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## The contrastive use of humor by a lesbian comedian for LGBT and general audiences\*

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Though various ethnicities, religions, and political groups have been discussed in the linguistic and anthropological literature, there remains a gap when it comes to the discussion of how the LGBT community uses humor. In 1905, Freud expanded the limited study of humor when he wrote the first critical discussion of humor from the margins. Since then, scholars have conducted linguistic, psychological, and anthropological analyses of stereotypes and the responsive use of humor by marginalized groups. However, a gap when it comes to humor and sexuality remains. Thus, the current article uses the theories of intertextuality, indexicality, and audience design to contrastively analyze a case study of how a lesbian comedian uses humor in two settings. First, an analysis is presented of how humor functions when used for a known LGBT friendly audience. This is then contrasted with a discourse analysis of how humor is used when the same lesbian comedian performs for a general (i.e. not explicitly LGBT) audience. This article provides insight into how intertextuality and audience design can be useful tools for LGBT performance when used in a “safe space” versus a general arena. More broadly, this research expands studies of humor to include marginalized sexual identities.

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## Introduction

When Freud wrote *Jokes* in 1905, he began the first critical discussion of humor from the margins. By analyzing self-deprecating humor produced by the marginalized Jewish community, Freud introduced the concept of joke-telling as a way for the minority group to speak out against the repressive majority (Billig 2005). However, though various ethnicities, religions, genders, and political groups have been discussed in humor literature since then, there remains a gap when it comes to the discussion of how Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) communities use humor. In an effort to fill this gap, the current article directly looks to LGBT comedy and contrastively analyzes a case study of how an LGBT comedian uses humor in two settings. By conducting this contrastive analysis, it is possible to see how discursive audience design (Bell 1984) and intertextuality become tools for the LGBT comedian.

The first context which is examined in the present article allows a look at how humor functions when used by an all-gay cast of comedians on the LGBT-focused show *The Big Gay Sketch Show*. This particular context provides a unique setting because the comedians are performing live shows for a known LGBT accepting audience, and it is aired on a private American LGBT network (LOGO). Thus, the performers are aware that their audience most likely shares core experiences and/or stances towards LGBT issues with them, which in turn allows ease of access when intertextually referencing these issues and beliefs through comedy. This is then contrasted against the second context, which looks at how humor is used when the audience is a “general” audience with unknown beliefs and value systems. By comparing the same comedian in these two different settings, this article presents a contrastive case study to argue that audience design is affected by the known versus unknown audience, and this in turn matters for the performative delivery and relative success of intertextual LGBT humor.

## *Humor and gender*

Across social scientific and humanistic disciplines, the closest that humor scholars have come thus far to developing a robust critical discussion of humor and sexual identity is in examining humor and gender.<sup>1</sup> Most famously, anthropologist Apte (1985) claimed that women in all different societies are discouraged from joking, and they are instead expected to be more sincere. As a result, Apte argues that joke-telling by women can be interpreted as a socially subversive act, reinventing the social power structure through discourse (*à la* van Dijk 2008). This then provides women with more tools of social critique through the use of public humor.

Following the establishment of a relationship between power, humor, and gender, Holmes and Marra (2002) crucially showed how humorous references to gender do not only shift power, but they also make the gender divide highly salient. When gender is the topic of humor, points of reference carry different meaning for different audiences and are then responded to as such. This understanding becomes more salient when considering LGBT humor, as the concept of gender is already conceptualized differently by LGBT individuals as being consistently and inherently

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<sup>1</sup> Notably the work done by Bing and Heller looks at lesbian uses of humor, but they state that the purpose of their research is to look at how humor operates within lesbian communities, not the presentation of lesbian identity (2003, 164–65).

socially and politically charged (Butler 1990). Therefore, an analysis of humor and sexual identity fundamentally includes critical considerations of gender, while adding to this the further marginalized LGBT experience.

### *Humor and the LGBT Community*

According to Willard's (2010) extensive research on humor by gay men and women, gay women can frequently be said to use humor to work against the type of deprecating humor often found in the majority society and to celebrate diversity: "lesbian jokes [a]re an affirmation and validation of a diverse lesbian identity [...] Lesbian humor deconstructs the stereotype of lesbians as hypersexual, and instead celebrates sexual agency and the power to self-define" (Willard 2010, 47). This same finding is reported in Bing and Heller's (2003) study of humor in lesbian communities. Bing and Heller find that much like other marginalized groups, lesbians tend to use humor to strengthen the in-group sense of community by drawing on stereotyped lesbian references and making fun of them.

Such a finding is also of interest considering Kulick's (2014) research on the "humorless lesbian", finding that lesbians are often considered to be laughed at as humorless as a way to (purposefully or unpurposefully) deprecate them in society. As such, humor can be used by lesbians to index this stereotypical view and then contest the perception that they are humorless, thus simultaneously resisting further marginalization. As a result, humor can serve an indexical function for lesbian comedians by "produc[ing] contextualized meaning" (Bucholtz and Hall forthcoming, 7), which they can then challenge through the less confrontational means of humor. In sum, the trend in humor literature has led to a general observation that gay women often use humor to contest social stereotypes and to focus on the multiple facets that make up their identity as individuals.

Finally, there is an additional difference that should be considered when it comes to when and by whom LGBT humor can be used. Willard again explains, "In general, humor within the LBGTQ population is welcomed when one is a self-identified member of this population. Many participants felt more comfortable using humor when around others who were similar to them, or who they felt they could trust or who could understand" (119). Extending this idea then, it is reasonable to expect that an LGBT comedian would feel more comfortable telling LGBT themed jokes when his or her audience is part of the same community. Now the question becomes, if an LGBT comedian uses humor differently for different audiences, how is this manifested? Where are the differences to be found, and what are the results of these differences?

### *Intertextuality and Audience Design*

To understand how intertextuality can be used as a tool by LGBT comedians, it is first important to establish what it is. Originally conceptualized by Bakhtin (1981), the idea of intertextuality was translated from Russian into English by Kristeva (1989), reaching wider readership, theorization, and acceptance. Intertextuality is defined as:

the joining together of ideas through texts in communication, while simultaneously reacting to and reflecting primed prior texts and anticipating unrealized future texts. These texts share an interwoven working relationship,

whether active or passive on the part of the actor employing them, to express a new meaning which draws on all understood meanings of the prior texts. In these events, texts can refer to written, spoken, representational, experiential, artistic, and a limitless number of other possible sources. (Seals 2012, 233)

Intertextual referents are shared by social groups with shared prior experiences (Becker 1994, 165), and can be surreptitiously drawn upon by members of a shared social group in a way that has meaning for insiders of the group but not necessarily the same meaning for outsiders (e.g. an “inside joke”). Thus, intertextuality can be a powerful tool for marginalized groups, allowing them to share meanings and experiences in communication in a protected way.

Simultaneously, intertextual referents allow comedians to share “inside jokes” with their audience members (if part of the same social group) to layer additional meaning and comedic effect. Furthermore, the comedian’s knowledge (or absence of knowledge) about their audience dictates to what degree they can draw upon intertextual referents successfully. For example, if they know a particular social group will be strongly represented, they can use intertextual references for that group with anticipated success. However, if they do not know whether intertextual references will be understood, they may choose to avoid using them. Thus, audience design (Bell 1984) becomes an important means by which to analyze situational appropriateness for the use of intertextual referents.

## Data and Methodology

### *Context*

To answer the previously stated research questions, the current article looks to comedic performances given by a lesbian comic well-known within the LGBT community, Julie Goldman. As a lesbian comedian, Goldman by profession resists the “humorless lesbian” stereotype. As part of her comedic repertoire, she employs both verbal humor and physical humor in her performances, often moving back and forth across the stage gesturing wildly throughout her shows. The current article will examine her comedic performances on an LGBT show as compared to performances for a general audience to determine how intertextuality and audience design factor into her performance style and how this style does or does not fit with previous findings regarding lesbian comedy. First, though, a brief background of Goldman is provided.

Julie Goldman is an open lesbian comedian. She is from New England (a theme she often draws upon) and has been performing comedy for over ten years. She usually focuses her jokes on aspects of her own life, such as being a Jewish gay woman in her mid-30s, partnered, average in height and weight, butch in style, from the East Coast, now living on the West Coast, and very successful.<sup>2</sup> In June 2007, Goldman was chosen to have her own *Comedy Central* special, which took place in New York City and found its audience in the traditional *Comedy Central* style - by randomly asking people on the streets of Times Square if they were interested in seeing a free comedy show.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Information taken from her website [juliegoldmanisreallypretty.blogspot.com](http://juliegoldmanisreallypretty.blogspot.com), her IMDB.com information page, various interviews with her available online, and personal communication with her.

<sup>3</sup> I learned this from my own personal experiences in Times Square after being asked just this question and then following this up with my own questions of how they fill the audience.

Therefore, it would not have been possible for her to know who would be in her audience nor what their sociopolitical leanings would be.

Around this same time, Julie Goldman was asked to join the cast of *The Big Gay Sketch Show* for its debut in April 2007 and remained for the following second and third seasons of the show. *The Big Gay Sketch Show* is a sketch comedy show specifically geared towards LGBT audiences and shown exclusively on the private LGBT television network LOGO. The show was produced by Rosie O'Donnell and had seven cast members, all gay men and women. The show produced three seasons, all of which were performed in front of live audiences at the show's set and involved a great amount of adlibbing. As compared with *Comedy Central* and stand-up club performances, the audience of *The Big Gay Sketch Show* was very specific and knew that they would be watching a half-hour of gay themed comedy. As a result, the comedians were able to be confident that their audience would be at least mostly comfortable with the material that they would be delivering.

### ***Method of Analysis***

In order to analyze Julie Goldman's comedic performance for different audiences, I look to her *Comedy Central* special, which is a half-hour long performance at the Gotham Club in New York City. In this article, I focus specifically on the five-minute section where she talks about buying a suit for her wedding in New York. This section has been chosen, as she incorporates topics of frequent discussion in the LGBT community, such as gender identity, assumptions made about sexual identity, and "passing". I then compare Julie Goldman's general audience performance with two selected skits that she starred in on *The Big Gay Sketch Show*. Each skit lasts approximately two minutes, and the topics include two partnered women trying to build a bookshelf together and a lesbian singing duo at a bar mitzvah. These skits have been chosen as they also incorporate assumptions about gender identity, sexuality, and critiques commonly experienced by LGBT individuals within wider society.

To analyze how her comedic performance is achieved in each clip, I transcribed the discourse of each video with a side-by-side running transcription of her gestures and general body movements, thus including the ways in which indexical and intertextual points of humor are embodied in her performance. I also recorded the audience laughter and annotated the transcripts with this. Audience laughter was measured in terms of decibels (dBA). As an average dBA measurement for conversation is approximately 65 dBA, that occurring below 60 dBA was called "quiet audience laughter", and that occurring above 70 dBA was called "loud audience laughter". I then conducted an interactional sociolinguistic discourse analysis of these transcripts looking specifically at the annotations for the topics she covers, the types and strength of gestures she uses, the intertextual cues she provides her audience with, and how her audience responds to her. I then compared each of these analyses to the others to find what similarities and differences exist between them. The results of this overall analysis are provided below.

### **Findings and Analysis**

The most meaningful aspect of Julie Goldman's performance is arguably audience design (Bell 1984) – the process that speakers go through when they shift their discursive style in such a way as to accommodate to the known preferences of their intended audience. This concept incorporates all aspects of her performance,

including discourse and gesture. When comparing the transcripts side-by-side, the differences in Goldman's performance are strongest between the known-LGBT audience and the unknown-general audience. However, there are consistencies between all performances in the topics she covers. The summary of results for each audience is given below.

### ***LGBT audience***

To analyze Goldman's performance for a known-LGBT audience, I looked to four of her skits from season three of *The Big Gay Sketch Show*. Consistently throughout the clips, Goldman makes jokes that would likely seem crude or harsh to a general audience but to which her LGBT audience laughs heartily. An instance of this is given in Example 1 below, where Goldman is performing a song for her "nephew" at his bar mitzvah while singing with her wife, played by Kate McKinnon. Goldman has just commented on how the family and temple have ironically invited her and her wife to perform but will not accept her marriage. An excerpt from this song is given below.

#### (1) "Bar Mitzvah Performance"

- 1 ((Goldman and McKinnon start playing guitars and singing))  
 2 G & M: Welcome to having all of the power  
 3 And welcome to killing the Earth and all of its flowers  
 4 (*audience laughter*)  
 5 Welcome to raping everything you come into contact with  
 6 And welcome to giving us all trust issues and self-hatred.  
 7 (*audience laughter*)  
 8 We:lcome to: ma:nhood.  
 9 G: Especially being able to kill anything you want and get away  
 with  
 10 it, especially if you're white.  
 11 (*audience laughter*)  
 12 G & M: Even when it's bad it's good. For you.  
 13 G: I mean even if you're not white, if you kill a woman, nobody will  
 14 really care.  
 15 (*audience laughter*)  
 16 G & M: We:lcome to: ma:nhood.  
 17 Welcome to the lesser gender.  
 18 You're a murderer.  
 19 (*audience laughter*)  
 20 Even if what you kill is the soul of a small girl.  
 21 (*audience laughter*)  
 22 You kill and you kill and you never ever stop.  
 23 And now all women are zombies, and we're all dead inside.  
 24 (*audience laughter*)  
 25 Yay!  
 26 (*audience laughter*)  
 27 We:lcome to: ma:nhood.

In the excerpt shown in Example 1 above, the content itself is very violent. However, the audience laughs repeatedly, laughing for a total of eight times in the above 18 discursive lines. The places where the audience laughs are key for analyzing their laughter. When analyzing the transcript, it is interesting to see that the audience laughs each time there is social commentary in lines 1 through 15. They sing about environmental destruction, psychological and emotional depression amongst women, racial inequality, and gender inequality in the judicial system. This supports the theories posited by Willard (2010) that gay women use humor to discuss socially oppressive issues in a safe space, and the audience seems to be drawing upon the same intertextual referents to these shared group experiences and is responding accordingly through laughter.

When the tone changes to more direct commentary in line 18, the content which the audience laughs at also changes. The audience laughs first at the abrupt statement “You’re a murderer” in line 18 and then laughs at the abrupt descriptions of violence again in lines 20 and 22-23. The audience’s laughter in the second half of the song is placed at points where the accusations of violence being made are very strong. Thus, it is reasonable to believe that once the commentary shifted from shared experiences, the audience’s reason for laughter also changed. The laughter in the second half of the song seems to be a result of releasing nervous tension (Spencer 1860, Freud 1905), and indeed the laughter sounds different in the second half of the song; it begins abruptly and does not last as long. Therefore, it is possible that the laughter at this point could be both an act of releasing tension and a result of drawing from shared group experiences.

What is especially important to note about the above example is that Julie Goldman is not drawing upon one discourse. She begins by positioning herself as a woman, married, an aunt, Jewish, gay, and cast out of the traditional religious practices. As her performance continues, she also positions herself as frustrated by social, moral, and political injustice, a feminist, and jaded against men. Crucially, her performance is not about “being gay” or “being a lesbian” or even “being a feminist”. It is about a result of all of these various aspects of her identity and her experiences culminating to draw out her frustrations in this performance. Thus, her comedy draws upon multiple aspects of her identity at once and as inseparable from each other.

In a later sketch, Julie Goldman again plays a married gay woman with a multifaceted identity. However, now the topic is domestic, and the focus is on the frustration of building an Ikea bookcase, which is understood as supposed to be a relatively easy task. At the beginning of the skit, Goldman insists to McKinnon that she can build the bookcase without anyone’s help, and she even scoffs at the idea of McKinnon calling a carpentry service to help. As the skit progresses, we see hours of time pass as Goldman builds everything from a complete set of chairs, a toy airplane, a baby crib, and a lopsided table. After three days have passed and her frustration has grown to extreme levels, she completes the bookshelf. However, immediately after, the bookshelf collapses to screams of “Fuck you!” between Goldman and McKinnon. The skit ends with the announcer saying, “Even lesbians have a hard time building furniture. Next time go to Fat Danny’s Pre-Built Furniture Emporium.” This results in rounds of laughter and applause from the audience.

This skit draws upon intertextual references (Bakhtin 1981, 1984, Kristeva 1989) to metadiscourses of lesbians as good carpenters and of Ikea being a place to get easy to build furniture. It then adds an extra layer of humor by intertextually drawing

upon shared experiences of lesbians not actually being good builders, the frustrations of trying to build furniture yourself at home, and the arguments that erupt between spouses out of these frustrations. The audience recognizes these multiple intertextual references and laughs each step of the way through the skit, thus making the comedic performance very successful.

As a result of this successful transfer of ideas, Goldman is able to rely primarily on her discourse throughout these skits. Her gestures are small in scale and far between each other. They are clearly supplementary to the comedy, not a necessary part of it. Supportive findings were retrieved from the additional two skits from *The Big Gay Sketch Show* that I analyzed. Goldman consistently maintains the inseparable multifaceted identity as a necessary part of her humor, draws upon intertextual referents to various aspects of this identity, and uses very minor gestures. Her audience is highly involved and laughs consistently throughout all of these sketches.

### *General audience*

Goldman's performances for her LGBT audience differ drastically from her performance for a general audience in many respects, but some similarities still remain. When Goldman draws upon her personal experiences and identity, she still maintains the multiple aspects of her identity as interwoven. However, she has to make each part more explicit for her general audience. While these various interwoven aspects of her identity are implied in her comedy for the LGBT audience, she directly discusses them with the general audience. As can be seen in Example 2 below, which is an excerpt from her performance in New York City, she directly points to different parts of her identity and alters her presentation of material for this audience.

#### (2) "Shopping in New York City"

- 1 G: But you know. It's hard for the *butch lez*. We're *very shy*. *Very sensitive*.  
 2 And the butch lez shops in three places. Old Navy, The Gap, and when  
 we  
 3 feel fancy Banana Republic. So.  
 4 (*audience laughter*)  
 5 I wanted to *extend*. Right? I live in New York City. I should be able to  
 6 find something great, right?  
 7 So I go to all these places, and it was very difficult for me. I went to  
 8 Barney's. Went to Bergdorf's. Saks Fifth Avenue. All- Bloomingdales.  
 9 All the places. And it's very hard.  
 10 You know why? Because the same bitch works in every store.  
 11 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
 12 ((grabs mic stand and drops it center-stage)) She looks like this!  
 13 (*audience laughter and applause*)  
 14 ((Gestures to show off mic stand four times)).  
 15 With *blonde hair*.  
 16 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
 17 And an accent from somewhere *fabulous*.  
 18 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
 19 We don't know what country, just *fabulous*.  
 20 (*quiet audience laughter*)

21 And she clanked up to me with her clanky bones. Clank clank clank  
clank  
22 clank  
23 clank clank.  
24 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
25 ((Impersonates store clerk)) *Can I help you?*  
26 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
27 The butch is *shy*. I was like “I’m looking for an outfit for my wedding!  
28 Hm!” ((kicks and acts fussy))  
29 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
30 And it’s amazing! Even in New York City! Even in the two-thousands!  
31 When we’re supposed to be enlightened and all enlightened and our  
heads  
32 are all how-a-how.  
33 But still people put you in a- in a box. People put you in “you’re  
supposed  
34 to be a label. You’re supposed to be this.”  
35 So when I said I’m looking for an outfit for my wedding, this woman  
saw  
36 just a woman, which means I’m a bride. Which to her means I’m just a  
37 woman, which means I’m just competition.  
38 So her whole inner monologue was *fascinating*.  
39 (*quiet audience laughter*)  
40 Because her whole illusion of reality just *exploded!*  
41 (*quiet audience laughter*)

In the above example, Goldman explicitly spells out her identity for the general audience, recognizing through double consciousness that this audience may not pick up on subtle aspects of her identity presentation (Du Bois 2007[1903]). She refers to herself as a “butch lez” multiple times, something she never once does for the LGBT audience. She also then goes on to describe traits assigned by the LGBT community to a person who identifies as a butch lez. She says that as a butch lez, she is “very shy” and “very sensitive”. It is interesting to note that her audience does not laugh during these moments, which could be an indication of a missing intertextual reference for them because such an overt description as this would be found comical by the LGBT community since butch lesbian women are often discussed as being sensitive but not wanting anyone to know or acknowledge this. She does, however, receive audience laughter when she then draws upon a more general metadiscourse of gay women shopping at Old Navy, The Gap, and Banana Republic. The audience recognizes this intertextual reference and laughs.

Goldman’s most successful elicitation of laughter from the audience is when she describes the woman who assists her in the store. She describes the woman as the stereotypical fabulous fashionista who all women “hate”. The “ideal” woman is a physical representation of all the social pressures and societal ideals that women experience, from being unbelievably thin to dressing so seductively that it is almost impossible to walk. Goldman’s audience recognizes this and responds with large amounts of laughter during this entire description. Goldman finds even more success with her audience by impersonating the woman with an over-the-top impersonation

and by visually depicting the woman as being as thin as the microphone stand. While this part of her performance still draws upon social critiques, she focuses the majority of the content on generalizable social pressures of what it is like to be a woman in the United States. Not a gay woman; just a woman, this providing something that both gay and straight women can recognize and laugh at together. When Goldman returns to her description of herself as a gay woman in line 27, her audience does not initially laugh. It is not until she physically acts out a tantrum that the audience laughs. Thus, she found it necessary to draw on over-the-top gestural comedy, using gesture to assist in conveying the conceptual imagery to her audience (McNeill 1992), to elicit laughter on this point.

Most interesting is when Goldman engages in a direct critique of society and still existing preconceived notions of what being a woman means and what being gay means in lines 31 through 37. She is directly criticizing the idea that a person has just one aspect to their identity that means just one thing. She says that the store clerk saw her as “just a woman” which makes her “just competition”. The audience does not pick up on her humorous criticism of the folly in this judgment. They do not laugh through this entire set of lines, whereas this would likely be material at which her LGBT audience would laugh heartily. Instead, her general audience does not laugh again until Goldman turns her attention back describing the store clerk, exaggerates her words (*italicized*), and exaggerates her hand gestures. At this point, her audience cues in to laugh, but they only still laugh quietly, unlike their robust laughter at her impersonation of the thin store clerk.

Thus, Goldman found a very different response from her general audience than she did from her LGBT audience, and she altered her performance accordingly. With her LGBT audience, she focused on social critiques, much as Willard (2010) discussed is common of lesbian comedians. She drew upon intertextual references to shared experiences, and her audience picked up on this. Thus, she relied primarily on discourse in her performance. She also gave an interwoven presentation of her identity as a Jewish gay woman, etc. This contrasts with her comedic performance for a general audience. While she still uses social critiques in her humor, her audience does not find humor in most of what she says. As a result, she drastically increases her movement on stage. She moves across the stage with large gestures in an attempt to further involve her audience and make the issues more laughable. Kimbara (2005) has found that gestures are made in an attempt to encode thoughts into social language. Therefore, it is possible and likely that Goldman found herself increasing the range of her gestures as she increased her attempts to incode her messages for this general social group. Goldman also finds more success in making the different aspects of her identity more explicit for the mainstream audience, directly discussing what it means to be gay, to be a woman, to be an urban resident, etc. Since her audience does not have the same shared experiences and intertextual referents, she must alter her performance to be more explicit and add in more gesture, through which she finds success. This case study provides important insights into how sexuality, not just gender, becomes a factor in humor and comedic performance and how LGBT comedians navigate this difference.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This article has reviewed a lesbian comedian’s performances for two different audiences – one known LGBT friendly audience and one general audience, to find how

humor is used and responded to differently in each setting. Of course, there are some limitations in this study. For example, *The Big Gay Sketch Show* and the stand-up performance are two different types of venues. However, it should be noted that while the former appears scripted, it still allows for a fair amount of ad-libbing. This is not unlike stand-up performances, wherein the comedian pre-scripts much of it but then ad-libs during the performance to enhance it. Therefore, the two still remain comparable. Second, the dBA measurements are only as accurate as the recordings allow. However, the sound levels within each clip are comparable against each other to still reach the same categorizations. Finally, the LGBT show has multiple comedians involved who are working together and playing off of each other, but the *Comedy Central* performance has Goldman on a stage by herself. These differences are important to consider, but they do not detract from the overall findings of this article.

By analyzing Goldman's discourse and gestures in each setting along with her audience's response, it is clear that audience design was very important for Goldman's success. Being able to accurately establish what intertextual topics each audience responded to allowed Goldman to continue eliciting laughs and to further use audience design to tailor her comedic style to her audience. The results could have been quite different had she forgone audience design and attempted to use LGBT intertextual referents for her general audience, or had she chosen not to use them for her LGBT audience.

More precisely, Goldman's comedic performance for the LGBT audience was exemplary of Willard's (2010) description of how lesbian comics perform. She drew humor from social critique, presented all aspects of her identity as inseparable, and was able to use intertextuality to draw on these references. In these ways, words were enough. Her performance for the general audience stumbled in these areas, however. She only found success after explicitly talking about various aspects of her identity and incorporating large amounts of extreme gesture to draw her audience in. Intertextual references worked only when connecting to larger, more generalized societal pressures, such as social expectations of how women should look. By accurately navigating which topics her different audiences had intertextual referents for and by filling in with gesture while doing this, Goldman presented her material to two different audiences successfully, though in two very different ways.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge through a critical lens that the material for Goldman's comedy results from general heteronormative societies still making (often incorrect) assumptions about the lives of LGBT individuals. The frequency with which these assumptions, and often judgments, are made is what leads these experiences to be so widespread that they can be drawn on as intertextual referents. While LGBT comedians are able to draw upon these experiences to create environments in which individuals can release tension through laughter, the fact remains that the prominence of such marginalizing shared experiences speaks to the still repressive nature of heteronormative societies.

This case study of a lesbian comedian performing for two different audiences (one known and one unknown) thus shows the power of intertextuality and audience design in practice, as well as the usefulness of these two concepts theoretically when analyzing talk in interaction. Furthermore, such studies bring a recognition of the continued marginalization of LGBT communities back to the forefront. More such studies within LGBT talk in interaction would be most welcome in further

understanding how intertextuality and audience design can be used to communicate additional layers of meaning to the intended recipient, whether ally or unknown.

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