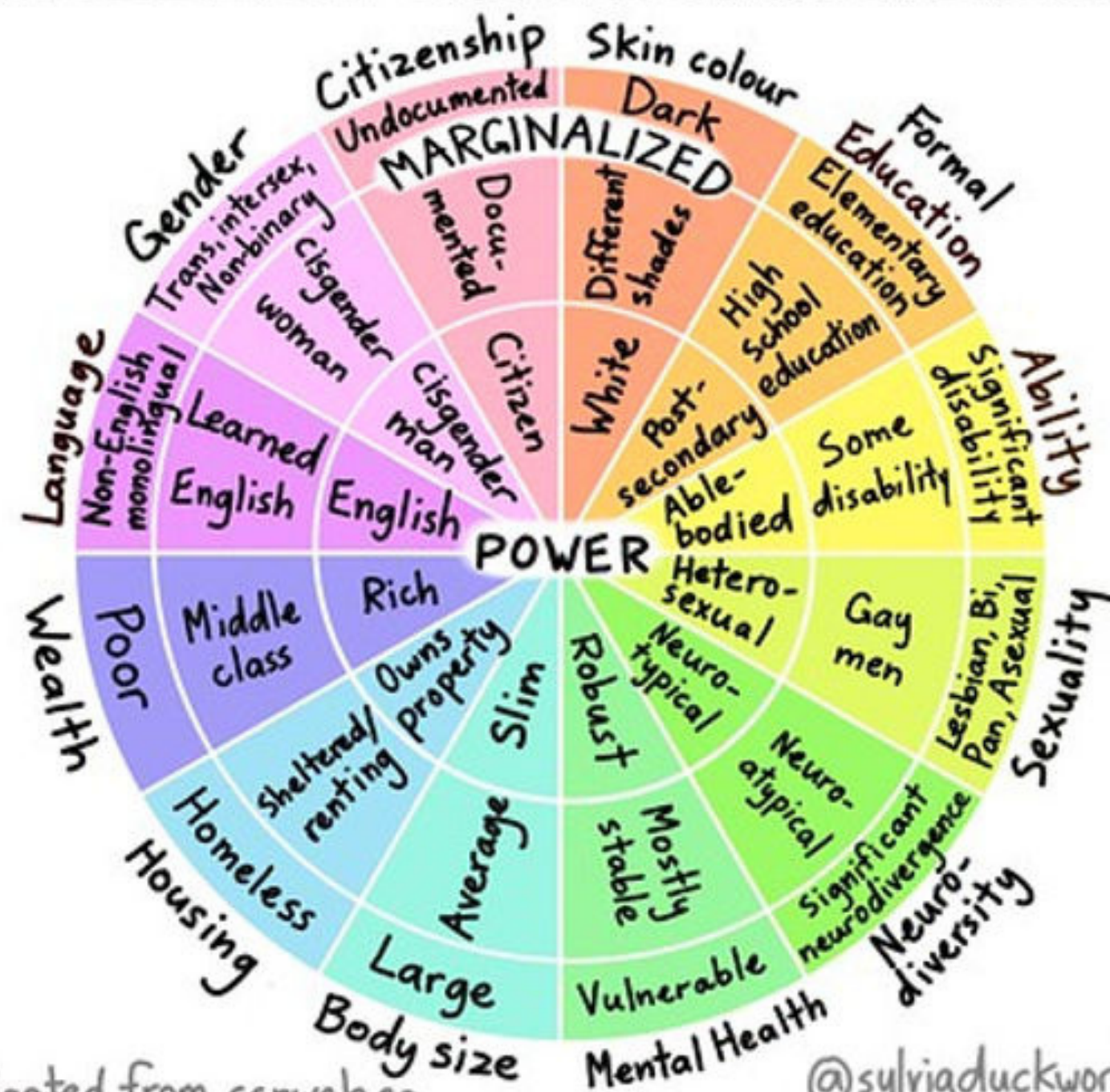
- Foucault (1977)

# What is Power?

Normalization as the instrument of power  
- Foucault (1977)

Who gets to be normal?

## WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE

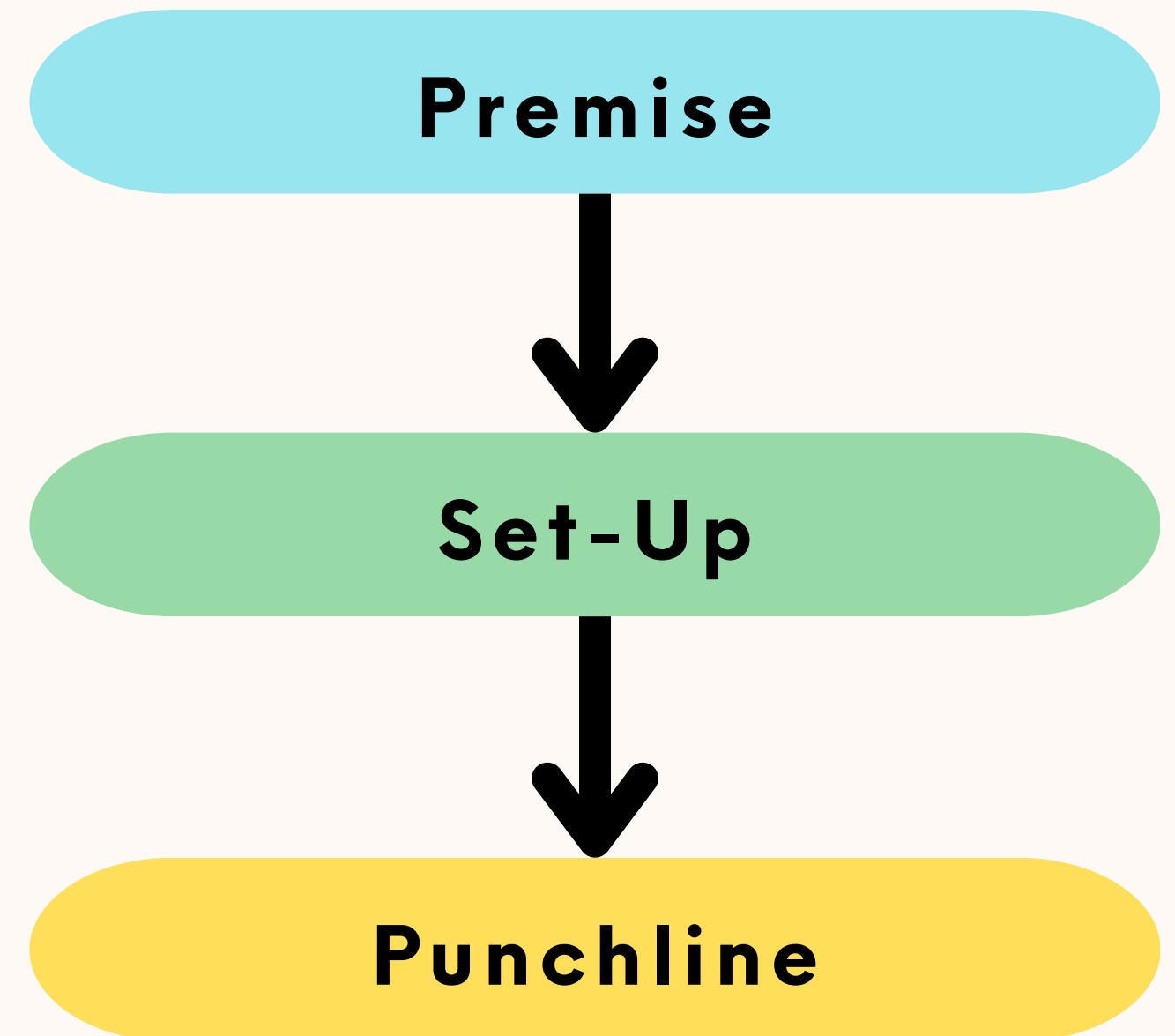


Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylvriaduckworth

# What is a Joke?

A joke is essentially a question with a surprise answer  
- **Hannah Gadsby (2018)**



# What is a Joke?

**Premise**

*Establishes the setting or the context of the joke. Starts to paint the picture for the audience*

**Set-Up**

*Builds tension within the premise by setting an expectation of how the story is going. Provides the opening for a perspective.*

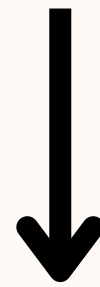
**Punchline**

*Releases the tension in a way that is surprising, shocking, or unexpected, but still makes sense with the set-up*

# What is a Joke?

## Punchline

*Releases the tension in a way that is surprising, shocking, or unexpected, but still makes sense with the set-up*



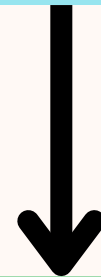
**By releasing the tension we close and deliver the perspective**





# Matt Rife

**Premise**



**Set-Up**



**Punchline**

*Maryland is a state that's  
beautiful and "ratchet".  
It can't "pick a tone"*



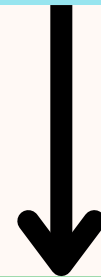
*He saw a woman who was still  
working with customers despite  
having faced domestic abuse*



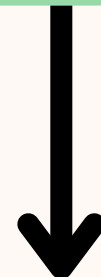
*She has no choice but to work with  
customers....because the abuse  
likely means she was incapable of  
her expected gender role*

# What power structures are at play here?

**Premise**



**Set-Up**



**Punchline**

*Maryland is a state that's  
beautiful and "ratchet".  
It can't "pick a tone"*



*He saw a woman who was still  
working with customers despite  
having faced domestic abuse*



*She has no choice but to work with  
customers....because the abuse  
likely means she was incapable of  
her expected gender role*

# Reifying structures as truth

## An Introduction to the American Horror Film

*Robin Wood-1979*

- ▶ Horror as a genre is was historically deemed as “unserious” and not worth “real critique”
- ▶ Wood argues that the “unseriousness” actually gives a better view to underlying unconscious perspectives
- ▶ “The general agreement that horror films are not to be taken seriously...means that our censor is lulled into sleep”

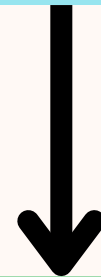
# Reifying structures as truth

What happens we are not critically engaged with a text?

We subconsciously accept the premise as a “truth”

# Hannah Gadsby

**Premise**



**Set-Up**



**Punchline**

*A story from her early days after coming out. Waiting at a bus stop late with another couple.*



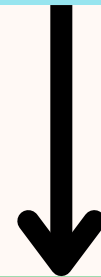
*The boyfriend assumes that Hannah is flirting and begins to get physically violent*



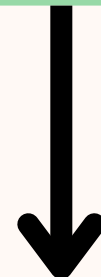
*The guy stops, realizing it was a girl. He assumed it was a "f-----t" trying to hit on "his" girl*

# What power structures are at play here?

**Premise**



**Set-Up**



**Punchline**

*A story from her early days after coming out. Waiting at a bus stop late with another couple.*



*The boyfriend assumes that Hannah is flirting and begins to get physically violent*



*The guy stops, realizing it was a girl. He assumed it was a "f-----t" trying to hit on "his" girl*

# Comparing perspectives of “truth”

**Both comedians are establishing an implied “truth” within the joke**

**Why do they feel so different?**

# Comparing perspectives of “truth”

## Punching Down

Speaking from within positions of power

- ▶ Referencing “truth”
- ▶ Legitimizing “truth” implicitly
- ▶ Demands inherent superficiality

## Punching Up

Speaking from outside positions of power

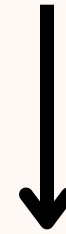
- ▶ Revealing Truth
- ▶ Exposing “truth’s” illegitimacy
- ▶ Demands inherent insight



# Going back to Education/EDI

**What's the point of Education?**

**To communicate a perspective**



**Who's Perspective?**



**To what end?**

# Why do we further Education/EDI

## What's the point?

(Actual EDI Scholars btw)

“Education was about the practice of freedom”

*bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress (1994)*

“This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.”

*Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of The Oppressed (1968)*

# Why do we further Education/EDI

## A True Commitment to Engaged Pedagogy

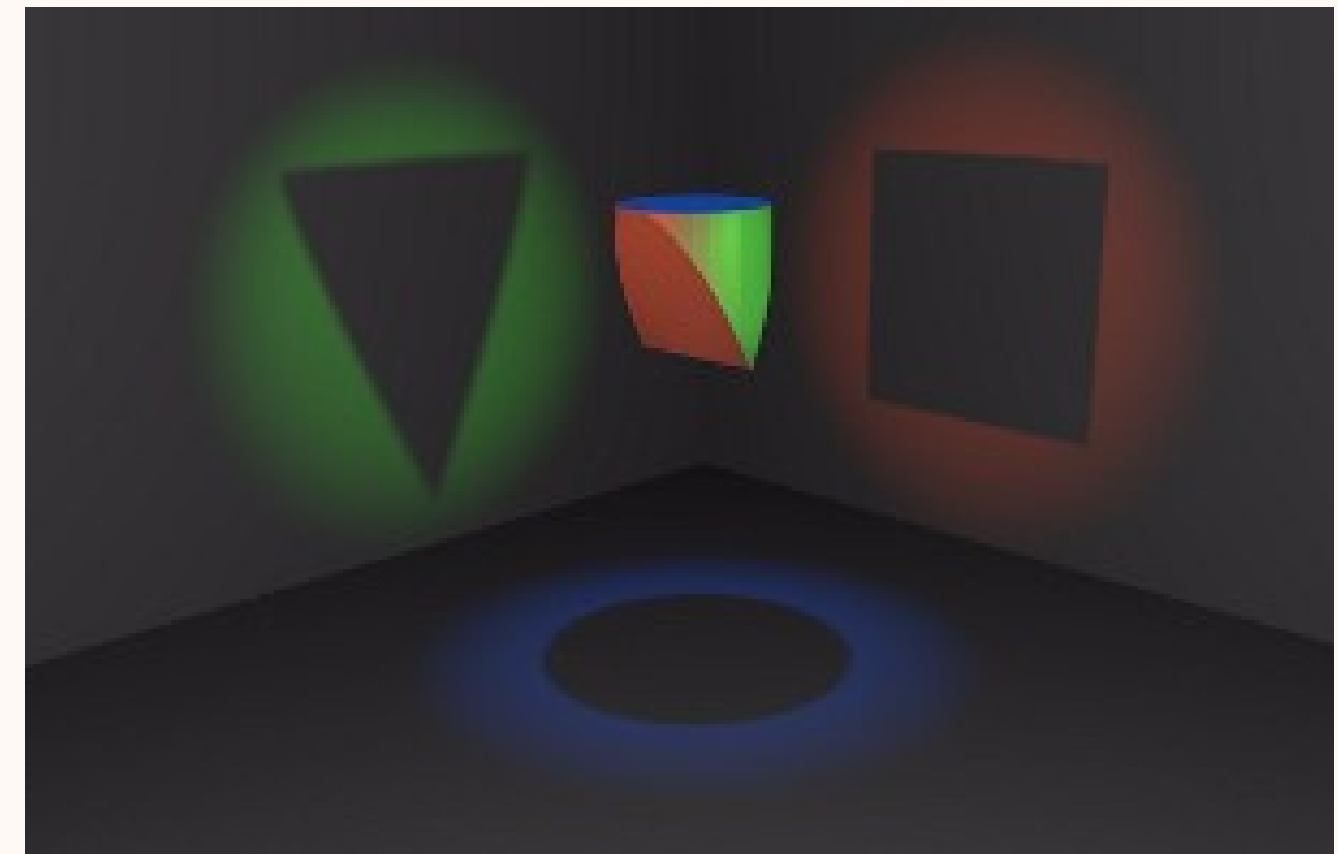
*bell hooks, Teaching to Transgress (1994)*

- ▶ Critical thinking is at the heart of engaged pedagogy. Our teaching must provide the opportunity to bring mind, body, and soul into learning
- ▶ This commitment is spiritually and emotionally demanding. Yet so is it equally liberating.
- ▶ It may not always be received well in the moment

# Aaaaaand back to Comedy

**How do we spark the ability to view an abstract structure critically?**

- ▶ We reveal underlying Truths
- ▶ We expose illegitimate “truths”
- ▶ We share real insight



# The Limits of Comedy

**Clip taken from the end of Hannah Gadsby's Special on Netflix:  
"Nanette" to show the limits of comedy for some stories**



# Questions to takeaway

## Next time you need to build understanding

- ▶ What is my insight? How have I grasped it?
- ▶ When am I informing? When am I teaching?
- ▶ How can I reveal the message through the process?

# Thank you!

" I speak here of poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean — in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight. "

**Audre Lorde**

# Thank you!

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