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RHETOR 123

Final Project Prospectus

P.U.S.H. Method in Cristela Alonzo's "Lower Classy"

Main Idea:

Cristela Alonzo calls from the outside in: her stand-up performance in "Lower Classy" tries to uncouple marginal identities from social class, a timeless and ever-needed form of cultural labor, especially to the relief of marginalized American groups. Millions of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and a big part of that reason is that no one is locating them in their space. So it's up to us to P.U.S.H., keep fighting, and create a better future!

P.U.S.H. stands for:

Position yourself,
Uphold marginal identity,
Subvert norms,
Hold your ground.

And it comes from applying Colleary's theory of a comic heterotopia on Gilbert's theory of the marginal identity, the outcome of which is the method P.U.S.H. (abbr. PUSH). PUSH gives you a valuable tool to take control of a dynamic system to destroy dominant and oppressive cultural norms. One could theoretically automatically produce material that would indefinitely push marginal voices and identities to the center cultural space.

Video Outline:

I. DEFINE: [dominant/marginal cultural sites](#).

Marginal identities represent a group that has been pushed to the margins by "dominant" identities. This is working backwards from Gilbert's assertion: "female comics rhetorically construct and perform their marginality on stage" which implies the status quo culture is male dominated. There are many different kinds of groups (Alonzo's identity contains many: Latina, grew up poor, lived in her car, woman, etc.) but the marginal identity structure fundamentally has the following axioms:

- A. "Marginal" identity implies the existence of a "dominant" identity
- B. The personal and social identity of the marginal are interdependent in relation to the dominant identity
- C. There exists an us-versus-them nature to marginal comedy

[As I define the object I will be manipulating, I will be adding visuals in the forms of animations and diagrams to make a clear, persistent tool to analyze Cristela Alonzo's stand-up. For now, imagine empty topological space. This space is currently empty, but using the above axioms we can construct the cultural space for the broad spectrum of identity. Here in the video I will slowly

build up this topology: (animation 1) I will create a circle to represent the totality of the marginal identity, and it will display on the screen labeled on the topological space [CLIP 1 57:14: why Alonzo talks about her mom, locating marginal identities]. (animation 2) Using axiom A, a larger circle will appear and be the representation of the dominant identity. Briefly both circles will contain bullet points of examples to make it clear what these identities represent. (animation 3) Axiom B will appear as pointed bidirectional arrows. It is at this point where I will say “notice that some bullet points under the marginal identity look like the dominant identity just gave it to them, and that’s because that’s part of the process.” (animation 4) Introducing axiom C, the us-versus-them nature because it’s a constant battle between the dominant and marginal culture for identity. Animation 4 is the marginal circle and the dominant circle with clipart tanks and History textbook war strategy diagram aesthetics to represent conflict.]

II. DEFINE: [Comic heterotopias](#).

This second point makes it formally clear what the battlefield diagram represents and how it operates. From Colleary, “heterotopias are real places, real sites wherein all the other sites at work in society can at once be rehearsed, challenged or inverted [...] to ‘create a space of illusion that exposes every real space’” I only have one axiom for this one:

A. Comic heterotopias must be playful.

Since stand-up comedy is a comic heterotopia, that means at its core stand-up is a place of play. Stand-ups use their ambi-valent identities to play around in this space. In this video, we are focusing on a marginal identity vs. a dominant identity.

[What’s left from the previous slide is the “battlefield” picture, so it’s clear to my audience what I’m still talking about. The gist of this section is to morph the battlefield picture into a model that we can actually work with and that can be generalized to all types of situations. (animation 1) The first animation clears the history-textbook-aesthetic battlefield diagram off the top of the circles. (animation 2) We get a close up on the border between the two circles, it looks like two cell membranes interacting. Both identities have different cultural expectations based on the material condition between the marginal/dominant identities. Part of the play comes from reorganizing and re-allocating cultural expectations between the marginal and dominant. (animation 3) From a visual perspective, it looks like circles expanding their domains.

III. DEFINE: Let’s define this process of reallocation as a function: a mapping from a set of society norms to another (possibly different) set of society norms.

Comic_heterotopias(marginal/dominant) = P.U.S.H. (this is exactly $f(x) = y$)

Here is the thrust of my prospectus: the PUSH method for cultural change. P.U.S.H stands for

Position yourself,

Uphold marginal identity,

Subvert norms,

Hold your ground.

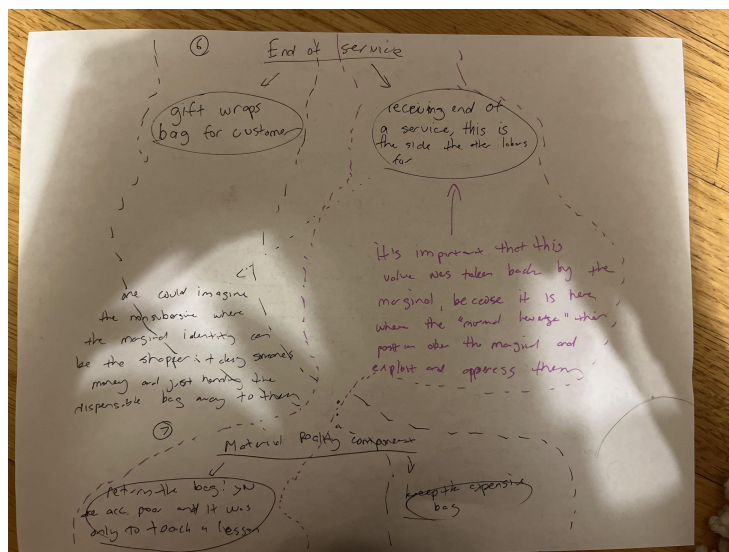
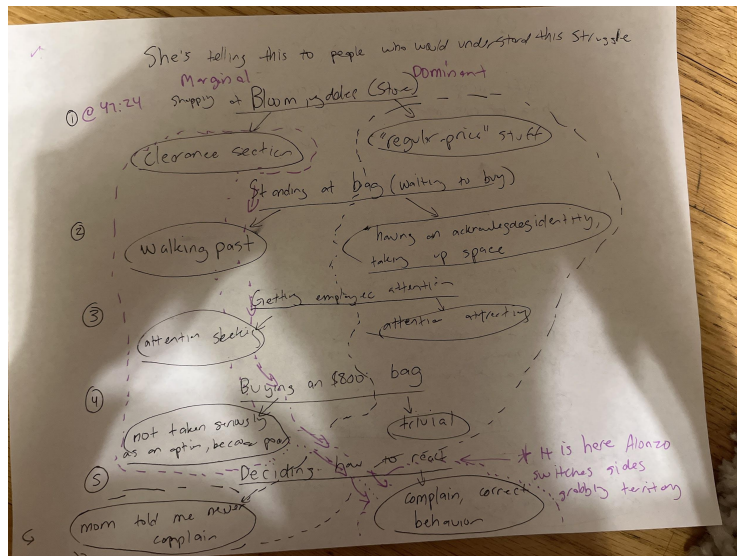
This is what happens when you apply the concept of heterotopias to the conflict between the marginal/dominant topological spaces of identity. PUSH is something you can take right off the page and put right in your pocket ready to use.

[There's gonna be an acrostic with the letters P-U-S-H displayed and their corresponding abbreviations will be written with them. There will also be a tiny model of the Comic_hetrotopias(marginal/dominant) topological function visible to keep up the repetition and keep the audience clear on what we are talking about.]

IV. EXAMPLE: PUSHing in Cristela Alonzo's "Lower Classy"

It's no surprise that she's performing in texas [shows pictures of copy-and-paste houses], [shows pictures of urban sprawl throughout texas] because it is here that an overlooked aspect of American culture lives—the American marginal. And as you know, a marginal implies the existence of the dominant [shows pictures of sf, la, nyc, etc.]. The marginal lives in the cracks of the United States [shows pictures of suburbs all around the United States], even my home town was constructed to be like this [shows pictures of Santa Clarita stroad sprawl and car dependency]. These are still places where a lot of racist, and close-minded people still reside in America, a fact that Alonzo knows very well due to her identities as Latina women, growing up poor, living in her car.

[I'm going to animation this diagram I drew which is a step-by-step process of PUSH. PUSH was defined above as a formal method with the goal of cultural change. [CLIP 2] 47:24 of "Lower Classy" will be used as an example:



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V. CONCLUSION: PUSH on!

This is my concluding section. By now, I have proved to my audience that Cristela Alonzo calls from the outside in: her stand-up performance in "Lower Classy" tries to uncouple marginal identities from social class, a timeless and ever-needed form of cultural labor, especially to the relief of marginalized American groups. Millions of Americans are living paycheck to paycheck and a big part of that reason is that no one is looking out for them. So it's up to us to PUSH, keep fighting, and create a better future!

[The final slide will have key bullet points and the acrostic for PUSH visible as a final parting gift for the audience. A subgoal of this presentation will be to perform enough repetition with PUSH throughout the video that the audience naturally feels a cognitive recognition from PUSH, and can use it in their own lives]

Thanks!