

Emotion, Femininity and Everyday Experience

Straight Female Audience's Perception of *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Student name: Yoshino Akizuki

Student number: 509330

Supervisor: Balázs Boross

Master Arts, Culture and Society

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

An American reality TV program *RuPaul's Drag Race*, in which drag queens compete with each other to be "America's Next Drag Superstar," has earned tremendous hit since it was first broadcast in 2009. Although *Drag Race* started as a niche program featuring drag queens and targeted only at the LGBTQ community, it is becoming a world-wide phenomenon in mainstream popular culture. Especially, straight female audiences have become a large percentage of the audience. However, why are straight women, who have not necessarily had a connection with drag culture, enthusiastic about *Drag Race*? Previous research on *Drag Race* are mainly textual analysis addressing particular issues such as race and ethnicity, social class, body shape and femininity (Darnell and Tabatabai, 2017; Edgar, 2011; Goldmark, 2015; LeMaster, 2015; Strings & Bui, 2014; Vesey, 2017). However, they lack the perspective of actual audience. And therefore, they do not explain the popularity among straight female audience. Since the audience of *Drag Race* has become increasingly diverse, different audiences interpret the contents differently. As Alasuutari (1999) explains using Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, intended message from producers is not always received "correctly" by audiences. Therefore, it is significant to take into account the perspective of the audience. Furthermore, as Bird (2003) suggests audiences critically and actively interpret the message and put them in the context of everyday experience, we should closely examine the process of meaning-making. Thus, this research aims at examining straight female audience's perception of *Drag Race*. To achieve this, I conducted the interviews with straight female audiences. As a result, it is indicated that the straight female audiences show emotional intimacy with drag queens. Also, femininity performed by drag queens is interpreted as empowering whereas audiences consider drag queen's behavior stereotypically feminine. Furthermore, audiences reflect their own everyday experience, especially insecurity and pressure caused by confronting with the social norm of femininity. As a conclusion, I suggest audience's active engagement in *Drag Race* could be a chance to reinterpret and represent gender, sexuality and femininity.

KEYWORDS: *RuPaul's Drag Race*, female audience, emotion, femininity, everyday experience

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1. Introduction

When the electro music starts, a beautiful woman with flawless make-up, glamorous body and a gorgeous sequin gown appears on the stage. She walks down the runway in the spotlight like a supermodel. When she stops at the head of the runway, she welcomes the judges to her own TV program while making witty jokes. Then she announces the theme of the runway presentation in which the contestants will be competing and says “Gentlemen, start your engines, and may the best woman win!” In this short moment, she brings breathtaking spectacle to the runway with her beauty, but she is not a woman. She is a man in drag named RuPaul, the most successful drag queen currently in American show business. She is the host of the reality TV program *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, in which drag queens compete with each other to be “America’s Next Drag Superstar.” In the program, contestants are judged on their ability to successfully complete various tasks or challenges. These include having to make outfits from scratch, act in a sitcom or telenovela, dance in a musical number with lip-sync, or do stand-up comedy in front of a live audience. And they always have to walk down the runway and show their charisma to be a star. The scene described above is the opening of the runway presentation. Each drag queen struts down the runway full of confidence with a flamboyant outfit, make-up, and a skillfully-padded curvy body while a voice-over narrates “I look stunning” or “I’m feeling sexy.” The audience sees drag queens presenting beautiful, powerful and playful figures of women in extremely exaggerated but unique ways.

RuPaul’s Drag Race (hereafter *Drag Race*) has become a tremendous hit since it was first broadcast in 2009. For its first eight seasons, *Drag Race* was aired on Logo TV, which is an American cable outlet originally aiming at the niche market of LGBTQ audiences. However, the program is now being broadcast on VH1, which is one of Logo’s sister cable outlets under Viacom, Inc., and targets broader audiences (Brennan and Gudelunas, 2017). In fact, *Drag Race* has gained a lot of audiences all over the world. For example, the season 10 premiere attracted one million viewers (Jordan, 2018), but since *Drag Race* is available on Netflix and there are other unofficial ways to watch the program on the Internet, there should be much more viewers in reality. Although *Drag Race* started as a niche and low-

budget program featuring drag queens and targeted only at the underrepresented LGBTQ community, it is becoming a world-wide phenomenon in mainstream popular culture as well. This shift is prominent, with some online articles stating that *Drag Race* is already in the mainstream (Rogers, 2014; Sasson, 2017), but this brings us the question of what has brought the program to the mainstream. This transition could be explained by the fact that straight female audiences have become a large percentage of the audience of the program. There are online articles suggesting that the majority of *Drag Race* fandom consists of straight female audiences (Crawshaw, 2017; Frank, 2018). Also, according to BBC News, more than 40,000 people attended *Drag Con*, the fan events held in Los Angeles and New York in 2017. At these events, 60% of the attendees were female, and half of them were straight (Jordan, 2018). Thus, it seems likely that the straight female audience contributed heavily to bringing the *Drag Race* phenomenon into the mainstream. However, it is still unclear why the program's popularity among the straight female audience is growing. One clue to this can be found in the fact that some of the drag queens from *Drag Race* revealed that straight female fans have told them how much they were impressed and empowered by the drag queens. We can see that these female fans develop a kind of connection with drag queens. Then, how can we explain this connection? Why are straight women, who have not necessarily had a connection with drag culture, enthusiastic about *Drag Race*? To reveal why straight female audiences are attracted to *Drag Race* and what kind of connection they develop with drag queens, I explore straight female audiences' perception of *Drag Race*. More specifically, I examine what kind of engagement female audiences develop through watching *Drag Race*; what role the gender performance of drag queens plays in the development of this engagement; what impact this engagement has on female audience's everyday life and how everyday experiences inform this engagement.

As Butler (1990) insists, drag is subversive performance that questions the social norm of gender and sexuality. By bringing marginalized drag culture into the mainstream, *Drag Race* has exposed the mainstream audience to a subversive and alternative representation of gender performativity. While many people have a positive view of *Drag Race* because of the contribution it has made to increasing opportunities for the LGBTQ community, many scholars also point out the problematic aspects of *Drag Race*. Previous

research on *Drag Race* are mainly textual analysis addressing particular issues represented in the program. For example, scholars have argued about the commodification of HIV (Hargraves, 2011), the influence of race on drag queens' career development in the music industry (Vesey, 2017), and the reproduction of stereotyped femininity (Edgar, 2011). Most of the arguments are highly critical of these representations and tend to negatively respond to the program. In addition, these arguments often show concern that these representations do not contribute to or are even harmful towards drag culture's subversive role. However, although it is crucial to keep these perspectives in mind when looking at the program, they lack the perspective of actual audiences. As Alasuutari (1999) explains using Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model, intended message from producers is not always received "correctly" by audiences. Since the audience of *Drag Race* has become increasingly diverse, different audiences interpret the contents differently. Thus, since these analyses do not take into account the perspective of the audience, they ignore the complexity of the current diverse audience's interpretation of *Drag Race*. Furthermore, we might miss the chance to find any perceptual changes towards LGBTQ individuals among the straight audience as well as the empowering aspects of *Drag Race*. Therefore, I focus on the actual audience's perceptions to highlight the rich and complex interpretations of the program.

In addition, it is meaningful to shed light particularly on straight female audiences to consider the phenomenal popularity of *Drag Race*. Although females make up a large percentage of the program's fans, little research have been done focusing on the straight female audience of *Drag Race*. For example, Villarreal, García, and Fernández (2017) and Chronaki (2017) explore heterosexual and homosexual audiences' perception of the program, but they do not specifically focus on the female audience. More importantly, it is worthwhile to look at how women – the portion of the audience most directly concerned with the subject of femininity – interpret the femininity presented by drag queens in *Drag Race*. Since drag is a performance done by men dressed as women that parodies and exaggerates femininity, women might reject drag because they feel insulted. On the other hand, it is possible that *Drag Race* attracts female audiences because they like gorgeous dresses and make-up. Either way, drag is closely connected to issues of gender performance and the representation of femininity which women deal with in everyday life. It is clear from the

program's popularity that quite a few women actually enjoy drag queens' performances, and that some of them show appreciation for and deep attachment with drag queens. This indicates that straight female audiences are often emotionally connected to drag queens through watching the program. Furthermore, as Bird (2003) argues, audiences critically and actively interpret the messages they have received and put them in the context of everyday experience. Thus, we should examine the process of meaning-making of the female audience; how they are emotionally involved with *Drag Race*; how they interpret gender performances of drag queens and how they reflect the interpretation of *Drag Race* in everyday life.

In this paper, I explore how the straight female audience engages in *Drag Race*. To achieve this, I conducted the one-on-one interviews with them to look at the process of meaning-making of the program. In the following chapter, first I illustrate previous research on *Drag Race* and the limitations of these studies, and present the importance of taking the audience's perspective, which highlights complexity of interpretation. In addition, I present the affinity between reality television, LGBTQ individuals and females; how they are feminized and subordinated in male-dominant society. And finally I highlight the female audience's critical and active engagement in the media, inspired by Bird's (2003) studies which pay detailed attention to the audience's process of meaning-making of the media in everyday context. In the chapter covering the research question, I demonstrate the significance of the audience's perception and explain three sub-questions; what kind of engagement female audiences develop through watching *Drag Race*; what role the gender performance of the drag queens plays in the development of this engagement; and what impact this engagement has on the female audience's everyday life and how everyday experiences inform this engagement. Then in my chapter on the methodology, I illustrate the process of sampling, constructing the interview guide, actual interviews and coding. As findings, I indicate straight female audience's emotional engagement with drag queens, reinterpretation of femininity affected by drag queen's performance, and reflection of/in everyday experience through watching *Drag Race*. As a conclusion, I suggest the significance of paying attention to straight female audience's personal and emotional engagement in *Drag Race* because audience's active engagement could be a chance to

reinterpret and represent gender, sexuality and femininity.

2. Literature review

Since my research seeks to better understand the straight female audience's engagement in *Drag Race*, there are several topics to explore. In this chapter, I examine the literature according to three main topics. First, I illustrate what arguments have been shaped around *Drag Race* and also present their limitations. And I discuss the importance of seeking the perspective of the audience to highlight the active and complex practice of interpretation. Second, since this research has three different elements, reality television, LGBTQ representation and the female audience, I describe the affinity between these elements illustrating how reality television has been feminized through addressing emotion. Also, I focus on how women are targeted as consumers of the "feminine" genre of TV programs. Finally, I examine the female audience's active and critical engagement with the media. It also highlights the importance to look at the process of meaning-making in everyday experience.

2.1. Arguments around *Drag Race*

First, I outline the discussions around *Drag Race* in previous studies. Previous research of *Drag Race* are mainly content analysis to illustrate particular issues surrounding the representation of drag. These analyses highlight concerns with the problematic representations of drag in the program, but they lack the audience perspective. Thus, I suggest using the approach of audience studies to understand the *Drag Race* phenomenon and review two articles focusing on audience perception of *Drag Race*.

2.1.1. Problems with the representation of drag in *Drag Race*

Because *Drag Race* has displayed many different types of drag queens, the scholarship of *Drag Race* mainly consists of content analysis focusing on particular issues such as race and ethnicity, social class, body shape and gender performance. For example, there are contestants with different racial and ethnic backgrounds. *Drag Race* also presents queens with different body types from very thin to plus size, as well as queens who have done plastic surgery. The regions where drag queens come from are diverse; whereas some are from

big cities such as New York or Los Angeles where the LGBTQ community is relatively accepted in society, some are from the South of the US where people tend to show more discomfort with LGBTQ individuals than other regions. As a result, *Drag Race* has many factors for scholars to examine about representations of drag. Through examining the literature, I find that there are two main types of problematic representations; the commodification of drag and the reinforcement of gender normativity.

First, arguments often include the problem of commodification of drag. The program is explicitly structured to encourage this, and RuPaul often emphasizes the importance of becoming marketable. However, many scholars are concerned that this emphasis causes drag to lose its original meaning of resisting inequality, discrimination or the subordination of LGBTQ individuals in society. Thus, scholars consider *Drag Race* as an attempt to commodify and exploit drag queens as marketable tools. For example, Vesey (2017) points out how drag becomes marketable culture through the use of pop music in *Drag Race*. In her argument, she criticizes the fact that light-skinned contestants are provided more chances to build careers in the music industry than those with dark skin. Although there is a problem in Vesey's argument in that she seems to connect skin color and ethnicity too easily, the same problem is pointed out by Strings and Bui (2014) who highlight that there is a tension between black/brown contestants and their white/Asian counterparts. In addition, Goldmark (2015) discusses upward mobility through drag as a form of the American Dream in *Drag Race*. He illustrates that upward mobility depends on each drag queen's self-independence in the market-driven industry, and points out that it is ultimately fantasy because contestants are faced with inequalities derived from race, nationality and English proficiency. From these arguments, the problems of *Drag Race* seem to be based on the market-driven strategy of the production of the program.

In addition, the concern about the reinforcement of stereotyped gender norms is expressed in literatures focusing on the representation of femininity by drag queens. Edgar (2011) claims that judgements of the contestants' presentation of their bodies resulted in reproduction of stereotyped femininity. RuPaul and the judges often criticize the contestants' appearance by saying that they are not "feminine" enough. Thus, the norm of femininity constructed through the competition is far from the original role of drag, which is, as Butler

(1990) explains, a strategy to mock binary gender roles and limited set of ideas of sexuality by performatively emphasizing and parodying femininity. In the end, Edgar sees the practice of drag kings – women dressed as men performing exaggerated masculinity – as more subversive and closer to the original role of drag. Similarly, Darnell and Tabatabai (2017) focus on the representation of bodies, especially “fat bodies of color”, in *Drag Race*. The authors claim that *Drag Race* ultimately reinforces the norm of the idealized female body which is opposed to fat bodies of color. In addition, there is some discussion about *Drag Race*’s spin-off program, *RuPaul’s Drag U*. LeMaster (2015) examines the representation of femininity in *RuPaul’s Drag U*, in which cisgender female contestants, whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth, transform into drag queens with a help of *Drag Race* alumni. While the author believes that the drag queens who interact with the female contestants embody and embrace an alternative representation of femininity, the female contestants are essentially involved in normative gender expression. However, even though the female contestants wear dresses and high heels in order to attract husbands or boyfriends, the transformation does not always function as a reinforcement of gender normativity. Rather, it is important to highlight how contestants gain self-confidence through drag, which embodies exaggerated femininity. For example, one of the contestants stated that she “feels vulnerable in a dress” at the beginning of the program. However, after transforming into a drag queen, she said “I can be powerful in a dress” (“Tomboy Meets Girl”). This does not mean that she just became feminine in the gender-normative context, but it could be interpreted that she has overcome a sense of insecurity as a result of stepping out of her comfort zone. From the discussions above, it is clear that femininity is often argued in the context of the body. As a result, the way the program depicts the drag queens’ bodies is often viewed as a reproduction of normalized femininity. However, it is also important to consider what defines femininity in different contexts and how female audiences themselves interpret femininity.

The arguments above demonstrate concern that in *Drag Race*, drag loses its subversive meaning of challenging the social norm. Some scholars consider the drag performance represented in *Drag Race* as an attempt to fit into the mainstream media industry. Moreover, they think it functions to reinforce stereotypes towards race, ethnicity,

gender and femininity. Although it is important to be critical of *Drag Race* to analyze its sociopolitical meaning, these arguments are limited by the fact that they tend to highlight the negative aspects and miss the value which *Drag Race* potentially has. Also, the limitation of these arguments is based on the fact that they do not examine the actual audience's perception of the program. The problem of the lack of perspective towards the audience is that it ignores the rich and complex practice of audience's interpretation of *Drag Race*. Therefore, in the following section, I illustrate the importance of audience studies and review two analyses of *Drag Race* that focus on the audience's perception.

2.1.2. The audience of *Drag Race*

As I mentioned at the end of the previous section, it is crucial to look at how an audience interprets the media because there is complexity in the audience's perception of the media. Furthermore, the audience may reinterpret and articulate the meaning of people, things or events represented in the media. This can be explained by looking at the basic concept of audience studies. Alasuutari (1999) explains Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model as a basis of audience studies as follows:

[a] message was no longer understood as some kind of a package or a ball that the sender throws to the receiver. Instead, the idea that a message is encoded by a program producer and then decoded (and made sense of) by the receivers means that the sent and received messages are not necessarily identical, and different audiences may also decode a program differently. (Alasuutari, 1999, p.3)

Thus, we need to carefully consider the audience's perception of the media because a message which a producer intends to convey is not always interpreted "correctly" by audience. Moreover, the audience may interpret it differently or add alternative meanings. In short, the key is how the audience engages in interpreting the media because the engagement could be highly critical but positive as well. Therefore, although there are not many articles focusing on audience of *Drag Race*, it is important to look at what arguments

have been made in the context of audience perception. Thus, I highlight two articles that focus on the audience's perception of *Drag Race*.

As an example of empirical research, Villarreal, García, and Fernández (2017) examine the perception and acceptance of queer representation in *Drag Race* among young Mexicans. They conducted three focus group interviews, one each with a heterosexual female group, a heterosexual male group and a homosexual male group. They reveal that empathy for contestants of the program plays an important role in the acceptance of drag queens. On the other hand, identification with contestants is not related to acceptance of them because the group of gay men, who should be able to understand the difficulty of being gay, were more likely to reject the drag queens, whereas both heterosexual groups were more likely to demonstrate enjoyment and acceptance of the contestants. The authors suggest that the gay men's rejection indicates that they are afraid of being confused with drag queens and this is associated with Mexican male chauvinism. Although this result is unexpected and interesting, there is a problem interpreting this result because all the participants watched only two episodes of *Drag Race* for the first time for the research. Thus, it would be difficult for participants to gain emotional attachment or identification with drag queens. Because I would like to consider not only acceptance of drag queens but further engagement of female audience, I need to interview female viewers who have already watched *Drag Race*. Also, I need to explore what is unique about women's viewing *Drag Race* because this point is not focused as central question in this literature.

As another discussion about audience perception of *Drag Race*, Chronaki (2017) examines audiences' perception of *Drag Race* aiming at both homosexual and heterosexual people in Greece, where LGBTQ life is still hidden and marginalized. She conducted interviews with *Drag Race* audiences, and it reveals that participants enjoy not only aesthetics but also the professionalism, talent and dedication of drag queens. Also, it revealed that they think critically about the lack of acceptance of drag culture in Greek society and consider themselves as important participants in the advancement of issues of gender and sexuality through watching *Drag Race* and educating themselves. This shows that *Drag Race* makes participants more reflective about LGBTQ issues in Greek society,

and some of them notice the gap between cultural and political acceptance of LGBTQ individuals. For example, homosexuality is not culturally accepted in Greece even though same-sex civil partnership is protected by law. This research gives me insights into how audiences reflect their thoughts towards the society in which they live through watching the program; but at the same time, I am also interested in a more small-scale and personal aspect of audience perception; the process of meaning-making of the program based on their everyday experience. Thus, I examine how straight female audiences interpret the program and reflect it in their everyday lives, and conversely, how their engagement with the program is influenced by their everyday experiences.

2.2. Reality television, representation of LGBTQ individuals and the female audience

In the previous section, I illustrated the arguments around *Drag Race* concerning the commodification of drag and the reinforcement of the social norms. Also, I pointed out the limitation of the arguments ignoring audience's perception and the significance of highlighting the process of meaning-making of the program. Since my research topic contains three different but correlative factors; reality television, LGBTQ representation and the female audience, I examine the arguments around these three factors and the affinity between them in this section.

Actually, each of these three factors are highly gendered, or more precisely, feminized topics. Many scholarly works have argued that reality television has been considered as a "feminine" genre. This idea is closely related to the emotion expressed in these programs. According to Aslama and Pantti (2006), the disclosure of "true emotions" in reality television is an essential factor providing intimacy and authenticity of the cast with viewers. Their main focus is on the monologue-style confession, but the key is the disclosure of emotion which gives us "real" moments with the cast. They explain the need for the cast of reality television to express emotion so that:

[b]oth the participants and viewers are involved in and move skillfully from one reality to another, forming a continuous play between authenticity/reality and staged role playing/staged reality. Consequently, the participant is caught up in a variety of differing

encounters and situations, each of which may call for different forms of appropriate emotional expression and behavior (Aslama and Pantti, 2006, p.171)

In addition, emotion has a connotation of femininity. In his argument of the representation of LGBTQ individuals in *Big Brother*, Lovelock (2017) explains the role of emotion and affinity of representation of LGBTQ individuals and women in reality television. According to him, representation of LGBTQ identities has been associated with emotion alongside other subordinate social groups, such as women and ethnic minorities, being opposed to white and heterosexual-male dominance in the Western society. Therefore, the emphasis on emotion in reality television codes reality television as a feminine genre of television, and as a result reality television has not been considered as a serious genre compared to news or documentaries. Similarly, Sender (2012) discusses the representation of LGBTQ individuals in reality television and points out that emotional labor has traditionally been the responsibility of people in less enfranchised social positions (women, LGBTQ individuals, people of color). Emotional labor includes “expressing transformations of feeling from shame to pride through coming out narratives, managing their own emotions and relationships in their roles as queer ambassadors, and training others to be more emotionally accepting of GLBT people” (p.221). Thus, emotion works as a means to make audience more accepting and raise intimacy with LGBTQ individuals. From these arguments, we can see that reality television is a highly gendered genre of television, and emotion plays a crucial role in growing the audience’s empathy with the cast. However, Lovelock (2017) points out that depicting LGBTQ individuals as emotionally excessive entails the commodification of queer people’s suffering and reinforces the subordination of LGBTQ in heteronormative society. His argument is based on Kavka’s (2008) literature on emotional excess in reality television. According to Smit’s (2010) review of Kavka’s (2008) *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy*, Kavka insists that emotional excess in reality television has “the potential for an antiheteronormative or ‘queering’ impulse” (Smit, 2010, p.95). Kavka argues that heteronormativity is sustained by the naturalized division between public and private, and therefore, emotional excess and intimacy could be the means to produce a reconfiguration of public and private space. Whereas Lovelock is concerned about exploitation of LGBTQ

individual's emotional labor, Kavka interprets the role of emotion as transgressive action against the division between public and private, which leads viewers to realize that not only the performance on screen but also everyday life consists of performativity. Therefore, there is a room for discussion if female audiences' emotional engagement with drag queens functions to question the norm of gender and femininity and change their behavior in everyday life.

In addition to the role of emotion, it is also important to point out that women have been targeted by taste/style-based and consumption-oriented "feminine" TV genres. Ng (2013) illustrates how Logo TV has altered its content aiming at a broader target, especially heterosexual females. Logo originally targeted LGBTQ audiences exclusively and its content covered serious topics from political issues to coming-out stories. However, the content has shifted to taste- and style-based programs in order to attract straight women. This is because straight women have long been targeted as influential consumers by the media and advertising industries, and viewed as sharing similar interests with gay men, including things like beauty, fashion, design and popular culture (Ng, 2013). The integration of LGBTQ culture into the mainstream is called "gaystreaming," and *Drag Race* is considered a successful role model for "gaystreaming" within Logo. In addition, she considers "gaystreaming" as the reflection of the concept of the "post-gay era", which is argued by Ghaziani (2011). According to him, assimilation of LGBTQ into the mainstream is currently prominent and this is related to two aspects; one is the emergence of increasing internal diversity within the LGBTQ community, and the other is the need for unity with external audiences including straight people. Although Ng admits there is a trend to reject distinctive labels such as "gay" or "lesbian" and to acknowledge more inclusion and fluidity in sexual and gender expression, she insists that the "gaystreaming" strategy of Logo is determined only by commercial interest. A similar view of TV channels' strategy to target the female audience is held by Cox (2015). According to her, content and advertisements in programs broadcast by Bravo (American pay TV channel) encourage female audiences to purchase taste- and style-based commodities which are considered "feminine." This leads to the reproduction of gender stereotypes of women who always care about lifestyle. She concludes that female audiences are not encouraged to discuss sociopolitical issues but

they are merely encouraged to enjoy their lifestyle amenities within a neoliberal and patriarchal context. These two papers suggest that women are made to consume style-based TV programs and amenities, and thus the female audience's engagement in TV programs is considered a passive and apolitical activity.

A common theme in the literature is that the affinity between reality television, LGBTQ representation and the female audience is that they are feminized through engaging in the disclosure of emotion. Whereas LGBTQ individuals and women are forced to undertake emotional labor, emotion in reality television functions as a tool to grow emotional intimacy with the audience as well. Also, since women are targeted as reality television audiences, women are expected to grow intimacy with cast members who display their emotion. Thus, it would be worthwhile to examine the function of emotion in the research on straight female audience's engagement in *Drag Race*. Furthermore, straight women are targeted as consumption-oriented audiences of TV programs but not recognized as critical interpreters of the programs. However, as I have indicated in the previous section, it is crucial to investigate the actual audience's interpretation of TV programs because we should not underestimate the audience's active and complex engagement in interpreting the media.

2.3. The process of meaning-making of the media in everyday life

In the previous sections, the problems of commodification of drag, the display of LGBTQ individual's emotion in reality television, and the straight female audience's consumption-oriented engagement in TV programs are discussed. Therefore, one might consider that female audiences consume LGBTQ protagonists who are feminized through engaging in emotional labor in a feminine genre of TV program. However, can we really say that watching *Drag Race* is merely consumption of marketable drag queens or commitment of reproduction of stereotyped femininity? To consider these questions, I look at the arguments about actual female audiences' reception of TV programs, especially those about their interpretation of gender related issues.

Before examining the literature addressing female audiences' reception of TV programs, I point out the significance of paying attention to the process of meaning-making of the media in everyday context, referring specifically to Bird's (2003) approach. First, her

research on tabloid readers sheds light on the significance of the narrative for the meaning-making process. Although this research is not about television audiences, it is important to pay attention to the process of how readers interpret the media. According to her, readers enjoy scandals through understanding the narratives behind the news, and make sense of them by connecting them to their own everyday life. In addition, scandals bring readers a chance to discuss the topic, and the discussion often involves moral judgement and a sense of empathy. However, she does not suggest that readers are merely concerned with scandals and not interested in political issues. Rather, scandals provide them with opportunities for interpersonal communication and multi-layered interpretation. This complex engagement in tabloids is realized by understanding the narratives of reported individuals behind the scandals. Thus, storytelling of the narrative plays an important role for the process of audience's meaning-making. In addition, as another audience case study, she illustrates the online fandom of the television series of *Dr. Quinn*. In online fandom, audiences not only enjoy the program but critically analyze and discuss various topics via e-mail listing. In the process of writing e-mails, female fans often reveal their personal experiences and emotions connecting them to the program. Consequently, the interaction between fans makes the e-mail listing a community (Bird, 2003). Furthermore, their active engagement in "being fans" turned into a campaign against the cancellation of the program, which was decided by the producers because the viewers were dominated by middle-aged women and the producers wanted to attract more urban male viewers. Some of the fans considered their campaign as a kind of feminist movement, because they considered the producers' decision to be oppressive for female viewers and politically dangerous. From this case, we can see that personal and emotional engagement in a program can become a politically meaningful activity. It also revealed that TV audiences no longer passively receive the message from the producer. Rather, they actively engage in the meaning-making process by reflecting their everyday experiences. And their critical interpretation of the program could lead to culturally and politically meaningful acts.

Next, I would like to illustrate two articles that examine the female audience's reception of TV programs. Stern (2009) explores how bodies are described in *The Real*

World and how female fans connect female casts' behavior and body images with their everyday experience by conducting interviews with young female viewers. One of the main arguments is the representation of eating disorders, which Stern (2009) describes as "troubled body" (p.59). Participants often mention the female protagonist's struggle with an eating disorder and relate it to their friends or sisters who also suffer from an eating disorder. Although they acknowledge the pain caused by the disorder and show empathy with the protagonist, they feel uncomfortable seeing it on television because they think the disorder is being used as a marketing tool. In addition, she discusses the "heteronormative body", which is represented in alcoholic consumption and sexual behavior of the protagonists (Stern, 2019, p.62). Participants recognize that the heteronormative and alcohol-induced hyperfemininity shown in the program was something they encountered in their real college lives as well. Consequently, Stern clarifies that young female viewers feel insecurity and pressure about their bodies, which should be beautiful and sexually attractive, and it is reflected in the program as a kind of "reality" for them. Also, she concludes that although the female viewers she interviewed were intelligent and critical of the program, they simultaneously enjoy watching it despite the role it plays in maintaining the norm of hyper-sexualized bodies. In another example of an article that addresses the issue of female perception of a TV series, Agirre (2015) illustrates how female audiences interpret gender-related issues portrayed in *Mad Men* by conducting interviews with female audiences. *Mad Men* is set in an advertising agency in 1960s Manhattan, a male-dominant work environment. Female viewers who were interviewed know that the examples of sexism and racism portrayed in the program are from the past, but they also feel that the situation has not changed significantly. Also, most of them identify with a particular female protagonist, who is described as a woman trying to be modern, hard-working and independent. This is a reflection of the fact that female viewers also struggle with the same challenges as workers as the woman did in the 1960s. Thus, although female audiences enjoy the program, they consider the gender-related issues in the program as not shocking but rather uncomfortable to see because they are very conscious that the same issues still exist in their daily lives. These two papers suggest that female audiences are critical about the gender-related issues described in the programs because they reflect their own

insecurities, pressures and struggles in everyday experience. Thus, it is worthwhile to consider female viewers of *Drag Race* as active agents who critically make sense of the message. And it is also important to carefully look at how they reflect their own experience in the process of meaning-making of the program in everyday life.

3. Research question

In this research, I focus on straight female audiences' perception of *Drag Race*. Previous research of *Drag Race* focus on the problematic representations of drag which lead to the commodification of drag and the reinforcement of social stereotypes. Also, as Ng (2013) and Cox (2015) indicate, broadcasters and producers target female audiences as highly a consumption-oriented audience of their programs. Thus, researchers express concern that *Drag Race* could lead to the consumption of marketable drag queens or the reinforcement of normalized femininity. However, these critiques lack the perspective of the actual audience reception. We need to think from the perspective of audiences who actively engage in interpreting media, and we can go back to the basic concept of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model; that is, that different audiences decode the messages encoded by producers differently. As Bird (2003) suggests, we should look at how audiences critically engage in the media and how they reflect their interpretation in everyday life. It is also important to examine how everyday experience informs the engagement in reading the media. Therefore, I examine the process of meaning-making that straight female audiences engage in through watching *Drag Race*. More specifically, I examine three sub-questions: what kind of engagement female audiences develop through watching *Drag Race*; what role the gender performance of drag queens plays in the development of this engagement; and what impact this engagement has on the female audience's everyday life and how everyday experiences inform this engagement.

First, I explore straight female audiences' engagement in watching *Drag Race*. The function of emotional intimacy will be the central subject of my examination. As Aslama and Pantti (2006), Lovelock (2017) and Sender (2012) explain, emotion has been emphasized in reality television and as a result the audiences develops a sense of intimacy with the casts. Thus, we can expect that revealing contestants' emotions plays an important role in attracting female audiences to watch *Drag Race*. For instance, the contestants of *Drag Race* are challenged with various tasks in which they need to show their creativity, humor and intelligence. Through tackling with challenges, they often confront difficulties such as the need for self-confidence or interpersonal conflict with other queens. In addition, the

conversations held in the "werkroom", where drag queens prepare for the challenges, make up a large portion of the program. Here they speak openly about their personal issues, including their relationship with their family, the loss of family members, eating disorders or negative experiences in the past.

While queens look strong and beautiful on the runway, they reveal their vulnerabilities and struggles as well. This contrast might lead the female audience to empathize with the drag queens, creating intimacy. Thus, it is important to consider how they interpret the drag queens' disclosure of emotion and confessions of personal issues. Furthermore, this requires an exploration into what exactly drives female audiences to develop intimacy. To this end, we should consider the research by Villarreal, García, and Fernández (2017) on *Drag Race* audiences. The fact that participants do not grow intimacy with drag queens indicates that empathy with drag queens, or more precisely, understanding the difficulties of being gay, is not sufficient because audiences do not know the context of the entire program; in other words, they do not understand the narrative of *Drag Race* or of each drag queen. Although it is apparent that participants do not show any particular attachment to drag queens because they only watched two episodes, this research suggests the necessity of exploring what audiences need in order to gain a sense of intimacy with drag queens, and to shed light on the role of narratives in the program.

Second, I focus on straight female audiences' interpretation of femininity as performed by drag queens. LeMaster's (2015) discussion about femininity in *RuPaul's Drag U* gives us the question of what subversive/normative femininity is. He insists that drag performed by female contestants eventually reinforces the normative gender expression because their motivations come from a desire to attract husbands or boyfriends through the wearing of feminine clothes. However, wearing dresses and high heels are not necessarily normalized feminine practice because they are doing drag, which expresses exaggerated femininity and is often "over-the-top" and "too much." Thus, women-in-drag does not mean following idealized femininity. Rather, considering only men-in-drag as subversive leads to the essentialist idea of binary gender because it essentializes the distinction between biological men and women and negates the possibility of women being subversive by representing an alternative femininity. There is no way to assume women

cannot drag, or, as Edgar (2011) indicates, that the drag king is much more subversive gender expression rather than the drag queens' performance in *Drag Race*. Moreover, we should pay attention to why female contestants of *Drag U* often feel vulnerable or insecure about wearing dresses. They might have conflict between two different ideas; whereby they feel uncomfortable with being "feminine" and do not want to force themselves into embodying normalized femininity, while at the same time they feel unconfident or even guilty that they cannot fit into the social norm of femininity. However, while drag queens teach female contestants how to behave "femininely" through wearing make-up, dresses and high heels, drag queens do not embody idealized femininity like female actresses or models do. Rather, the point is that female contestants learn from drag queens how to feel confident and comfortable with themselves. Thus, it is possible to reinterpret femininity not as the reinforcement of gender-normativity but as the empowerment of women without denying femininity. To further explore this, I examine how female audience understand femininity performed by drag queens.

In addition, we should examine the actual female audience's interpretation of femininity. As we have seen, Stern (2009) explores how bodies are described in *The Real World* and how female fans look at the bodies. She clarifies that young female viewers reflect their everyday experience while watching female casts' behavior and feel a sense of insecurity and pressure watching feminine bodies embodied by the casts. Her point of discussion is the representation of the hyper-feminized body, but this research also suggests that the issue of femininity is not limited within the appearance of body shape but embodied as a mindset or behavior. The young female *The Real World* audience's insecurity and pressure would be related to the fact that the female contestants of *Drag U* feel vulnerable about dressing as "feminine women" because both of female groups have conflict towards normalized femininity. Thus, a sense of insecurity could be considered as a key factor of female audiences as well. In addition, Agirre (2015) illustrates female audiences' interpretation about gender-related issues in *Mad Men*. Female audiences are conscious that the sexism described in the series is not a product of the past but instead is a continuing issue which they confront in everyday life. Their identification with one specific protagonist suggests that current female workers also struggle with the same challenges

that this woman did in the 1960s, and that they also desire to try to challenge existing gender-normativity. Thus we can see this audience's active and critical interpretation of femininity and gender expression, and we should explore if *Drag Race* audiences also actively and critically engage in interpreting femininity and gender expression, and how they do it.

Finally, I look at how straight female audiences reflect their interpretation of *Drag Race* in their everyday lives and how everyday experiences inform the engagement in watching *Drag Race*. For example, Chronaki (2017) illustrates that the engagement of Greek audiences in *Drag Race* reflects the lack of acceptance of LGBTQ cultures in Greece. *Drag Race* actually leads some of them to acknowledge that LGBTQ individuals are not culturally accepted, even though LGBTQ rights are politically protected and they consider themselves as critical and active participants in LGBTQ issues. Two points emerge from this argument; one is that the audience's interpretation of *Drag Race* informs their engagement with LGBTQ issues in their society; the other is that culture is a crucial factor to spread acceptance of LGBTQ individuals. As culture influences individual perception, the opposite would be also true; individual perception shapes culture. In that sense, each individual's process of meaning-making should be understood because personal experience informs the cultural realm in turn. Thus, it is meaningful to look at individual perception more closely. In addition, as Bird (2003) explains in the case of tabloid readers, understanding the narrative is crucial in the process of meaning-making. Also, the way straight female audiences connect the narrative with their own experience should be examined in the research. Bird (2003) describes the way the online fandom of *Dr. Quinn* connected their own experiences with the program, and how it led to their emotional attachment with the series. Furthermore, not only did they stick to the story of the TV series, but criticized the cancellation of the program in the political context. Thus, I would like to analyze how female audiences emotionally engage with the program in relation to personal experience. Watching TV programs is a part of many daily routines, but that is why the ideas gained through these program are highly pervasive. Therefore, it is worth looking at how straight female audiences connect issues represented in *Drag Race* to their own everyday lives through emotionally engaging with the program.

4. Methodology

In this section, I illustrate the methods used to examine the straight female audience's perception of *Drag Race*. I have chosen audience research because there are limitations to the ability of content analysis to explain the popularity of *Drag Race* among the straight female audience, and I would rather explore what the program means to this audience. Furthermore, I focus on the process through which female audiences make meaning of the program in everyday context. Thus, the interviews were constructed so that I could see how they interpret the program, how they feel about it, and how they explain it with their own words.

Since we live in an age of "media saturation", watching TV programs is a part of our everyday lives. As Bird (2003) explains, "[w]e really cannot isolate the role of the media in culture, because the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways" (Bird, 2003, p.3). She also emphasizes that our media experiences are non-predictable and non-uniform, and thus we must not imagine there is static audience. Applied of *Drag Race* audiences, this means that we cannot define how they will behave. Rather, it is crucial to carefully look at individual's process of meaning-making on a small-scale. Thus, I employ interview as a method and explore what straight female audiences personally find important and how they express it in their own words. Bird says, "[t]he images and messages wash over us, but most leave little trace, unless they resonate, even for a moment, with something in our personal or cultural experience" (*Ibid.*, p.2), and therefore, I focus on audience's process of meaning-making based on personal experience to understand what is socially and culturally meaningful about *Drag Race*.

To gather plausible data, I used Bryman (2016) as a guide through the purposive sampling process. The sampling method should meet the criterion sampling standards; "sampling all units (cases or individuals) that meet a particular criterion" (Bryman, 2012, p.419). The participants were required to fulfill the following criteria; 18 years old and above, cisgender female, heterosexual, watching *Drag Race* for minimum one season. And snowball sampling was employed because I wanted interviewees to feel free to speak about their opinion on *Drag Race*, and thus, I needed to be trusted by interviewees. In this sense,

snowball sampling was effective since interviewees knew informants and they did not worry about who I was. Also, when selecting the sample, I intended to reject individuals who did not fit this particular profile because the research question is quite specific. However, for ethical reasons, I was careful when asking about each interviewee's sexual orientation and gender identity. Although I clarified that research subjects should be heterosexual females in the recruitment phase, I did not want to offend candidates by making them feel rejected because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Furthermore, in case that there were any candidates that had not publicly revealed their sexual orientation or gender identity, I wanted to avoid any situation that would force them to reveal it unnecessarily. Thus, I intended to tell each candidate the research purpose and criteria for the interview in detail, explain that they could not participate unless they met all the criteria, and let them decide whether to join or not without mentioning sexual orientation or gender identity. In actual practice, however, thanks to the informants and interviewees who introduced me other interviewees, I did not have to repeat the criteria to each candidate because they conveyed that I needed straight women as interviewees. As a result I did not have to reject any candidates, although I did have one candidate who told me she could not participate. In addition, I did not require that participants should be enthusiastic fans of the program, but I did require that they understand the structure of the program. Also, I did not include specific nationality or ethnicity within the criteria and tried to look for interviewees with different backgrounds. Consequently, seven out of eleven interviewees were Dutch living in the Netherlands, one was from Portugal living in the Netherlands, two were from Ecuador living in the US, and one was Japanese living in Japan. As for age, most of them were in their 20s and one of them was in her 50s. Thus, I cannot generalize any comments in the interviews nor classify and compare the comments according to interviewee's ethnic background or age. Seven out of eleven interviewees were students (one of them was working while she was studying), one was working as an academic writer, one was working after graduating high school, and two were working after graduating university. Eight interviews with respondents living in the Netherlands were conducted by face-to-face meetings at cafes or at the university, and three other interviews were done by Skype. The length of interview ranged from 30 minutes to 80 minutes at maximum, and took around 55 minutes on average.

Because I was exploring how straight female audiences engage in *Drag Race*, I selected semi-structured interviews and conducted interviews with female audiences to clarify the process of meaning-making of the program. Since the research touches upon a specific and internal topic for the interviewees, I asked mainly open-ended questions. Because I have defined sub-questions, I focused on the female audience's engagement with the program and its drag queens, their interpretation of femininity, and their everyday experiences in relation to the program. Thus, the interview guide consists of questions to clarify these topics. First, I asked questions such as "Please tell me about queens you like/DO NOT like", and "What do you think are the most funny/serious/impressive moments?" to see what they enjoy about the program and how they interpret each drag queen's performance and personality. I spent a large portion of the interview asking about their favorite queens because I wanted to focus on the emotional engagement of the audience. And, although I did not ask the question "Who do you think you can relate to?" in the first few interviews, I added the question later and it became one of the most important questions for understanding how they developed emotional intimacy with queens. Second, in order to understand the interviewee's interpretation of drag queen's gender performance, I included questions such as "What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen?", "What is not acceptable behavior for a drag queen?", and "Who do you think is the most beautiful queen?", which allowed me to explore topics related to femininity. However, their interpretations of femininity were actually derived more from other questions about their first impression of the program, about their favorite queens or about the reason for their preference of *Drag Race*. Thus, I tried to dive into the comments when they talked about gender performance and femininity, and asked them to further explain their comments. And finally, I explored how *Drag Race* influences their everyday lives, and the other way around, how their everyday experience influences their interpretation of the program. To achieve this I included questions such as "In which real-life situations do you think of *Drag Race*?" and "What could you learn from *Drag Race*?" I also asked "Why do you think there are a lot of straight female fans of *Drag Race*?" to see how they self-theorize their own preference.

During the interviews, I strived to create a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees to talk as much as possible, in the same way as Bird (2003) tried to make her

interviews more collaborative, and to avoid controlling the entire conversation in the interview. Before I started recording, I shortly talked about myself and asked them about themselves. For example, I talked not only about my research, but also about my personal life including why I came to the Netherlands, and what I was doing in Japan. I also asked interviewees about things like their studies or their work. In addition, I told them that I was personally a big fan of *Drag Race* so that they felt we could share enthusiasm about the program, but I did not mention specifically which queens I preferred or what I liked about *Drag Race* to prevent them from being influenced by my opinion and hesitating to express their own thoughts. During the interview, I consciously showed empathy for them with nodding and smiling to make them feel accepted about what they were saying (however, it was actually interesting to hear their opinion and I did not have to pretend that I agreed with them). When I wanted to know to more about their comments, I just repeated briefly what they had said in order to prompt them to explain further. Sometimes I added some information I knew about drag queens they mentioned. For example, when one of the interviewees told me she liked Katya from season 7, I said “I remember that she had alcoholism problem.” Then, she started talking more about Katya and her interaction with another contestant. To gain deeper insights, I tried to make “the interaction as a collaborative dialog, more conversation than interview” (Bird, 2003, p.12). I cannot say that I was always successful at it, especially with the interviews at the beginning and via Skype, but it was effective to put the idea of the interview as a conversation in my mind in order to make interviewees more relaxed and get them to talk freely.

After completion of the interviews, I transcribed and coded each interview with the grounded theory coding method (Charmaz, 2006). In the initial coding phase, I started with line-by-line coding “to identify implicit concerns as well as explicit statements” (Charmaz, 2006, p.50). It is crucial to do line-by-line coding because significant insights often appear in the answers to the questions which I originally did not see as the most important. For instance, I was able to derive more interesting findings about femininity from the self-theorization of *Drag Race* popularity among women than from their comments about who they think are beautiful queens. Once I completed the coding, I compared all the codes, chose which codes were most relevant, and organized similarities and differences between

codes. Then I categorized codes in line with topics which led to answer sub-questions through focused coding. I used this to explore topics about engagement and interpretation of drag queens, femininity and gender performance, and interviewees' everyday experience. For example, to understand the female audience's engagement, I mainly used topics related to relatability, empathy and emotion and looked at how they develop emotional intimacy with queens. As for femininity, I focused on topics related to drag queen's appearance and interpersonal communication because these topics included the ways how the interviewees reflect their own idea of femininity. Also, I found topics around confidence and insecurity were related to everyday experience as well as the audience's recognition of femininity. In addition, I found the word "transformation" as *in vivo* codes, which Charmaz (2006) explains as "symbolic markers of participants' speech and meanings" (p.55). And "transformation" actually became one of the central topics of this research. This is the process I used to collect, analyze and examine the data on how straight female audiences engage in meaning-making with *Drag Race*.

5. Findings

Using the methodology described in the previous section, I conducted one-on-one interviews, transcription and coding to look at participants' meaning-making process for *Drag Race*. In this section, I illustrate the findings in line with three sub-questions; what kind of engagement female audiences develop through watching *Drag Race*; what role the gender performance of the drag queens plays in the development of this engagement; what impact this engagement has on the female audience's everyday life and how everyday experiences inform this engagement.

5.1 Engagement in different transformations of drag queens

5.1.1. Transformation from private self to performative self

As the first finding, I observed that female audiences enjoy the transformations of drag queens. Although all of the interviewees had seen or heard of drag queens before watching *Drag Race*, they had not been exposed to drag very much in their daily lives. For many of them, drag is “extravagant” and this extravagance captures their attention. The extravagance is particularly expressed within the drag queen's transformation from a man to a drag queen, which is visually drastic and surprising for audiences. One of the interviewees spoke about how impressed she was by the way that men can embody beauty and femininity through this transformation.

I think as females really admire how they look in drag, how they can go, can transform themselves from sometimes really manly dude to a beautiful woman. I think we really admire that. I mean, I myself I never wear make-up, but already for me it's weird to watch the show everyone put on make-up, I find it interesting anyway. Because I think, I've seen so many queens on the show whom I think they look more womanly and more beautifully than I am. They are gorgeous. (Eve, April 4, 2019)

Another interviewee, Kelly, focuses not only on how they transform visually but also on how they turn themselves into a different personality, their drag persona. She explains the

transformation and personality of Kameron Michaels from season 10:

as a person, he seems really calm, and lay back. And a lot of dramatic everybody else, but as a drag queen she's like, it's completely different personality as well. But still pretty calm and not overdone, you know? Like pretty stylish and, ah, the fact that he can make his very masculine body looks so feminine. I think that's really cool how he does that. [...] I think he's pretty smart, and has, went through a lot, but has a very, overcoming it without, like, always needing much attention, but still standing out. There is a good balance between it. (Kelly, March 20, 2019)

From Kelly's description of Kameron, we can see that she sees the real personality behind the drag persona through watching transformation. In other words, there is the oscillation between performative self and private self of drag queens. The reason why audiences enjoy seeing this transformation and finding the real person behind the drag persona can be explained by Wilson's (2014) argument about reality celebrity culture. According to her, "celebrity implies a split between a public and a private self: there is the public persona that gets constructed in relationship to media such as film and television and there is the private 'real' person behind the fabricated representations" (p.422). Thus, audiences find a star real when they see him/her in the private life, and this exposure is necessary in order for audiences to feel connected to and invested in the star and eager to see him/her on film or television. However, in contemporary celebrity culture, the boundary between stars and their audiences has become more blurred because of social media. And, in the case of reality television celebrities, there is little gap between star/public persona and real life because of the exposure of their "real" lives in their TV shows (Wilson, 2014). Applying this to *Drag Race*, one of the reasons female viewers enjoy seeing a drag queen's transformation from a man into a queen is that it gives them the opportunity to try to find the real person from both the drag persona and private self. That is because, as Wilson (2014) illustrates:

in much of reality television, the public-private split at the heart of the celebrity phenomenon is no longer most prominently mirrored in the distinction between the

celebrity's on-screen and off-screen life but rather in the distinction between the "performed self" and "true self," both of which take shape in relation to the reality format (p.428).

Thus, it can be said that viewers of *Drag Race* try to find "real" moments through looking at the oscillation between performative and private self of drag queens. For example, Irene explains the role of the drag persona as a "mask". She considers the extravagance of drag queens to be a means of self-expression and concludes that they process their emotions through performing drag persona.

I think, the extravagant, that is in the show, it's inside, there like extravaganza from within, it's a way to express themselves. Maybe I think also a way of dealing with emotions in different way, so you can still cry or love or anything, but there's like a mask on, it's not directly themselves, but it's a part of them that they can show. I think that's for me what I see. That's the way to express themselves, true drag. (Irene, April 9, 2019.)

Similarly, Erika mentions the "mask" and she says that it feels "real" when drag queens talk about themselves, especially about negative experience.

Usually, kind of feels like they have on mask, which is of course kind like drag personality, but sometimes it feels kind of lost to me, like how they are as a person. When they kind of open up, like, you know, "I have these going on", I don't know, I really like those kind of things. It feels way more personal when they do that, because in the end, always kind feels like, "Oh, they're drag queen, that's what they do, that's what they are", but sometimes it's like also there's like person behind as well, that came to be this drag queen. [...] You know, it really makes feel more real instead of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. That's more like the life as well. They try to show other people to inspire. I really like that serious moments as well. (Erika, April 4, 2019.)

These quotes indicate that the drag persona can be considered a reflection of the drag

queen's own personality, but at the same time, audiences also try to see much more behind the "mask" so that they can feel the real and private selves of drag queens. Furthermore, the role of the "mask" can be explained by Yudelman's (2017) argument of drag queen's transformation. According to her, the contrast between the main stage and the werkroom is intensely highlighted. Before drag queens take to the main stage, they open up about often painful memories from their past while putting make-up on their bare faces in the werkroom. The scenes in the werkroom are depicted as authentic moments of reflection and discussion, in contrast to the main stage where drag queens appear with glamour and charisma. Also, she states that "[a]s their makeup cooks, the queens' character arcs deepen; the seams of drag are exposed" (Yudelman, 2014, p.21). She emphasizes that queens' personas in the werkroom and on the main stage are integrated into a unified subject in spite of the contradiction between the two personas, and therefore, it can be interpreted that exposing the seams helps audiences understand that the private self influences the performative self of the drag queens. Thus, the interviewees' comments on transformation suggest that female viewers of *Drag Race* actively interpret how the "mask" (performative self) is shaped by the private self, and therefore enjoy watching the contrast between the queens' performative and private selves. As a result, the more audiences understand the private self of drag queens, the more they perceive their transformation as dramatic and authentic.

5.1.2. Emotional transformation

In addition to drag queens' transformations through flamboyant make-up and gorgeous outfits, many of the interviewees describe *Drag Race* as "so much more than a man dressing as a woman". They say that they are attracted not only to their skills and talent in the competition, but they appreciate the fact that drag queens have been through a lot of hardships. In other words, viewers are also interested in the emotional transformation that results from overcoming the personal struggles the queens face when out of drag. In order to understand why they appreciate the drag queens' emotional transformations, it is important to look at how female audiences emotionally engage with drag queens. Some of the interviewees, especially enthusiastic fans of *Drag Race*, identify with certain drag queens. As Eve suggests, personality traits make female audiences relate to the queens. She relates

to Ben De La Crème, who appeared on Season 6 and All Stars 3, because she found her introvert personality to be very similar to hers.

I think I can relate a lot to Ben De La Crème, you know, she's kind of girl next door, like she's really normal, she doesn't have huge personality like some other queens, which is really genuine, I think. Bit humble. [...] I think I can relate Ben Dela Crème, she's more like introvert. And I see myself as more introvert, so maybe that. (Eve, April 4, 2019)

Eve sees Ben De La Crème as an ordinary person compared to the other queens, and this makes her identify with her. Also, she said that she can relate to the insecurities that Ben De La Crème feels as well as her efforts at personal development through the competition. Another respondent Helena describes her identification with Katya, who appeared on season 7 and All Stars 2 and confessed that she used to have a problem with alcoholism and still struggled with anxiety. Helena connects Katya's struggle with her own anxiety.

She [Katya] was so open about everything that she was going through, and I feel like "Yeah, girl I get you", you know. I sometimes get suffer from anxiety too, and she was just, you know, yeah, I just felt her. (Helena, April 4, 2019)

Interestingly, both Eve and Helena's favorite queens are different from the queens they identify with. Eve loves Bianca Del Rio from season 6, admiring her as the "total-package" and a "real star", and Helena loves "everything" about Adore Delano from season 6. In contrast, they identify with Ben De La Crème and Katya, who open up about their insecurities or negative experiences. This indicates that when viewers find commonality with drag queens, especially when it is something negative, they relate more strongly to the queens. Importantly, the queens need to show that they are making an effort to overcome their issues as well as to show vulnerability in order for audiences to relate deeply to them. Otherwise viewers just feel sad for them, and do not identify with them. For example, when I asked interviewees to talk about the most serious moments of *Drag Race*, some of them raised Ongina's (from season 1) confession of being HIV-positive and Roxxy Andrews' (from

season 5 and All Stars 2) experience of being left at the bus stop by her mother. Although they feel empathy and emotion for these queens, they do not identify with them. This is partly because their experiences are too serious to identify with, but it is also because they do not see the process that queens used to try to overcome their negative feelings or open up about these issues with the other queens. Thus, there needs to be a certain narrative for viewers to identify with the drag queens.

Within *Drag Race*, drag queens are required to have the skills for drag, including make-up and padding, the abilities necessary to survive the competition, including sewing and acting, and a personality that the audience will like. Among these, personality is especially important. The reason why RuPaul repeatedly encourages queens to show emotion and vulnerability is because she believes drag queens have to be likable and thus marketable in the show business. Wilson (2014) explains that television stars have to be valued not only for their glamour but more for their relatability. She states that “television has tended to emphasize the ordinariness of its stars in hopes of creating bonds with audiences characterized by intimacy and regularity” (Wilson, 2014, p.425). Thus, drag queen’s ordinariness creates a bond with female viewers which is often derived from personal issues, negative experiences or the vulnerability of the drag queens. In addition, confessing personal issues functions as the narrative progression of the program. One of the interviewees, Cassie, explains how it works:

When they talk about like every season, almost every episode, you have this moment where they are talking about their, like normal life or their past, and, for example, when they talk about religion, or being bullied in school stuff like that. It’s not I can directly relate to, because I don’t have the same experience, but I like that they’re being vulnerable. [...] I really enjoy that aspect, because I can understand them more, and understand why they are who they are. So, I really like that. (Cassie, March 22, 2019)

Chronaki (2017) points out the role of the narrative, stating that “[t]he logic of the narrative allows audiences to ‘stay tuned for each episode’ and engage with the text more fully, so as to be able to make more coherent and complex judgments” (p.206). Thus, watching drag

queens talking about personal issues and showing emotion makes audiences become more involved in the narrative. At the same time it makes a drag queen more authentic and real for the viewers. Then, viewers can see the queens' transformations as people throughout the season. For example, Nora tells how the winner of season 7 Violet Chachki transformed as a person:

In the beginning she was super annoying, kind of bitchy, but I liked her the transformation through the show, how she became so much more nice, and, I mean, I understand why she was kind of bitchy in the beginning because she was also really young and she wanted to prove herself. I just like every contestants, a lot of contestants go through this transformation or growth. (Nora, March 26, 2019)

Through seeing transformation and understanding the drag queen's background, audiences find the narrative of growth or regeneration in each drag queen, who has been through failures and difficulties and grown up as a person. This is reflected in Helena's comment:

They went through a lot of things, a lot of shit. I feel like they all came back stronger, and of course, a lot of people gave negative opinion on them. They just don't care, they're just who they are, and unapologetic. That's nice. I think people should be like that. (Helena, April 4, 2019)

Each drag queen represents the narrative about how a weak, unconfident and troubled boy transforms into a strong, confident and beautiful queen and also into a grown person. And as we have seen, many interviewees find the narrative behind each drag queen's transformation, and they understand and appreciate the drag persona more deeply. In this process, showing emotion works as the narrative progression to make audiences understand more about the private selves of the drag queens, and creates intimacy with them.

From the interviews, I was able to observe female viewers' engagement in the drag queens' transformations. On the one hand, the viewers enjoy the transformation from man

to drag queen. This transformation is not only visually apparent but also represented by two different personalities within a drag queen; the performative and the private self. On the other hand, viewers also admire their transformation as a person, which is described as a narrative of growth or overcoming personal issues. This leads female viewers to develop emotional intimacy with the drag queens through understanding their hardships and struggles and finding commonality with them.

5.2. Gender performance and femininity

In the previous section, we examined female viewers engagement in the different types of transformations demonstrated by the drag queens. Interviews indicate that viewers observe the oscillation between the performative and the private self and try to find the authentic and real personalities of the drag queens. Furthermore, it often creates emotional intimacy with the drag queens through identification with their personal struggles. In this section, I will consider what role the gender performance of the drag queens plays in the development of this engagement.

5.2.1. Visual expression of femininity

The reason why female viewers relate to drag queens can be explained by the way drag queens perform femininity. As I have argued above, female viewers enjoy the transformations of the drag queens. Therefore, because fashion and make-up are actually playing a central part in the transformation from private to performative self, it would be worthy to consider the meaning of fashion and make-up in this context. In fact, flamboyant fashion and make-up are considered as a key element that female viewers are interested in. A lot of interviewees told me that make-up and fashion attract women, but they also think that the way drag queens wear make-up and outfits is obviously different from the way women do in everyday life. Additionally, fashion and make-up are highly feminized things within contemporary society and this is why drag – men practicing exaggerated femininity through padding their bodies, putting on make-up, and wearing women's dresses – is often viewed as a subversive practice that questions gender norms. Thus, firstly I attempt to describe how female viewers interpret the way drag queens engage in fashion and make-

up.

Based on their comments on the beauty of drag queens, there is evidence that female viewers find alternative value in the way drag queens practice of make-up and dressing, which is different from the social norm of gender and beauty. For example, Jane explained the new value she found in the beauty of drag queens in the following way:

I become more flexible and knowledgeable, [...] more flexible at admiring that beauty before that I was kind of “Wow, that is strange”. So, I really changed that. (Jane, March 23, 2019.)

Jane came to appreciate the beauty performed by drag queens through fashion, make-up, and attitude on the runway since she started watching *Drag Race*. Especially, she now thinks of make-up as a means for drag queens to express creativity rather than to look like real women. We can see that *Drag Race* affected her idea of beauty, and in this way the drag queens’ representation of beauty through make-up and fashion can be considered as creative. From this, I consider how female audiences feel about their everyday engagement in fashion and make-up, and how they compare, reflect and reinterpret them with drag queen’s fashion and make-up. Another interviewee, Erika, expressed deep feelings about what she loves about the fashion and make-up of drag queens; she is inspired by the queens’ confidence and ability to not care about what others might think.

What I really love is big queens wear really tight dress which is I would never do in my life. But they would be just walking around, you know, “This is fine, I look fucking gorgeous.” I really love when they do that and I think that’s more relatable to women, you know, like I want that kind of confidence as well to wear tight dress without worrying about how big my butt looks or something like that. [...] So I guess that thing, it relates more to the insecurities and struggles that we as women deal with, that they deal with. (Erika, April 4, 2019)

Erika’s comment highlights how fashion and body shape reflect images of ideal femininity in

our society. Because she is concerned about how her body looks when wearing a tight dress, she respects drag queens who are overweight and yet still comfortable with wearing dresses which emphasize their body shape. Her concern is not personal but broadly shared in society. Stern (2009) found that the young female viewers of *The Real World* feel insecurity and pressure on their bodies. According to Brooks' (2015) discussion about audience interpretations of femininity through celebrities, gender is politicized by regime of representation and the body is the agent to define and stratify what an ideal gender performance is. Women are thus required to reflect and maintain their own body to fit into the ideal gender performance. Also, he explains that we are exposed to a huge number of images of femininity through the representation of celebrity in the media, and women internalize the image of ideal femininity. Actually, many studies revealed that a significant majority of female celebrities can be categorized as thin, white and normatively attractive, and few were judged as overweight (Brooks, 2015). Thus, we can see a discourse from Erika's comment that women have to care about their appearance, especially their body shape. In addition, Erika also makes a comment on make-up. She has a keen interest in make-up and enjoys it on a daily basis, but she used to be concerned about other people viewed her make-up. This is also considered a reflection of the social norm of gender performance, but she has changed her mind towards make-up since watching *Drag Race*; she has become more comfortable with wearing make-up in her own way no matter what others might think of her. For example, she sometimes wears blue lipstick, which is considered to be "not ordinary" or deviant from ideal gender performance in everyday life. What is important here is not that she resists the social norm of femininity but that she notices her internalizing certain expectations for women, which often restrict her behavior, and tries to feel more comfortable and confident about herself. This indicates that the way she thinks of fashion and make-up has been affected by the way drag queens represent their beauty, and she is beginning to deal with her uncomfortableness with internalized ideal femininity. Thus, although fashion and make-up are considered highly feminized things, the female audience's interest in fashion and make-up in *Drag Race* does not necessarily mean stereotypical feminine behavior. Rather, we can see there are female viewers who are empowered by encountering the various representations of femininity performed by drag

queens and seek out a way to be comfortable and confident with themselves in a different context from normalized ideal femininity.

5.2.2. Behavioral expression of femininity

In addition to visual or physical terms of femininity, the interviews revealed that the representation of internal and behavioral femininity is also prominent in *Drag Race*. Almost all the interviewees describe the drag queens' off-stage behavior as feminine. More specifically, they find commonality with the drag queens' gossiping and quarrels, which they see as reflecting their own behavior when they are among women. For example, Amy stated that Roxxy Andrews reminds her of being surrounded by mean girls when she was a schoolgirl.

Roxxy Andrews was on first season I didn't hate her, but when she was on All Stars season, I started hating her. Because she was a bitch. She was mean, she was trying to play games. And I didn't like that, just because as I grow up in the school, with girls, rich, catholic girls, which I had mean girls, I really didn't like that. Yeah, I was never bullied or anything, but I really don't like that. (Amy, May 1, 2019)

And Irene noted parallels in the feminine behavior of drag queens and women in that both of them tend to engage in gossiping and indirect ways of expressing their opinion. She sees this negative side of femininity in both women's and drag queens' behavior.

If you study at group with women, and there are like 15 women in a big group. And that's almost like 14 drag queens together. And they never go as well, there are always gossiping or just like somethings they say, which are not, don't pretty sound mean at first, but when you think about it, then it's like "That wasn't nice thing to say". And that's what you sometimes saw, also see in *Drag Race*. They're not directly mean sometimes, but just like just below. But women are not always mean, but there's a lot of gossip, most of the time. A little bit different, but a little bit same as well. I think it's feminine side to drag queens as well. They have some, feminine side I think, in the behavior as well. In the

way behave with each other, yes. (Irene, April 9, 2019)

In addition, it is important to think about “drama.” Drama usually means a quarrel or discord between queens with an accompanying display of emotion, and it is often derived from the drag queens’ feminine behavior noted above. Interviewees are conscious that drama attracts female audience and makes the program interesting, as some of them explain:

I think it [targeted audience] is a lot of girls, because they love drama, you know. (Maria, April 4, 2019)

If people want drag queens to be funny or to entertain them, it’s better for them that queens talk shits and the show gets more drama. (Yoko, March 22, 2019)

If a viewer is not into drama, she/he might not like the program. For example, Yoko is the only interviewee who is not a big fan of *Drag Race*. Although she enjoys the way drag queens argue emotionally and build relationships, she is not into drama; more precisely, she does not pay much attention to each drag queen’s emotions, personality or background. Audiences who love drama also enjoy seeing real personality through drama. And, the love for drama is considered as highly feminine behavior. Irene describes the difference between women and gay men as follows:

I know one of my best friends, he is gay, and but he’s like still very, if you see him, you never know he’s gay. He is going out with some girl friends sometimes, he always says “I don’t understand why you gossip all the time”, but we understand because we all participate in it. That’s why I think it’s more relatable to watch than for men who never understand where this behavior is coming from and never relate to the behavior. Because, I watch *Drag Race* with him, and he asked like “Why would you watch this?” and I thought it was fun, I thought actually he would like it as well. But all the gossiping and just taking so much time for make-up, taking so much time for the clothes didn’t interest him at all. But I think you can relate to it as a woman because normally you do that make-up and

everything as well. I think that's why we watch it. (Irene, April 9, 2019)

Thus, female viewers often have ambivalent feelings about the drag queens' representation of feminine behavior; while female audiences feel uncomfortable watching drag queen's off-stage feminine behavior, they also relate to their behavior because they behave like them and understand it.

Whereas female audiences interpret that *Drag Race* represents a subversive and alternative way of gender expression, the way they interpret drag queens' behavior and women's love for drama as feminine illustrates the stereotypical idea of femininity. This is related to how emotion is considered as feminine because drama always involves emotion. According to Lovelock (2017), LGBTQ people and other subordinate social groups such as women and people of color have been associated with emotionality. And he points out that emotionality has been less valued than reason and rationality which are traditionally connected with white and heterosexual male. Thus, "much of the cultural devaluation of reality television has been bound to an implicit perception of the form as inherently 'feminine' due to its emphases upon emotional (and bodily) exposure" (p.455). Therefore, reality television has been inherently gendered. In this context, *Drag Race* could be problematic in terms of emphasis on emotion because it could reinforce stereotypical femininity. However, it is interesting that interviewees find femininity by focusing on the behavior of drag queens who are actually male (although some contestants are transwomen) and lay their feelings bare or gossip, as Yoko explains:

drag queens exaggerate femininity, both in good and bad way. They show femininity by make-up, clothing and curvy body, but they also show bad aspects of women, like they tend to make groups, criticize behind each other's back and interfere other's business. So, they are like the most annoying version of women, even though they are men. (Yoko, March 22, 2019)

In contrast to ideal and normative femininity, femininity described here is not valued by the heterosexual male. The absence of heterosexual male is actually pointed out by one of the

interviewees, Amy, stating that that is why *Drag Race* is a place for women to feel secure. Although drag queens' behavior and women's love for drama are perceived as feminine and might reinforce stereotypical femininity, it is also different from ideal and normalized gender performance which women often internalize as heterosexual male gaze. Whereas some of the interviewees do not enjoy drama between drag queens, their feminine behavior could create sense of affinity with drag queens for female viewers as many interviewees actually find commonality and intimacy.

5.3. Reflection of/in everyday experience

I have discussed that female audiences observe their daily behavior in watching drag queen's behavior when they are in and out of drag. And interviews indicate that drag queens' performance of femininity could be perceived as both empowering and stereotypical. In this section, I consider how the female audience's engagement with *Drag Race* influences their everyday life and how everyday experiences inform this engagement.

5.3.1. Sense of ritual through the use of language

As we have seen, emotion presented in the program functions as the narrative progression and to develop the female audience's intimacy with drag queens. I observed that the more enthusiastic the interviewees are, the more they focus on the drag queens' personal and emotional moments. Also, they become more immersed in the world of *Drag Race* and feel themselves a part of it. The use of language plays an important role in evoking the feeling that they have joined this world, not only by increasing emotional intimacy with the drag queens but also by creating a sense of ritual. Through her interviews with Greek audiences of *Drag Race*, Chronaki (2017) found that the repeating certain phrases and having a certain structure work as a ritual that guarantees its quality for audiences. In fact, many of my interviewees point out that the language, including slang or catchphrases, used in the program captures their attention and stays in their mind in everyday life. For example, the line RuPaul repeats at the end of each episode has a strong message for audiences.

The line they ended up with every show, like "If you don't love yourself, how in the hell

somebody else gonna something” is just keeping in my mind all the time. Very powerful.
(Jane, March 23, 2019)

The repetition of certain phrases is quite pervasive, and has a powerful affect on the audience. Through the entire program, the audience see a lot of emotion, vulnerability and struggle, and the phrase repeated at the end of every single episode, “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?”, functions as both a summary of the program and as a ritual. Therefore, audiences can easily recognize the message they should receive from the program, which conveys the discourse of self-love. In addition the line “If you can’t love yourself,~”, the program repeats certain phrases and slang that are only recognized by its audience in order to call the viewer’s attention.

I really like the slang in it, so, umm, “sashay away”, “herstory”, umm, like “shade” and “read” each other, what else is there... umm, I don’t know, yeah, just the fact that you get really comfortable with the show because of a lot of them saying lines, they said same words then you get, kind of join with it. (Kelly, March 20, 2019)

I think maybe on the daily basis sometimes, come across my mind, like, words they use, like, just whole language, you know, I think I use them a lot, because I just like it, I have friends also watching it, so you can just joke around it. So, I think on that kind of thing, I think about it on the daily basis. With the language and the stuff they say, they’re just hilarious. (Maria, April 4, 2019)

These comments suggest that getting familiar with the phrases makes audiences more involved in the world of *Drag Race*, and that they actually begin to use them in their everyday lives. Some of them use the phrases when communicating with friends who are also *Drag Race* viewers. As Bird (2003) argues, engagement with the media often involves daily communication with other individuals, which indicates that the language used in *Drag Race* functions as a communication tool for viewers. In addition, one of the interviewees provided an insightful analysis about the role of language in the program; the repetition of certain

phrases gives structure to the program and creates a kind of platform for fans. Furthermore, recognizing this language gives fans the feeling that they are a part of the *Drag Race* community.

I also really like that RuPaul uses a lot of same words, like “Hello, hello, hello” and “Shantay, you stay”, something like that, you really set a platform because people are gonna say that as well in their real life. I mean, I remember breaking up with my ex-boyfriend, and I hear she [RuPaul] saying “Sashay away” and I was like “Oh my god, I shouldn’t be thinking this right now!” But I really push the show in your head, then you will be able to put it into your daily life. Because there are so many quotes really recognizable. Sounds like “Okurrr”, you really know them immediately they are fans, and already have bonds. You really start thinking in that language, in that slang. So, I think that’s really a brand. I think it’s really smart that they created the brand with words like that or “The time has come for you to lip sync for your life” or “for your legacy”, it’s really smart, like “Bring back my girls”, so there’re a lot of language in every episode really predictable, and really makes you, yeah, really invested in the show. (Eve, April 4, 2019)

This quote suggests that not only emotional engagement but also the use of language plays an important role in creating and maintaining the huge fandom of *Drag Race*. Like learning a foreign language, viewers learn the phrases RuPaul and the drag queens use. And through learning the language, they feel like they have become a member of their world. The repetition of phrases thus functions as a kind of ritual, which establishes the structure of the program, creates a sense of community to join, and becomes a part of everyday life.

5.3.2. Confidence and sense of insecurity

While language is something viewers learn through watching *Drag Race* and which becomes a part of their daily lives, confidence is another factor that almost all the interviewees find they could learn from drag queens. As I have argued above, female audiences identify with the drag queen’s narrative that they become strong and beautiful through struggling with personal issues. And when the audience sees drag queens being

confident, they see drag queens as role models for learning how to deal with challenges out of their comfort zone, overcoming difficulties, and staying themselves.

[What I learn from *Drag Race* is] how confident they are when they're on stage. It's really impressive to see, and, yeah, I can learn something like that. Because confidence is really important when presenting yourself. But also, in the challenges they have to face like how they have to develop and deal with the situations where they are uncomfortable. It's, yeah, like, it shows how to overcome things, I guess. (Kelly, March 20, 2019)

The reason I chose to focus on the fact that female viewers value the drag queens' confidence is that yearning for confidence goes hand-in-hand with a sense of insecurity. Insecurity is what creates the bonds between female viewers and drag queens, and what women deal with in everyday life, especially when they unconsciously reflect internalized ideal gender performance. Erika's comment below shows that women often feel less confident or insecure about themselves.

What I like the most about watching *RuPaul's Drag Race* is, I always wish I had like even one tenth of their confidence, when they're on stage, that's what I love. They just own who they are, exactly how they want to be, there's message like something that females, women, really can learn from *Drag Race*. Like "Okay, difference, that's totally fine. You can be as strong or powerful as you wanna be". (Erika, April 4, 2019)

As I have argued in the previous section, women unconsciously care about what is acceptable appearance or behavior according to the social norms of femininity and ideal gender performance because women are often exposed to these norms. Therefore, as many of the interviewees feel, women are not sure or do not fully realize what they really want to do from within because the willingness they have is also influenced by the social norm because "social life is the product of cultural construction, then it is impossible for individuals to completely remove themselves from the cultural realm created by its discourse" (Brooks, 2015, p.74). It consequently causes women to face conflict between their desire to embody

ideal femininity and discomfort they feel in being forced to follow it. Therefore, the reason why a lot of respondents admire the drag queens' confidence is because drag queens seem to be able to represent themselves however they wish even though they are considered deviant from the social norms of gender. However, this does not mean women can never overcome their insecurity and embody themselves in their own way. For example, Helena has learned how to deal with her insecurity from *Drag Race*.

There is a thing that Ru said actually like, when you feel confidence, about one part, you can translate it to other parts, and I just always say it in my mind every time I feel a little bit insecure. (Helena, April 4, 2019)

This quote suggests that female viewers do not just relate to the drag queens insecurities, but also reflect on where their own insecurities come from. Consequently, they find alternative ways of self-representation as a result of seeing drag queens who embody the idea that we do not have to follow the ideal gender performance. At the same time, their new way of self-representation does not have to be deviant or completely different from the idea of femininity shared in society; rather, women can embrace femininity in their own way, as Kelly does.

I think it [drag] is bit too different to apply to my own life. But, umm, maybe I started like appreciating femininity bit more, so, I like now once in a while, when I dress or something, normally I don't do that, yeah, I don't know, maybe to, just that it's ok to stand out and to be comfortable or confident with yourself. (Kelly, March 20, 2019)

Thus the interviewees often try to apply what they learned from the drag queens, especially how to feel comfortable and confident with themselves, in their everyday lives. Although it is impossible to be completely free from the ideas of ideal femininity and gender performance, comments from interviewees show that it is possible to reinterpret, articulate and represent the ideas of femininity. While on the surface the subtle changes that many female viewers make to their gender performance may not seem subversive, a careful analysis of the way

that they actively reinterpret and represent themselves in everyday life provides insights into both the impact that *Drag Race* has had on them as well as their own desires and insecurities.

6. Conclusion

In this research, I have focused on the straight female audience's perception of *Drag Race*. Previous research on *Drag Race* indicate problems with its representation of drag, especially its commodification of drag and its reinforcement of the social norm of gender expression, but I have pointed out limitations of that research because they do not examine the perspective of the audience's perception. To make my argument, I have referenced articles on reality television, LGBTQ representation and female audiences focus on the effects of emotion, gender performance and femininity, and the meaning-making of the media in everyday life. And to examine actual audience's perception, I conducted interviews with straight female viewers of *Drag Race*. From the interviews, I uncovered several characteristics of the straight female audience's engagement in watching the program, their interpretation of femininity and the reflection in/of their everyday experience. For my conclusions I highlight these characteristics in this section, and present suggestions for future research.

6.1. Emotion and its “serious” meaning

First, the straight female audience's engagement in watching *Drag Race* is characterized by an appreciation of the drag queens' transformations, which are transformations from a man to a queen and transformation as personal growth. Regarding the transition from man to queen, I have shown that straight female audiences pay attention to the oscillation between a drag queen's performative self and private self and try to find the queen's real and authentic moments. Additionally, the oscillation between performative and private self matters to the *Drag Race* audience because the split between public and private is no longer crucial or possible in reality television, as Wilson (2014) points out in her discussion of reality television audiences. Furthermore, the audience interprets the performative self (drag persona) as being shaped by the queen's experiences and how the queen has dealt with difficulties and challenges to their private self. Thus, the audience's understanding of the drag queen's private self is crucial because it informs the drag queen's transformation. This also leads audiences to a deeper appreciation of the drag queen's expression of her

performative self.

On the other hand, transformation as a person is also important for the female audience to emotionally engage with drag queens. When drag queens disclose their emotions and personal struggles, the female audience identifies with and develops emotional intimacy with drag queens. Sender (2012) describes emotional labor as “expressing transformations of feeling from shame to pride through coming out narratives, managing their own emotions and relationships in their roles as queer ambassadors, and training others to be more emotionally accepting of GLBT people” (p.221), and the disclosure of each drag queen’s emotion functions exactly as emotional labor. However, it is indicated that showing emotion alone is not enough for the audience to achieve emotional intimacy with the drag queens. There should be a narrative for the audience to read as personal growth, or overcoming negative experiences. Bird (2003) reveals that the process of meaning-making of the media requires the narrative to understand and empathize with individuals who are reported or represented in the media, and my interviews with straight female viewers indicate that their involvement in the narrative helps them to develop emotional intimacy with the drag queens. In addition, it is also important to point out the significance of emotional intimacy in the political context. Reality television has been contrasted with more “serious” news or documentary programs and considered to lack political meaning (Lovelock, 2017; Sender, 2012). However, as Chronaki’s (2017) interviews with the *Drag Race* audience suggest the political significance of cultural acceptance of LGBTQ individuals as well as legal protection of LGBTQ rights, emotional intimacy with drag queens in *Drag Race* could be politically meaningful in promoting cultural and social acceptance LGBTQ individuals. Thus, the disclosure of emotion and development of emotional intimacy in *Drag Race* could be “serious” and political.

6.2. Alternative representation/interpretation of femininity

Second, my interviews with straight female viewers reveal that they find much of the femininity performed by drag queens as subversive and empowering, but certain behaviors of the drag queens are interpreted as stereotypically feminine. As we have seen, previous research on *Drag Race* problematize the representations of bodies in the program as

reinforcement of idealized femininity, and viewers are eventually involved in normative gender expression (Edgar, 2011; Darnell & Tabatabai, 2017; LeMaster, 2015). However, my interviews show that the femininity which drag queens visually present could be empowering for female viewers. Interviewees consider the drag queens' fashion and make-up as a means to express themselves, and appreciate them being confident and comfortable with themselves in drag. While drag queens' representation of femininity does not follow normalized gender expression, queens show different types of beauty and enjoy expressing femininity. Thus, the drag queens' performance of femininity gives the straight female audience the idea that alternative interpretations/representations of femininity and gender performance is possible without denying the femininity which women already have in their mind.

Furthermore, almost all the interviewees find the drag queens' off-stage behavior as feminine. In contrast to research putting emphasis on the representation of body/appearance and reinforcement of idealized gender performance, my interviews indicate that the female audience consider femininity to be not only about appearance but also represented in behavior. Many of the interviewees consider drag queens engaging in gossips or quarrels and becoming too emotional as feminine behavior because they acknowledge that they also behave in the same way. Whereas the interviewees understand and feel a familiarity with the drag queens' off-stage behavior, some of them felt uncomfortable watching it because it is too feminine. Furthermore, some interviewees felt that love for "drama" is one of the characteristics of women. In that sense, the show's use of the queens' behavioral expression of femininity and coupled with lots of "drama" to attract the female audience might reinforce the idea of stereotypical femininity. On the other hand, it is also interesting to consider that the femininity represented in the drag queens' off-stage behavior is outside of heterosexual male dominance and different from the idealized feminine behavior shaped by heterosexual male gaze. I would not go as far as to say that showing femininity through the drag queens' behavior is positive or empowering for women. However, this could be one of the factors that allows the straight female audience to feel safe watching *Drag Race* because the queens' feminine behavior brings female audience a sense that they are out of sphere of heterosexual male dominance which gives women

insecurity and pressure.

6.3. *Drag Race* and everyday experience

Finally, I was able to observe the impact of female audience's engagement in *Drag Race* on everyday life. As Chronaki (2017) explains, the use and repetition of certain phrases functions as a kind of ritual, which establishes the structure of the program. Furthermore, it creates a sense of community and becomes a part of the audience's everyday life. Some of the interviewees consider RuPaul's words "If you can't love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else?" as a kind of mantra, which stays in their mind after the show is over. Since the message from RuPaul is always repeated at the end of the program, it becomes powerful and pervasive for the audience. Some of the interviewees actually use these phrases when talking with others who also watch *Drag Race*. Some of the phrases were originally used within LGBTQ community, especially the gay community, and some other phrases are contestants' catchphrases which originated in the program. In either case, straight female audiences learn the phrases as the language of another culture, the *Drag Race* culture. The more familiar they get with this language, the more they develop a sense of belonging to the culture of *Drag Race*. Thus, the use of language plays an important role in creating and maintaining the huge fandom of *Drag Race* as well as conveying the program's messages and establishing a community for the audience to join and to communicate with others.

At the same time, the audience's everyday experience informs the engagement. The interviews demonstrated that the interviewees' insecurities and the pressures that they feel have an especially significant role in creating their bonds with the drag queens. As Brooks (2015) indicates, women are often exposed to idealized images of femininity conveyed via television, magazines and the Internet. The social norms of gender and idealized femininity are pervasive, and women tend to internalize these norms. Therefore, women cannot completely refuse to accept the norms even though they are fed up with being exposed to idealized beauty. This often causes insecurity and pressure for women and makes it difficult for them to represent themselves as they wish. As Stern (2009) illustrates, young female audiences feel insecurity and pressure that makes it uncomfortable

for them to see female protagonists' hyper-feminized bodies and behavior in reality television, but at the same time they enjoy watching these programs. This is because they often see girls around them expressing hyper-femininity in the same way, but they do not think this is a good way to express femininity. In contrast, my interviewees felt that seeing drag queens being confident and comfortable with themselves was empowering for them. This is because the viewers interpret the drag queen's representation of femininity as a message that we do not have to obey the social norms of gender expression or idealized femininity concerning body shape or appearance, or even behavior, including something like the idea that "Women should not stand out." The interviewees learn from drag queens how to deal with insecurity and pressure, and how to feel comfortable and confident with themselves. Thus, through watching drag queens representing alternative femininity, straight female viewers reflect how they deal with the idea of femininity in everyday life. Moreover, they question the validity of binary gender expression and idealized femininity.

Watching television is a part of many people's everyday routine and is thus quite personal. However, that is why the ideas derived from watching television are highly pervasive, especially when the audience is fully engaged in the program. The interviews with straight female audience of *Drag Race* give me insights into their engagement in watching the program, which is not only fun, but also emotional, active, critical, profound, and positive. Straight female viewers' engagement in *Drag Race* shows that emotional intimacy with drag queens could lead to the social acceptance of LGBTQ individuals. Also, they reinterpret and articulate new ideas of femininity through reflecting on their everyday experiences. Although the way my interviewees engage in *Drag Race* might not cause a direct and radical change of LGBTQ issues or lessen the disparity between men and women, changing the perception of individuals is crucial; as feminists have insisted "The personal is political." The perceptual change towards LGBTQ individuals and femininity have an influence on everyday experience, and there is the possibility that it will eventually lead society to a more culturally accepting and comfortable future for those who have suffered from past perceptions. Thus, I would conclude that *Drag Race* is a meaningful TV program when viewed from the perspective of the audience's perception because it can act as a trigger for the audience to reinterpret and represent gender, sexuality and femininity.

6.4. Limitation and suggestions for future research

Finally, I would like to offer some suggestions for future research. This research targeted straight female viewers of *Drag Race*, and I focused on the disclosure of emotion, the representation and interpretation of femininity, and audience's reflection of/in everyday experience. This focus means that there are some limitation as well. Since I focus on straight female audiences, the perceptions of other audiences such as LGBTQ individuals and straight male are ignored and should be examined separately. Also, although it is important to look at the audience's meaning-making process for the program based on everyday experience at a small-scale, the audience's thoughts on more general political issues could be explored. This would enable us to observe if the program causes any political or social change towards LGBTQ issues to emerge in reality. Above all, it would be important to explore the basic concept of drag culture more deeply because I have focused on femininity from the perspective of heterosexual female. *Drag Race* presents unique practices in humor, aesthetics and the use of references to LGBTQ history and popular culture. These practices are based on the idea of "camp", which is characterized as "a way of seeing traditional structures that are hostile to queerness as hostile. Its hyperperformance of gender and sexuality allows for a critique of gender and sexual norms, exposing the anxious, unseemly underbelly of heterosexual life" (Sender, 2012, p.221). Thus, camp has been a means for LGBTQ individuals to survive heteronormative society and has been exclusively practiced within LGBTQ community. However, *Drag Race* exposes mainstream culture to the practice of camp. Therefore, it would be a fruitful discussion to explore how the practice of camp is interpreted by heterosexual audiences. Also, Sender claims that "[r]ather than leaving the representational, emotional past behind, camp offers strategies that welcome a sustained engagement with trauma, shame, and bad feelings not readily absorbed into discourses of visibility, futurism, and positive images" (*Ibid.*, p.222). In that sense, camp is precisely what drag queens embody in *Drag Race* because the drag queens often show their emotions and vulnerability through both of the performative and private selves, and audiences understand the narrative each drag queen shows in the program. Thus, in the future research, it would be meaningful to explore how the practice of camp in *Drag Race* is interpreted by the

audience and informs the audience's engagement in *Drag Race*.

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Appendix 1: Interview guide

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well. This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential. Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race.

- When was the first time to watch *Drag Race*?
- Could you tell me why you started watching *Drag Race*?
- Which seasons have you watched?
- Which season is your favorite? And why?
- Could you tell me about the first impression of the show?
- Has your first impression changed through watching *Drag Race* by seasons?

Contents and contestants

- Could you tell me about queens you like?
- Could you tell me about queens you DO NOT like?
- Who do you think you really relate to? And why?
- Who do you think the most beautiful queen? And why?
- What do you think are the funniest moments?
- What do you think are the most serious moments?

- Have you ever got emotional when watching *Drag Race*?
- What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria to be a good drag queen?
- What is not acceptable behavior for a drag queen?
- Do you like RuPaul or her style of drag?
- Have you ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Everyday experience

As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general question in relation to Drag Race.

- In which situation do you think of *Drag Race* in everyday life?
- Do you think *Drag Race* becomes more popular in the past few years? And why?
- Who do you think targeted audience of this show? Why?
- I have read an article that almost a half of fans of *Drag Race* are straight female. What do you think about it?
- What do you think people could learn from *Drag Race*?
- What could you learn personally from *Drag Race*?
- Is there anything that you want to say?

This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Appendix 2: Interview transcripts

Interview 1

Name: Kelly

Age: 21

Occupation: Student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 20-03-2019

Location: Interviewer's flat

Duration: 37min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how straight female audiences think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you think about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview will be recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Kelly: I think ah maybe a year ago or something like that?

Int : Why did you start watching Drag Race?

Kelly: I think I've heard about it before, I had no clue what it was, but then I saw it in my Netflix ah from homepage, and it looked very colorful and I was really in a mood for something fun and quirky, so, "OK, just see what it is". I mean, it's very extravaganza and it's very loud as well but it's a... I mean, you can't watch 10 episodes in a row because you get tired, but it's a... it's really fun.

Int : What did you think when you watched Drag Race for the first time?

Kelly: It was very quirky, it's not very serious show. I mean it is serious competition, contestants really wanna win and they really are... are serious about winning as well, but just ahm... everything around it just make really fun, there is a lot of humor in it, and... also, it's a lot about fashion as well, I really like that.

Int : Which seasons have you seen?

Kelly: Hmm... how many seasons are there?

Int : Now season 11 is aired, but on Netflix, 1 to 10.

Kelly: Yeah. I think I've seen maybe 5-10, because earlier seasons have very bad quality, so I just skip through them and started watching latest seasons.

Int : Which season is your favorite? And why?

Uh! Oh, I wouldn't know, I mean, I have a trouble remembering every single, ahm...drag person, so, I don't know, in every season, there are one or two I really really like, and then I want them to win, ah...

Contents and contestants

Int : Okay, then let's talk about queens you really like. Maybe start with your most favorite queen?

Kelly: Mmmm, there was one, ah, I'm not sure what the name was, but one in the latest season, there was a guy with a lot of tattoos and he was really like sporty but then, he was...

Int : Kameron Michael? From season 10?

Kelly: Yeah, that's it, I think so. I really liked her.

Int : Why?

Kelly: I don't know, as a person, he seems really calm, and lay back, and a lot of dramatic everybody else, but as a drag queen she like, it's completely different personality as well, but still pretty calm and not overdone, you know? Like pretty stylish and ahm the fact that he can make his very masculine body looks so feminine. I think that's really cool how he does that.

Int :The transformation is really amazing.

Kelly: Yeah, but also like what the person is behind, you know? Like when somebody wins at the competition I really like to think if they deserve it as a person as well, and, like, it isn't always the case I think because like big part of drag queens are like shade and

yeah, and ah, reading of other drag queens, but, yeah, you can see the personality behind them.

Int : What do you think, what kind of personality Kameron has?

Kelly: I think he's pretty smart, and has went through a lot, but has a very, overcoming it without, like, always needing much attention, but still standing out. There is a good balance between it.

Int : Do you have other favorite queens as well?

Kelly: Ahm, yeah, not sure like some other queens are very nice but I can think of Sasha Velour now because I've seen the book, but I like Sasha Velour as well, just the fact how creative she is with all the costumes but how clever as well. She is really nice. Now I also think of, oh, I don't know who it was actually... I think it was in the season with Aquaria? Ah, I'm not sure, there was one look, there was like a purplish body suit with a hat and gloves and... ah... Okay, I really like it as well. But thing I like most about the show I think, is looks.

Int : Okay, could you tell me more about looks you like?

Kelly: I really like when they have to get creative and you see actually they come up with really creative and also nice costumes as well. I'm really into clothes, I like seeing that.

Int : Could you describe one or two examples?

Kelly: Hmmm, one is that I was trying to describe earlier, there was like, ah, it gave me a Breakfast at Tiffany things, classy, like long gloves and big hat and...

Int : Ah! Isn't it Aquaria's look?

Kelly: I'm not sure, but I think so...

Int : Body suit in lavender, big hat...

Kelly: Yeah! Can I look for?

Int : Yes.

Kelly: (...) Oh, yeah, found it.

Int : Why do you like this particularly?

Kelly: I don't know, it was just, I think it's again maybe bit of contrast, because drag queens they tend to come across pretty...ah... trashy? (laugh) And even when they try to come across classy, then it's mostly just pretty basic look with gown and glitter on it, and pretty normal make up. But this was such a different approach making it classy but also really, maybe even artsy and stylish. So I really like the different person I

hadn't seen before. I like both (Aquaria and Sasha) are unique.

Int : What do you think Aquaria as a person?

Kelly: As a person, yeah... I'm not a big fan of her personality, I think, I really don't like the small competition that some drag queens have, like Aquaria and, it's mostly with Miz Cracker? I didn't like that they had like battle going on or anything, and they shade each other or something like that. I mean it's funny to watch, of course, but I mean it doesn't make me wanna like [???] for person to be a winner.

Int : Okay, so please tell me about queens you DO NOT like. And why not?

Kelly: Ahm...one of the bigger queens, that came back because earlier season she broke her leg, or broke her leg or something like that, Eureka, yeah. Okay, first season she was, ah I didn't like her at all. I was like, she didn't seem talented and bit uncomfortable on anything, and she also really didn't seem nice, but, in the next season which she came back I really started recognizing of more, she was pretty talented, but the fact that she always has to be so loud. I mean I can see why other queens get annoyed by her.

Int : You don't like her because she's so loud.

Kelly: Yeah. And also, like, no I don't know, she doesn't seem very spontaneous and sweet as a person or anything. I'm not sure. It's also really, it's still kind of difficult to, ah, actually get to know the personalities, because I don't, I mean, I'm not there, and also don't really watch Untucked, it's like a beside show, right? I've never really watched that I think that's more like behind the scenes, you actually get the personality. So... yeah.

Int : I think you can see what's going on in the werkroom also, about drama and so on.

Kelly: That's true. Oh, wait, now I think of one drag queen, ahm, I really really did like for the personality... ahm... let me think of it... it was... really helpful for other people, in most times, and but, and he was really really funny, but also kind of sweet in the end, like... oh, can I look up?

Int : Yeah, sure.

Kelly: It's so difficult to remember all the names...hmm... he's in season 6... I'm not if he was the winner actually... I think so, yeah, Bianca del Rio! I really really liked her. She was so sweet but so goddamn funny as well. I really like her personality. And also very confident. She really deserved to win. And I though I really like Adore Delano. But she was really one of the younger ones, but she was really chilled and also really

funny, it's like "ah (impersonating Adore's way of talking)".

Int : Then could you describe most impressive moments of Bianca and Adore? If you have particular moment that you thought "oh I really like Bianca/Adore!"

Kelly: Mmmm mostly for Bianca del Rio, was like, moments in the werkroom, when she really helped other people, really would make fun of them but not in a hurtful way. And that's so difficult to do. And she's so smart about it. That's really good. And, how, yeah, her looks were always really on point and her comedy completed as well. Adore Delano, was just really pretty.

Int : Being pretty is important?

Kelly: Yeah, I really like when something is aesthetically pleased, and the fact that, like, the dude or guy became such a feminine, example of, feminine beauty, it's really cool to see.

Int : I think you have already told a little bit, but what do you think funny about Drag Race?

Kelly: Yeah, I really like the slang in it, so, ahm, "Sashay away", "herstory", ahm, like "shade" and "read" each other, what else is there... ahm, I don't know, yeah, just the fact that you get really comfortable with the show because of a lot of them saying lines, they said same words then you get, kind of join with it. It makes, maybe bit [??] but really fun also. And the fact that it's not serious and only colorful clothes and they joke about Michelle Visage's boobs and everything like that. It's so weird and, yeah, everything is really funny.

Int : You think it's really different from your own culture or everyday life?

Kelly: I think it's definitely different, yeah. I mean, ahm, we have, with my friends I do quirky jokes as well, but not as extravaganza. I mean, in RuPaul's Drag Race, everything can happen and everything goes, and still I think in my life there're some boundaries I don't wanna cross because I wanna be socially acceptable, you know? And in a show like that, the extravaganza is really acceptable but outside of the world, it isn't. Yeah, it's maybe nice to escape that. Like, getting into the show where the shit happens is really normal.

Int : What do you take seriously about Drag Race?

Kelly: Oh, what I take seriously, ahm, the fact that they sometimes include some, ah, political view points into it as well, how some drag queens explain their stories and what happened to them, the hard things that they went through, like, some of them had diseases or family dying or something, and the fact that they feel oppressed by the

fact that Trump is president now. Everything like that all the difficulties they have to deal with, I think it's really important that they addressed as well. And I think it's really good of them that there are also like serious tones underneath it. The fact that they see each other as a family. They really support, in fact in Drag Race.

Int : Maybe could you describe one impressive moment?

Kelly: Hmmm, impressive moment... just any... drag queen, like broke down when explain their stories, how, I don't remember who it was exactly, but they were left by mother at bus stop when they were kids, and, yeah, how, I mean, their hobby started as make-up and dressing up as a drag queen, how they get through that. Those are more impressive moments I cried a little bit as well.

Int : You got emotional?

Kelly: Yeah, bit, sometimes.

Int : Actually, I wanted to ask if you got emotional when watching Drag Race, so it's one of the examples, right?

Kelly: Yeah, that's more serious moments. I'm not sure, but any moments, any drag queens cry. When I really like somebody and he had to go, it's like "oh, don't let her go!". And in the finale, when they win or they get a message from family members or anything like that. When they try to make you emotional, I get emotional (laugh).

Int : It's similar question, but have you felt empathy with drag queens?

Kelly: Yeah, definitely, like, ah, maybe not necessarily in, when they have to leave, I don't really believe in that they should have win or anything, I'm not always very empathic because, ah, sometimes they are really confident like "I can do this and I'm gonna win" and they were really bashing other queens, and they have to leave, then I'm like "hahaha~". So, then I'm not very empathic because of course they're not my favorite, but, ah, on the other hands, in actual serious moments, or when I really wanna, like, support the drag queen or when they really want to win, then I'm empathic about them.

Everyday experience

Int : I think we move on to final section of the interview.

Kelly: Okay. I also thinking maybe feel to talk a little bit, ahm, RuPaul like he addresses to some queens when they have to be real and they have to be vulnerable and

express their emotion in order people to like them and to be a better drag queen, and that is also something I think that create empathy when they were very real and they... You can see that they mean things they say and they really want something, and that's really what creates empathy when, ah, yeah when you believe it, you know? And some I didn't, like "yeah, okay". But, in, like, usually further in the season, drag queens become better and also more personal. Empathy grows as well, I think.

Int : Thank you for your opinion. That's really good point, I think. I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life in relation to watching Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life? And about what do you think at the moment?

Kelly: Uh! I don't know...I don't think about it a lot in everyday life, but I can imagine it pops in my mind anything LGBT related, so, some of my friends are gay and I imagine that they really would like to show [???] support or anything like that, or like some of slang or (laugh). They say "Yaaas kween!!!!" or something like that (laugh).

Int : Have you talked with your friend? About Drag Race?

Kelly: Ahm, not really, actually. Because he is not very feminine of his way of going, and I don't see him that much, so didn't really have the opportunity to talk to him about it, but I also don't wanna assume that he watches Drag Race, you know? Because there are a lot of, ahm, stereotypes when it comes to gay people and they are not always right and I don't wanna give in on them. So, like, I think it might be too much for him as well to watch it. So, I don't wanna offend him or assume that he likes that sort of things. Because it is very crazy show, so I can imagine that he doesn't see[?] and he like it. I've never really started about it

Int : Then do you talk about Drag Race with other people?

Kelly: Uhm, with my housemates, I watch, when seasons of Drag Race with them. So, we can kind of talk about it. And, ahm, especially wow watching it. It's really nice escape to show but I don't think I really think about it too much in my everyday life besides just watching.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior, or maybe your knowledge has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Kelly: Yeah, maybe. I think it has quite role realizing what gay people have to deal with, and well not in all cases, I mean, I think for example a friend of mine has really good

life, his parents are completely okay with it and ahm, actually almost everybody around him. That's good. But in America you really feel like the fear of the people and, that feels actually realistic as well. Because they get, they have to leave their house when their parents find out that they are gay or something like that. So, it has been, maybe a little bit of realization moment that not everybody is that good, and how people deal with to be accepted by your surroundings. And how important family is as well. Yeah.

Int : Do you think the situation is different from your culture, or in the Netherlands?

Kelly: Yeah, I really think so. Ahm, of course not all the cases, some, of course in the Netherlands it happens as well, not all the people are very accepted, but in my groups and networks and culture, generally very accepted. Yeah, to me it's really difficult. And, yeah, I mean, I've always been very accepting towards anything like that, so I think that [??] watching it as well. Because I wasn't accepting I'm not sure if I've watched it, I don't think at all, actually. So, yeah, I think it's very connected as well.

Int : Could you tell me what you have learned from Drag Race? I think you've already told something, but if you have other things in your mind besides LGBTQ issues...Anything will do if you could come up with, for example, make-up skills, fashion, or more mental aspect such as attitude towards challenges.

Kelly: I mean, it is whole different culture that like I opened the door when clicking on RuPaul's Drag Race, I learned new things like slang and, everything they do like how they put on their wigs and tits and, how they shade their faces with make-up, but also like when they tuck (laugh). I mean I had no clue (laugh). So, that's really funny, and maybe as well how confident they are when they're on stage. It's really impressive to see, and, yeah, I can learn something like that. Because confidence is really important when presenting yourself. But also in the challenges they have to face like how they have to develop and deal with the situations where they are uncomfortable. It's, yeah, like, it shows how to overcome things, I guess.

Int : Do you think it's useful for your life as well? Or is it completely different?

Kelly: Ah, maybe unconsciously? But I think it is bit too different to apply to my own life. But, ahm, maybe I started like appreciating femininity bit more, so, I like now once in a while, when I dress or something, normally I don't do that, yeah, I don't know,

maybe to, just that it's ok to stand out and to be comfortable or confident with yourself.

Int : That's beautiful. I think this was the last question, but, is there anything that you want to say?

Kelly: Also, RuPaul herself is very interesting person as well. Because it seems like within the show, RuPaul is like this kind of Goddess, like always perfect and also very kindness this "modely" figure. But, I mean, show is also very, how do you say it, I mean there's a lot of advertising in it, and it's really like, "buy this! Watch this! RuPaul everything!". So, it's really just a money machine for RuPaul. But, ah, I mean, RuPaul is like an example for all those people, but I think it's also made a little better than actually is. I can't believe that RuPaul is such a perfect person, and I think they would show it as well RuPaul isn't perfect either. But it doesn't really come across, I mean you see RuPaul as a history, very soft and loving, but, no one is like RuPaul, but, I would like to see some, some imperfections there, just like the other drag queens.

Int : That's really interesting!

Kelly: Yeah, yeah. I think , that's it.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 2

Name: Cassie

Age: 22

Occupation: Student

Nationality: Portuguese

Date: 22-03-2019

Location: University

Duration: 50min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview will be recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Cassie: I think maybe beginning of last year? Because I knew it existed but I just never really got the attention on the show, but for some reasons it became really popular in the Netherlands last year, and everyone is watching the show. So I guess I've been watching it in summer.

Int : Do you know what was the reason that it got popular in the Netherlands?

Cassie: I think because it became available on Netflix, So more people have access to it.

Int : You have heard of Drag Race from your friends or someone else?

Cassie: Yeah, from friends, and, I guess more people started watching it, and yeah, most people I know have like heard of it and watched it as well.

Int : What did you find special in the show when you saw it for the first time?

Cassie: I really, I kind always enjoy watching like reality televisions, I also saw Project Runway, that's going on now again, but I really like that it was about drag queens and, I don't know it was something different, it was always a lot of pop culture references like about weird stuff, and I like the aspect that, it's, usually reality shows are kind of fake or maybe constructed, and this one seems very genuine and, I don't know, real aspect. And it has also a lot of like films and music that I already know, so it's fun to see like the contestants and everything.

Int : What did you find strange in the show?

Cassie: Strange... I didn't think I found anything strange. But maybe it was nice seeing maybe underrepresented communities on like television and internet, on reality show, when usually you don't really see those kind of things become very popular anyway, so I guess it wasn't that strange or weird, it was just nice, I guess.

Int : Which seasons have you seen?

Cassie: Ah, season 6 up until I guess season 11 now. And all stars 4, I've seen.

Int : Which season is your favorite? And why?

Cassie: Oh, my favorite. Ah, I guess season 8 or 9. I like the contestants there, like what kind of the characters they had, drag queens, what they were, but also the challenges, talking about that, yeah because they also talk a lot about like Donald Trump was elected, some of the challenges were also more political, so I like seeing that part also.

Int : You found season 8 and 9 bit more political.

Cassie: Yeah, more political, maybe more engaging that aspects. And also because a lot of technology has changed like the camera, it's just like more professional, how it was filmed and everything. I like that as well.

Int : You noticed the technological change as well.

Cassie: Yeah, because I watch them backwards, so I'm season 6 now and comparing it to new season, I can see like all of different changes. So that's also quite interesting.

Int : Has the impression of Drag Race changed since you started watching it?

Cassie: I think it has changed, but maybe improved, a bit better, because I like, show should be diverse, so, showing all kinds of people, ages, nationalities now as well, like races,

body types, I guess in that aspects only changing better, but I like how diverse and creative they are. What they present, what kind of challenge, I guess.

Contents and contestants

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race. Please tell me about queens you like.

Cassie: Queens I like, oh! Ah, right now, I really enjoy Vanjie, Miss Vanjie, I think she is really funny, and I really like the jokes she makes, like, I mean, all the season, most of the people showing like narrating or giving commentary, it's always her, like she makes me laugh. I also really like Monet X Change and Monique Heart, I really like them together, I think it's very funny and I don't know they bring like different kind of humor, but I know they're also very religious, so I enjoyed watching them because they also talked about like their beliefs and growing up in church, and they said they made like a, they went to drag church or something, so they would go as drag queens to give like a sermon, so I find that really interesting like because religion is such like controversial topic when you are gay or lesbian or whatever, so I think it's really nice they include it as well. Ah, what other queens...Aquaria, I also really liked, and from the other season, Sasha Velour, I thought she was really creative. And, I don't know bit strange, but I...yeah, that's what I really think of now.

Int : Could you tell me why you like Aquaria?

Cassie: Ah, I guess because she is young and from what I know she was also watching Drag Race when she was like eleven or twelve, and then inspired her to go on the show, ah, the same as like Valentina, you know, because they pull from like fashion references, they try to recreate that as a drag queen, I find really creative and nice to watch basically.

Int : How about Sasha?

Cassie: I think she was maybe one of the more political queens, and, I don't know, how she presents the idea is always intellectual, like smart, but I also like how they create social media to make like a platform to represent ideas and connect with people, that maybe like, ten years ago on Drag Race you didn't have that. And now I guess they are more popular because of that as well. Like some of the drag queens they have like millions of followers, and that's like how do you, you know, from all of the different parts of the world, it's really interesting.

Int : Can I ask you about some other sides? You talked about humor and personality of Miss Vanjie, Monet and Monique. How about Aquaria, Valentina and Sasha? What do you think about their personality?

Cassie: From what I remember, I think Aquaria was more, maybe more shy, more quiet, but I guess because she was like young and show, maybe bit, like nervous to be there or something, it look like, maybe she was just reserved, I don't know, as a person, yeah, I guess because they are more what I've seen was reserved, but then when they went on the runway, when they did the challenges, they were really extravagant, so I'm not sure if that was how their personality is, if, because that was on the television show, like unnatural. But from all of the drag queens I think they're naturally funny, because you have to be to be drag queen, you know, you have to know how to entertain and I guess like make people want to watch you.

Int : Please tell me about queens you DO NOT like.

Cassie: About the contestants? Ah, who I don't like...I guess sometimes like from last season you have Yvie Oddly, her drag is very weird, I'm not sure if you watched the first episode, but she was the one came in with like a race car, and then some of them were like, "oh, I don't understand her drag" and then, the thing I think about it was, "okay, you're drag queen, like so many people critique you or they say, you know, that it's weird and that's not well, why would you critique another person, another drag?" I don't know, I would expect them to be more accepting as drag queens. And I don't know, the other thing I don't like is when they are very mean or bullying or talking behind each other's backs, you know, saying, it was, I don't know, critique each other basically, when they're giving their small commentary like video. Yeah I guess that is what I think that stand out to me.

Int : Could you tell me the queens you don't like? Or you don't have any particular queens?

Cassie: Ah, I mean, I'm watching season 6 now, I don't like the Australian queen, ah, Courtney Act. I can understand like why she's popular, why she's good on the show, but I don't like her personality. It's not, yeah, I don't know, it's not that I hate her, but it's not my favorite of drag queens. Because she comes off as a little bit arrogant, I think. That's main thing. Like you can be arrogant and funny, but she is just arrogant and not that funny.

Int : Can you recall episodes / situations / challenges when you really felt empathy with

a contestant?

Cassie: Empathy...I guess, ah when they talk about like every season, almost every episode, you have this moment where they are talking about their, like normal life or their past, and, for example, when they talk about religion, or being bullied in school stuff like that. It's not I can directly relate to, because I don't have the same experience, but I like that they're being vulnerable. And, ah you also see, like, whenever, like one or two of them they are [???] each other, they have like problem of something, when they're talking about what's something about personal, then other support them, and they, you know, like try to talk to them, be friends, something like that. Like in season 6, you have Bianca Del Rio, and I think it's Trinity K Bonet, she's always like very defensive, she doesn't talk, and she starts talking about like her problems, and Bianca always support her and kind of like friend or mother, I guess. So I really enjoy that aspect, because I can understand them more, and understand why they are who they are. So I really like that.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations or challenges when you really felt sorry for a contestant?

Cassie: Ah, I guess one of the last ones, on season 11, the last queen that got eliminated, Honey Davenport, because sometimes I also watch the Untucked, the backstage video, and she was like really crying because she was eliminated, and I was so sad, like you see her coming off the stage, she was already crying a bit, but, they, after coming off the stage, just fell into the ground, like crying, because she was sad to leave, and I thought really sad for her as well. Also I think lip-sync, she wasn't, she was the worst among other queens, so I could understand why, but I really liked her personality, so I was sad to see her going home.

Int : As for personality, which aspect do you like about Honey Davenport?

Cassie: I guess she was kind of similar to maybe Monet X Change and Monique, that she was funny, she had good jokes, observations, yeah, I guess that she was, seems very likable in the show. That's what I like.

Int : When did you feel happy for a contestant?

Cassie: Ah, I think it's All Stars, or maybe it was the season that Monique Heart was in, no, I think it was All Stars, when she and Latrice Royale were going to be, eliminated, both of them, and they had lip-sync, and both of them were good, but I really liked Monique better because I was fan of hers, and then, Latrice was saved, and

Monique was also saved, so I was really happy for that because I really enjoyed seeing not only her reaction but other drag queens' reaction, I don't want her to go, so I was happy, obviously. It was like "haaa!" And also she fell to the ground (laugh). Very dramatic.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments?

Cassie: Ah, one I can remember now is I think on one of the last season, that have Monique, Monet and ah I think it was Asia O'hara, and they were in the werkroom doing their dresses, and then spider appeared on one of their dresses, and then they were like "Ah!! Spider!!" I think it was so silly all of them were freaking out because it's spider, but it's so funny because it's exactly the same way I would react. So, to me that makes it relatable more. And, maybe another moment, ah, I also enjoyed when they do the snatch game, all of the snatch games I watched I really enjoyed, but I think I would say I liked Monet's snatch game, she played Maya Angelou, and it was so funny, because it was like very similar to I guess what Maya Angelou would have said, but she also did like her mannerism, she did a poem, that was very unexpected and very funny.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments?

Cassie: I guess always on, like the final episode of any season, when they, ah RuPaul gets pictures of their boy self, or their younger self, and they have to say, like what would you say to 5 years old and the name, and they always cry, like all of the queens cry, and I think that's most serious moment because I guess being on the show, you don't really think about the past as much, just doing the challenges, and for the television, it's like but wait, it's like thinking about their past and, yeah I think it's very serious.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Cassie: I did get emotional when it's the more serious part like that, but it's not that I would cry or something. It's just, I feel empathy for them.

Int : What do you think when watching serious part of the show?

Cassie: Ah, I think I feel sad watching them, ah, describe the situation and then they get very emotional, and then you can see that they are drag queens and they have like persona, but they are just human beings. And they cry as well, they, I don't know, talk about serious experiences, and that's what I'm thinking about like, as if it was my friend or something, that's telling me the story, so I feel sad for them.

Int : Could you describe the most impressive moments for you?

Cassie: Ah, yeah...hm...I mean, I guess I really liked when Sasha Velour won, and that's her, I think her mother or father was in the audience, but I think the reason why she had her head shaved is because her mother had breast cancer, then she lost her hair, and then she wanted the parents in the audience, I think that was like very impressive, showing, you know, I guess respect for her parents something like that. I really enjoyed that moment.

Int : Do you think it is relatable?

Cassie: I think that's very relatable at least how I am with my parents, I could understand why she was doing it, but it was also like kind of awareness moment, I guess, showing that. Awareness for breast cancer.

Int : Yeah, I was really impressed as well. To be honest, I was crying (laugh).

Cassie: Oh! (laugh) I usually don't cry. I'm just either very happy or sad, but I don't really cry. Most of the time I watch Drag Race with my cousin, and she cries all the time (laugh).

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Cassie: Ah, well, I think they have to be funny, maybe even if they're not funny, they have to have something that makes them stand out or unique. They should have like not very specific like fashion sense or how they dress, but it should be maybe little bit consistent, ah, I don't know, they just have to have something that makes them unique, stand out or, have, like good story or good character. And I think they have to be relatable and humble at the same time, like I think that's one of the reasons I don't really enjoy seeing Courtney Act, because she doesn't come off as humble to me. So, I guess that's why.

Int : Your favorite queens are humble, do you think?

Cassie: I think they're humble, but they can be very arrogant, but they are funny about it. That's what I like. Obviously like, I don't think that's quality of the material or if it's very expensive, it's more what kind of clothing they can use to tell the story or something about character. Like Monique's outfits, they didn't seem that expensive, but it was funny because it was like her character.

Int : Like, brown cow moment?

Cassie: I love that!! I think that's so funny, like that's why I enjoy watching Drag Race, because like only a drag queen can come up with something like that.

Int : Only a drag queen can come up with...

Cassie: Like something crazy, funny, and also Monet, she has like soap and sponge, and also in All Stars, she brought the sponge! Only drag queens come up with things like that I feel. Like very specific and silly, but that makes it so fun.

Int : Maybe, other, "ordinary" people can't do the same thing?

Cassie: I think they can, but I don't think it comes off as funny. I think they also have to be a little bit weird and extravagant for it, to come up with it.

Int : I think you've already told me, but what is not acceptable behavior?

Cassie: I guess, this is something that applies to all people, maybe don't be, discriminatory against people or races or whatever, that should not be okay. In season, I think one of the last episodes I watched, they were doing the debate challenge, and it was Latrice and other black queen, it was like, one between them, she made like joke about them being like the help or maid or something, it was perceived as very racist, and she was saying people should not get offended, I thought, "you can't do that". Also the judges said, critiqued her on that, "it wasn't seen as funny, it was just seen as offensive". I think that's one of the things like they should be careful about.

Int : I'd like to ask you about beauty or feminine side of the show. Of course, drag queens are wearing women's clothing and making something, like really beautiful costumes. What do you think beautiful about drag queens?

Cassie: I think as drag queens, they are always inspiring to look very feminine, but like exaggerate feminine, like exaggerate kind of beauty, but you don't necessarily need to have feminine shape to portrait that. Like you have, in last season, you have Yvie Oddly but also you have Milk I think, you also have Alaska, maybe as well. They are like very, their body shape, characters are very straight, masculine, but it's mixing masculine and feminine, I think that makes it beautiful, like everybody can be represented, and it doesn't have to be a man in woman's clothing, but it can also be, for example Gia Gunn, she was transgender, she became transgender after being on the show for the first time, and now she was female but still being drag queen, and I think that was important for people to see, also you don't have to fit in the certain, like, feminine stereotype to be a drag queen, basically.

Int : That question was bit complicated, sorry. But, thank you for your opinion. You think being feminine is not always necessary for drag queen, for men, but also for women as well?

Cassie: Yeah, I think so. For me, that's obviously like seeing them almost looking like women, the body shape and make-up, I think it's fun to watch, but at the same time, I understand like that's exaggeration in the same way that maybe women are perceived as having to attain the beauty idea, everyone can be just themselves. It doesn't matter if you are woman or man, and I think that's what drag queens are also trying to show on the show, like the diversity, everything.

Int : Thank you. Next question is about RuPaul. Do you like RuPaul's style of drag?

Cassie: I like it, but I think for me it is a little bit old-fashioned compared to maybe the more, younger or other kinds of queens that they show on the show, but I think it's always like very polished, and almost like a Barbie, like very perfect, so in that way, I can appreciate it, but it's not my favorite kind of drag. Maybe a little too glamour or something, I don't know.

Int : Have you ever felt that a choice by Ru Paul was not fair?

Cassie: I think so, ah, I think maybe the choices are always obviously made, because it's television show, like it has to have some drama, I guess, but sometimes contestants or the judges are little bit harsh in the critique, I guess in past seasons they have been a little bit more soft. Like in one of the last episodes of season 11, you have Mercedes Iman, and she was critiqued that she wasn't dancing very much, very expressive and she said she had a stroke, and that her, like half of her body was paralyzed. I think maybe if she had told them that before, they would have been more considerate, but I guess it's also makes it good television like, seeing not only the contestants be vulnerable, but also the judges being more empathetic. But sometimes I think they're very harsh. But also like the show has been edited, so you don't know what else they have said.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life and bit more general questions in relation to watching Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Cassie: I guess, ah sometimes it's not funny situation at all, maybe if I'm stressed or something, I just think about this funny moments and like laugh a little bit. But also as the reaction as I said I watch mainly with my cousin, but she's sixteen so I guess that's a way of us keeping in touch (laugh). Like, seeing, you know, and we

talk about it and laugh about it, whenever I'm with her, that's when all the references of RuPaul comes out.

Int : Your cousin is also in the Netherlands?

Cassie: Yeah.

Int : You are watching Drag Race together?

Cassie: Yeah, whenever we can watch together. That's always fun.

Int : Could you tell me what you talk about Drag Race with her?

Cassie: We talk about episodes and she would send me like all the Instagram memes about contestants or all kind of things that they have said. Yeah, it's quite funny because she also says like "I'm the person that understands Drag Race the most from our friends", it's funny in that aspect. And then she tries to explain like all of our conversation to her parents. And that, yeah, that is quite funny because they can't understand or something, you know.

Int : Why do you think Drag Race became so popular?

Cassie: I guess now again going back to what I see with my cousin and she explains other friends, people have become much more accepting of like drag culture and LGBT culture, so a lot more people are watching it, and just people that are lesbian and gay and transgender or whatever. And also it's just fun to see something very like extravagant. It's reality TV but it's not something like watching the Kardashians, it's another kind of lifestyle and maybe things they talk about aren't necessarily as interesting or relevant, and I think RuPaul touches upon a lot of different issues relevant and interesting.

Int : Who do you think the target audiences of this show?

Cassie: I think maybe in the beginning it might have been like people that as I said LGBT or something like that, but I think now they target for anyone that just enjoys like watching RuPaul. Yeah, I think obviously, I think it is targeted for like younger generation, like up to thirty or thirty-five, now you also see like much older drag queens coming on, so I guess it is the show for everyone, really. I guess it's not specifically target towards straight people, but somehow people just like watching the show. And I guess with all the challenges and like the songs used for lip-sync, always mixing very new contemporary pop songs and very old songs, and I guess in that way they try to represent every kind of interest, as possible.

Int : What do you think people who watch Drag Race could learn from the program or contestants?

Cassie: Maybe to have more empathy for people, for people in general, because like when the drag queens talk about like vulnerable moment or problems in their life, you can see everyone has problem, so, they can just be more empathetic, and but also learn about like maybe minorities how they are affected in daily life, like they also talk about people being prejudice, discrimination, so maybe learning more about that aspect. Maybe people in their daily life somehow think about these problems, but if you are minority, this is something that you have to deal with every day. So, maybe to have more empathy for those people.

Int : Could you tell me what you have learned from Drag Race?

Cassie: What I have learned...I guess a lot of like pop culture references. Also this kind of new things, like their religion and everything. I mean I think it's very interesting because I'm not ever religious person but I can like respect someone's religion. Ah, even on the, Mercedes Iman, she was talking about being Muslim drag queen, but she didn't want to talk about it. I was just thinking like "why don't you want to talk about it?" But I guess because that's something so personal, and Muslims are being like discriminated against every day, maybe if she talks about it more then people will criticize her, something like that. I don't know. Yeah, but I guess I learned maybe all this kind of like difference, references too. Different things. That's what I like about it.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Cassie: I think maybe not my behavior like in everyday life, but if I'm talking to someone that also watches Drag Race, we will like say something or do something, that's related to the show, my thought, I don't think my thought has changed that much. I can just appreciate the show because it makes funny, makes me laugh. Yeah, I guess that's it. Maybe just to be more like nothing so much about thing, just, bit more relaxed, weird, whatever.

Int : Is there anything that you want to say?

Cassie: No, good luck with rest of your thesis!

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 3

Name: Yoko

Age: 28

Occupation: Employee

Nationality: Japanese

Language: Japanese (*translated into English by the author)

Date: 22-03-2019

Location: Skype

Duration: 80min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview will be recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Yoko: I watched season 8, it was 4 or 5 months ago. And I thought I don't have to watch more of them, but I watched some of the seasons because I decided to join the interview.

Int : Why did you start watching Drag Race?

Yoko: Why I started watching Drag Race is because I studied gender and queer studies at the university, and I like, I'm somehow interested in LGBT issues, I don't know, but I like gay or lesbian or that kind of things. And the title attracted me to watch. Drag is

kind of peculiar, isn't it? I think drag queens are special or peculiar in LGBT community, so I just started watching it.

Int : What do you mean by "peculiar"?

Yoko: Ah, I think LGBT means sexual orientation, but drag queens are different, for example, they are like Matsuko (Japanese TV personality/drag queen). It's not always the case that they love men even though they dress as women, so it's different from sexual orientation, I think. I was wondering if it is same or not in other country.

Int : You just started watching it because you found it, not because someone recommended you watch it.

Yoko: Yeah, I started myself, spontaneously (laughing).

Contents and contestants

Int : What did you find special, fun or strange in the show? What was your first impression?

Yoko: Ah, as the first impression, you know, drag queens, who were relatively known in each city, get together and they are judged and criticized in challenges like fashion contest or lip-syncing, and I was like "okay, I see, I understand the process". That's all.

Int : Did you find something interesting in the show?

Yoko: Interesting? Ah, I think drag queens are already minorities compared to ordinary people. And among minorities, some of them say like "oh, she is from XX, it's super countryside", so, there is discrimination within the minority community. Some of them are boasting like "I'm from NY!" and appealing they're upper-class or polished or something like that. And they talk about other queens like "she is such a country girl", so I thought what they are doing is exactly the same as women (laugh), like trying to make hierarchy in a group.

Int : That's interesting. Which seasons have you seen?

Yoko: Season 8 and 9. I watched all the episodes of season8, but I found it bit boring in the end, because, it's just showing jealousy or quarrel between drag queens and it's the same as women. You can enjoy it because it is between drag queens, but I think there are too much shit, mean things going on.

Int : Then, is it difficult to answer which season is your favorite, right?

Yoko: I didn't have favorite one particularly, I was just watching like "what's going on?". But what I found interesting is that, I watched it with my boyfriend. He was just watching their fashion, like making outfits by themselves and walking on the runway, so he was

just watching superficial things like looks, but he thought it's bit gross. He really likes fashion, so maybe he was focusing on that part, but he only recognized what he could see with his eyes, like he didn't see their behavior or attitude at all. The meaning of the conversation didn't interest him at all. So, I forced him to watch it in the end.

Int : So, you started watching Drag Race because it is about drag queens, but you thought it is the same as the battle between women. I'd like to ask you if your impression has changed through watching it.

Yoko: I expected drag queens are good friends because they are in the same minority community, but there is a community in the community for minorities and discrimination as well. And then, I think, drag queens are relatively, ah, I don't say they're abnormal, but like, peculiar, and they tend to be looked down on or discriminated, compared to normal people in general. But, there are some people who are discriminated within the drag community and I was bit surprised. I think black people tend to be criticized or discriminated. For example, you have Kim Chi. Others were excited, like "wow! It's Kim Chi!", admiring her make-up. But for me, it's just really Asian look, I mean, because Asian people are flat-faced and she has to do something special, like fantasy, with her make-up. I thought her make-up might be exotic for foreign people (not Asian people). And some queens' make-up are really rough. Some of them try to look like real women, and some are doing it just as an entertainment. Those who put make-up really well are either respected or criticized harshly. I think it's extreme what others say to these queens. Like, "oh, they really look like women and beautiful!" or criticized.

Int : About which queen are you talking? I mean, who do you think beautiful?

Yoko: I can't remember the name. I thought she was beautiful, she had her hair curled like 1960s' style. She wasn't criticized and she was treated bit different. But, if you can do make-up very well but your outfit is not stylish, you would be criticized "it's tacky", like, "did you see her outfit? I can't believe it". It's so woman.

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race. Please tell me about queens you like.

Yoko: I can't remember the name, but drag queens I like are who can do make-up paying attention to details and look like real women.

Int : Why do you like queens who are like real women?

Yoko: Because they meet my own beauty standard. I think queens doing over-the-top make-

up is for entertainment and I don't want to imitate that kind of queens. But when I see queens who are good at make-up, I'm excited that I could be beautiful as well because they transform themselves from men to beautiful women. And I didn't think black people were beautiful.

Int : Why?

Yoko: I think black people have big nose and, I know it's bad to say it, but they look like gorillas or something. Especially black men, they are biologically male and their nose look really big. Then, I feel they look big-boned rather than beautiful. I think white people are relatively beautiful. And who was that...she talks Spanish, flamenco-ish, ah...

Int : Valentina?

Yoko: Yeah! I think she is beautiful! And I dislike this queen (sending me a picture of Vanessa Vanjie Mateo). She was criticized that she didn't have a good taste. I don't like her. She was not fully feminine nor fully entertainer. I don't have any favorite queens in particular. Queens I think beautiful, judging it objectively and calmly, are who look like real women. I do remember who I don't like, on the other hand, I don't like Naomi. And...ah, Acid Betty, but I like her in different way. Who was that...I don't like Bob the Drag Queen. Because she is kind a half-assed. She's like an old lady in the tired bar or something. The way she laughs isn't, like, polished or sophisticated. I don't like that. I like beautiful and bit snobby queens.

Int : So, you don't like Bob and Naomi because they look like old ladies in the tired bar.

Yoko: No. They look cheap. They could do better make-up if they make effort a bit more. Both of them. They are both black men and their make-up don't look elaborate, they put only eye blows and eyelashes.

Int : So, you appreciate a kind of elaborate beauty.

Yoko: Yes, I think it's beautiful.

Int : You pay attention to make-up, right?

Yoko: Yeah. I look their outfits and hairstyle as well. And their skin, especially when they're out of drag. They appear as men in the interview, I mean, commentary. It's okay there is a gap between their appearances in and out of drag, but I don't like their skin very dirty, like too much pimple or something. Acid Betty's skin is beautiful when she's out of drag. So I like her.

Int : So, you think drag queens should be beautiful when they're out of drag?

Yoko: Yeah. I think she's a real drag queen.

Int : What do you think the most important factor to be a "real" drag queen?

Yoko: Hmmm, they should look clean and tidy. They should look expensive and polished. Because they are queens, not bitches. Like, they can be, I don't say arrogant, but, like... unapproachable? For example, one of the challenges was taking their pictures with former winners, and there was a queen with a mask or face piece, and I think she is feminine, really beautiful, and she is a real drag queen.

Int : Do you think atmosphere, attitude and behavior are also important?

Yoko: I think so. I feel femininity from how they sit on a chair, how they give the eye.

Int : Being feminine is important for drag queens?

Yoko: For me, yeah. I like feminine queens.

Int : As for personality or character, what kind of queens do you like?

Yoko: For example, Valentina didn't say mean things and she was relatively reserved. I didn't like Acid Betty talking a lot of shit about other people.

Int : Do you think they are good queens if they do not talk a lot of shit about others or they are kind to others?

Yoko: Ah, if people want drag queens to be funny or to entertain them, it's better for them that queens talk shits and the show gets more drama. I don't know. I can't judge if they're true drag queens when they appear in the media. I mean, they might have been different when being in the city they come from, and they might be acting for the entertainment because they're on TV. I like really feminine queens. But I know the show wouldn't be interesting if all the contestants are equally feminine and reserved and no one is loud or comedic like middle-aged lady or something.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations or challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Yoko: I could understand their feeling when I could see they really wanna win. I don't fully understand what they think beauty is, but I can see they kind of arm with make-up and outfits and go towards what they think ideal beauty. It's same as women. If you're competing with women, I can understand you wanna win.

Int : Do you have same experience, like competing with others?

Yoko: You know I really hate losing. But I won't obviously show that. Some of them are conscious that other people watch their behaviors because it's television. They're consciously showing the process, like how much they want to win and how they

execute in the challenge. On the other hand, some of them show only the result, like how their work is done. Valentina is beautiful in general, I think. So, she's trying to win with her beauty, while some are trying to win with gossip or something. They are all different but they are kind of calculating all the time. You know what I mean?

Int : So, some of them try to do something dramatic intentionally because they know they are being filmed, is it right?

Yoko: Yeah, that's right.

Int : Could you recall scenes or queens who shows drama intentionally?

Yoko: I think Naomi Smalls was doing that. She was, kind of, too much. And who was that, Chi Chi or someone said she didn't have enough fabric, I think. I don't think she was beautiful...she looked cheap. She emphasized her butt. I think butt is one of the means to sexually appeal to gay men, but emphasizing too much butt is, ah, I don't know, way too much. It's same as a woman who is showing off her boobs. It's even vulgar.

Int : What do you think about the way drag queens show the sex appeal?

Yoko: Ah, for example, for women, the sex appeal is related to boobs and butt, I think, but that is not directly connected to sex in fact. Emphasizing body parts are kind of seductive, but there are some steps before having sex, like talking each other or dating. But, in my mind, the connection between gay people and sex is kind of straightforward. I think there's prejudice like "gay men have sex and die because of disease". And I don't feel comfortable to see them emphasizing sex appeal because it is too direct.

Int : So, you think there's difference between gay men and straight female about sex appeal, right?

Yoko: Yes, women have a kind of filter, not direct. Gay people are open or direct or, they're like "hey bitch!", and they enjoy being bitch or something. Their sex appeal is too much, and it's like a performance. And I don't know, I'm sometimes confused if they are drag queens or transgender. If they are too beautiful and too feminine, then I'm like "hm, is she really a drag queen? Is she a transgender?", because they really look like women and just a little bit too much. So, I think they might be out of the range of drag queen because they look really natural. If they look natural, then I doubt if they are drag queens. I don't know, if they just like dressing as women, or they really want to be women. If their mind is female and they dress as women, then is it drag? I think

they might be just women.

Int : Could you come up with someone?

Yoko: Maybe Raja from season 2. She's super beautiful. She looks normal woman.

Int : So, when you see natural and feminine queens, you think they might be transgender, right?

Yoko: By the way, the definition of drag queen is men in women's dress, right?

Int : You think that's the definition, right?

Yoko: Hmmm, actually it's difficult, I think drag queens are who do not undergo a sex change surgery, do not wear women's clothes in everyday life but dress as women in the pride parade or events. I don't know.

Int : Then, I want to ask you if you have felt sorry or got emotional for a contestant.

Yoko: I often think they are similar to women, but I've never felt something negative. If I had to say, I feel sorry for everyone who gets critique from RuPaul. Because, the definition of drag is vague and they can be over-the-top or anything, they can do fantasy or something surreal like Kim Chi, and they can be beautiful with orthodox way. But they are judged and criticized even though the definition is not clear. Everyone talks a lot of shit, like making fun of someone from countryside. They are really like women. They make a group with people from big city and tease the weaker one. Drag queens say something really straightforward. So, judges are also harsh, like criticizing they look cheap and not good at using neon-color or something. I'm like "are you serious? How can you say such a thing?".

Int : On the other hand, do you feel happy or positive for a contestant?

Yoko: Ah, can I talk about really personal, my own feeling?

Int : Yeah, sure.

Yoko: I'm happy that I'm not that hairy (laugh). Seriously, I talked with my boyfriend that drag queen have to make a lot of effort to prepare, like to shave or something. Even women feel it tiresome to put make-up on every day, but they take a lot of time. So, I talked with my boyfriend that I'm relieved I'm not hairy. They become really beautiful even though they have beard. And they have to tuck! I feel sorry for them. I don't understand why they want to wear tight outfits, but it cannot be helped if they want to do that for sex appeal.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Yoko: Hmm, I don't have anything, not because I cannot remember but I watched the show without feeling any emotion. I originally studied gender and sexuality and I've watched some films regarding these issues, so, I don't think the show is well done. I mean, it's not beautiful that they make queens compete each other. Of course, they make a lot of effort, but I'm not comfortable to see a lot of jealousy or envy, gossip, bragging and so on. I feel it's sometimes rigged, or artificial? I don't know. I expected to see more about make-up or cosmetics. I don't think it's beautiful how they show the relationship between queens, because they talk too much shit.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments? Can you recall scenes?

Yoko: Ah, I don't remember.

Int : Then, could you describe the most impressive moments for you?

Yoko: The first scene, each of them enters the room. It was interesting to see where they sat down at the table, how they made a community, what their relationship was like, especially when they knew each other before coming to the show. I expected they were good friends because they were same minorities, but there was a certain gap or discrimination within the community.

Everyday experience

Int : You already told that drag queen's behavior is similar to women's behavior. I'd like to ask you what you think the difference between drag queens and women.

Yoko: I don't like if women behave like drag queens. Drag queens exaggerate femininity, both in good and bad way. They show femininity by make-up, clothing and curvy body, but they also show bad aspects of women, like they tend to make groups, criticize behind each other's back and interfere other's business. So, they are like the most annoying version of women, even though they are men.

Int : So, they exaggerate femininity not only with looks but also with inside.

Yoko: I won't say they misunderstand femininity, but drag queens exaggerate femininity, I mean, it's way too much.

Int : Why do you think drag queens behave femininely? Why is it important that they emphasize femininity, like make their body curvy?

Yoko: I think there are some reasons. One is for performance. It is interesting that men act like women. Secondly, it's entertainment. It's kind of surreal. And then, it's self-expression. Many of drag queens are gay or bisexual, I guess. And it is one of the

means to express that they are minority. They can avoid being offended if it is entertainment. I think when they dress as women, they can gain empathy from women, compared to when they stay as men and tell people "I'm gay". So, I think it is a kind of self-assertion.

Int : Why do you think women can empathize with drag queens?

Yoko: It's difficult to answer why only women can do it, but, because they are incomplete. I mean, they are biologically men even though they dress as women. They cannot be pregnant, they don't have vagina, they don't have boobs, they have the Adam's apple. They have male aspects but try to be women. I think they are kind of cute because they are incomplete. I don't say I look down on drag queens, but I kind of feel like I can advise them to be women.

Int: As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life in relation to watching Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life? And about what do you think at the moment?

Yoko: Maybe when I see rainbow flags or pride parades? But I don't think much about Drag Race. I often think of LGBT issues. For example, when I see people of LGBT community in the city, or when I think of artist or watch films. I look up the artists and find that they are homosexuals. I notice there are many gay people who are good at art or something special. I watched The Imitation Game yesterday, and Alan Turing was also homosexual as well.

Int : You often think of LGBT issues in everyday life. Is it because you studied it at the university?

Yoko: Yeah, I think so. And I often notice lesbian couples or transvestite in the city. When I notice that, I think of LGBT issues. I like Queen, I like Freddy Mercury. I cannot help imagining that if the songs were influenced by the affair he had. I guess people are good at art if they are in fleeting love. You don't think so?

Int : Hmmm, I don't know...

Yoko: Because if you are a man and love someone who is also a man, it's super sad if it's hopeless love. It's too sad. If the possibility to be loved is lower than normal people, LGBT people would have to go through a lot of difficulties. That's why they can develop the ability to express sad feeling through art or music, I guess.

Int : Who do you think the intended public of this show?

Yoko: Maybe women in their 20s or 30s? I think women would watch it more than men. Or maybe those who have friends who are these kinds of people. If they're not interested in this kind of topic, they won't watch it. It's interesting that they show drastic transformation. If not, it would not be meaningful to show their face without make-up. I'm impressed that they study hard how to touch their earrings, how to cross their legs or how to walk in high heels. I think they are better than me. What I found interesting was that everyone took off high heels in the backstage. They feel pain with their foot as women do. I could feel the same way.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Yoko: How to be self-assertive? It's not enough to just say what you want, both at the workplace or home. If you want to do something, you have to convince others. So, I think we can see the process how to convince others, like, how to make a statement and how to be recognized and admitted. Drag is a kind of tool to be self-assertive, I think. They need to make people admit who they are, like as a right, not in selfish way. They make an effort not only about outfits or posing, but they try something in the tiny community. We could learn how to show their effort and make people admit them. We can see the process of making an effort.

Int : Could you tell me what you have learned from Drag Race?

Yoko: I feel like I don't make enough effort when I see drag queens turn into feminine women. They express femininity, even though they have limited range of motion with their body, their act is delicate and nuanced. The way they talk, some of them are like middle-aged women, but they imitate women and look really feminine. Because they even have beard but turn into beautiful women, I feel I have to do better make-up. Sometimes I feel sorry I don't put much effort only because I was born as a woman (laugh).

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

***Original transcript of the interview with Yoko (in Japanese)**

今日は時間を取ってくれてありがとうございます。私は今オランダの大学院でアートとカルチャーの社会学を勉強してます。それで、今修士論文を書いている、ル・ポールのドラァグレースの女性のファンについて考えているのね。私がそうなんだけど。今日のインタビューは、修士論文のメ

インに使わせてもらいます。観たきっかけから始まって、内容の話とか、ドラッグクイーンについて聞かせてもらって、最後に日常生活とか個人的なことも少し聞かせてもらいます。よろしくお願いします。

Int : 最初に聞かせてもらいたいんだけど、(番組は)いつ見始めたの？

Yoko: 4~5 か月前くらいに、シーズン8を見て、もう(これ以上見なくて)いいかなあと思ったんだけど、インタビュー受けるってなって、ちょこちょこつまんで観た感じ。

Int : 観ようと思ったきっかけは？

Yoko: なんで観ようかと思ったのかは、私も大学でジェンダー専攻してて、特にクイアスタディーズを勉強してたっていうのもあるし、LGBT とか好きだし、なんか、その、ゲイとかレズとかなんかわかんないけど好きなのね。タイトルも興味引いたのと、ドラッグクイーンで、ちょっと特殊じゃない？LGBT の中でも特殊かなと思ってて、それでなんか見てみようと思って見てみた。

Int : 特殊っていうとどういうところで特殊？

Yoko: LGBT っていうのは性的指向を指すんだと思うんだけど、ドラッグクイーンっていうのはまた別かなと思ってて。簡単に言うとマツコとかそうじゃない？性的指向が必ずしも女を装うから男性が好きっていう訳でもない人もいるじゃん。ただちょっと女装家みたいな。それが外国だとどっちなんだろうと思って見た。

Int : なるほどね。誰かに勧められたとかじゃなくて、自分で Netflix で見つけて観たってことだね。

Yoko: そう、自発的に観た。笑

Int : 初めて見たときに特別だな、面白いとか変だなとか、最初の印象はどうだった？

Yoko: 最初の印象としては、あれじゃん、各地方にいるある程度ドラッグクイーンとして活動してる人たちを集めて、ファッションコンテストとかアテレコで歌うたって点数つけて批評するみたいなのがあったから、へー、そんな感じで進めていくんだなーって感じ。

Int : ここは面白いなって思ったポイントあった？

Yoko: 面白い？なんか、ドラッグクイーンでだけでもマイノリティだと思うわけ。普通の人たちと比べて。マイノリティの中でも、「あの子って〇〇地方じゃん、田舎」って、マイノリティの中でも差別じゃないけど、コミュニティの差別があるんだなって。「私はNY出身だから」って言って、上流階級じゃないけど、都会なのを意識してやってるとか、「あの子は田舎っぽい」とか言って、やってることは普通の女と変わんないんだなと思って。笑 マウンティングだなーって。

Int : シーズン8は観て、あと他のシーズンも観た？

Yoko: シーズン 8 と 9 はちょこちょこ。シーズン 8 は全部見たけど最後らへんつまんないなと思って。女の妬み嫉みをドラッグクイーンに変えただけっていうか。ドラッグクイーンっていうフィルターがかかるから面白く見れるんだろうけど、なんか悪口とか多いな一みたいな。

Int : じゃあ、特別気に入ってるシーズンみたいなのは特になんかことかな。

Yoko: 特に好きなシーズンはなくて、ただのドラマっていうかドキュメンタリーっていうか、どんな感じかな一ってぼーっと見てた。けど、おもしろかったのは、彼氏と一緒に見たんだよね。彼氏はファッションの方、服を作って、ランウェイやってっていうの、外的要因しか見てないけど、(態度や行動が) 女っぽいとかなくて、むしろちょっと気持ち悪いとか。ファッションが好きな人だから、そういうところ見てるのかもしれないけど、本当に目に見える部分しか見てない感じ。会話とかの意味とかは全然興味がない。だからもう、半分強制的に一緒に見せた感じだよ。

Int : ドラッグクイーンっていうことで観始めたけど、女同士の闘いと変わらないって思うようになったって言ってたけど、他にも印象として変化したことってある？

Yoko: 勝手にマイノリティのコミュニティは仲良くやってると思ってたけど、マイノリティはマイノリティの中でコミュニティがあって、差別あるんだなって。そこでも、えらいとかえらくないとかじゃないけど、一般的なノーマルな人たちと比べてドラッグクイーンってアブノーマルチックな位置だから、結構下に見られがち、差別されがちな対象なのに、その中でも差別される人ってどんだけって。やっぱり黒人が多いなとか思った。キムチ一って出てくるでしょ。その人に対しては「キムチだ〜！」って言ってたのが、メイクがすごいみたいな。でも、私の視点的には、メイクがすごいっていうか、アジア人っぽいなって。顔が平らだからメイクでどうにかファンタジーみたいな感じでやってるのかな一って。だからそういうのが外人に受けるのかな一みたいな。化粧のやり方もさ、結構雑な人もおるやん。ほんとに女に似せてる人と、エンターテインメント的な人おるやん。なんか、きれいにやってる人たちは比較的、尊敬されるかなされるか、極端になって印象。「女性に近い、きれい」って尊敬されるか。

Int : どのクイーンがそれにあてはまると思った？

Yoko: ごめん、名前が出てこないの。1960 年代みたいな感じで髪が外にカールして、っていう人はきれいだなと。当たり障りもなくディスられることもなく。ちょっと別な人って扱い。ただ、化粧うまくてもちょっとファッションがちょっとでも悪かったら「ダサイ」みたいな。「見た？あの格好」みたいな、マジで女やん。

Int : じゃあ、内容のこともすでに聞いたんだけど、もうちょっと聞かせてもらいたくて。好きな、お気に入りのドラッグクイーンは誰になるかな？

Yoko: 誰って言われて名前が出てこないんだけど、私が好きなドラァグクイーンは、化粧が細かくて女性に近い人が好き。

Int : なんで女性に近い人が好き？

Yoko: 自分の中のきれいの基準にあってるから。派手なのはエンターテインメントだなーって感じで、それになりたいとかまねしたいとも思わないけど、化粧がきれいなドラァグクイーン見ると、元は男なのにこんなにきれいになれるんなら自分もなれるんじゃない？ってなる。黒人の人は、きれいと思わなかったんだよね。

Int : なんでなんだろうね。

Yoko: なんか、黒人の人って元々だけど鼻が太いやん。言い方悪いけど、ゴリラとかサルっぽい。特に男の人の遺伝子、生物学的には男だから、すごく骨太に見えるの。鼻柱が。そうになると、きれいってよりごついなって。どっちかという白人とかのほうがきれいと思う。あの、ほら、スペイン語話す、フラメンコみたいな、その人！

Int : バレンティーナかな？

Yoko: そうかも！その人がきれいだと思った。私この人（バンジーの写真を送って）が嫌いな。最初センスないってディスられてた人。嫌いな。なんかこう、完全に女装じゃない、でもエンターテインメントでもないっていう。誰が特に好きっていうのはなくて、客観的に、冷静に観て、この人きれいだなって思うのは女性に近い人。逆に嫌いなのは覚えてて、ナオミはあんまり好きじゃないし。あとは…アシッド・ベティは、あ、あの人は違う分類で好きなの。誰だっけ、ボブ・ザ・ドラァグクイーンとか好きじゃない。なんでかっていうと、中途半端。場末のバーのおばさんのママみみたいな。笑い方も、おばちゃんみみたいな。そういうのが好きじゃない。高飛車できれいな人が好き。

Int : ボブもナオミも場末のバーのママって感じがして好きじゃないってこと？

Yoko: うん、なんか、安っぽい。化粧もなんか研究したらもうちょっとあるんじゃない？ボブもナオミもどっちも。どっちも黒人じゃん。まつげとまゆげだけ、それに口紅みみたいな。作りこんでない感じがすごい嫌。

Int : 作りこんでる美しさ、みtainなのがいいってこと。

Yoko: そう。きれいだと思う。

Int : メイクをしっかり見てるってことなのかな？

Yoko: うん、服とか髪とか。あとすっぴんになった時の肌。インタビューの時は男のカッコで出てくるじゃん。ギャップがあってもいいんだけど、すごい汚い人はいや。ニキビが多いとか。逆にアシッド・ベティとかはきれいじゃん。男でも。だから、また違う意味で好き。

Int : ドラァグしてないときもきれいなのが大事ってことかな。

Yoko: ドラッグクイーンだな、って思う。

Int : 「ドラッグクイーンだな」って思う一番大事なポイントって？

Yoko: 清潔感じゃないかなー。品よく見える。高そうに見える。クイーンだから。ビッチじゃないから。つーんとしてる。それこそ写真を撮るときに、歴代の優勝者の中に、顔にチェーンをつけてた人、ラジャかな。あの人とかめっちゃきれいやん。ああいう人はドラッグクイーンだなと思う。

Int : 雰囲気、態度、ふるまいも大事ってことかな。

Yoko: うん。椅子に座ってる姿勢とか、目線のやり方とかも女性だなんて思う。

Int : 女性らしいっていうのも大事ってこと？

Yoko: 私の好きなドラッグクイーンはね。

Int : ドラッグクイーンとして良いクイーンは、高く見るとか女性らしいっていうのが大事ってことなのかな。

Yoko: カルーセル真紀みたいな。IKKO さんとかは違う。

Int : 性格とかキャラクターみたいなことで言うと、どういう人が好きだと思った？

Yoko: バレンティーナは悪口あんまり言わなくて、どちらかという控えめ。アシッド・ベティはおしゃべりとかやじるのが好きなのはあんまり好きじゃない。

Int : 悪口を言う言わない、他の人への優しさとかは、ドラッグクイーンの良し悪しに関係あると思う？

Yoko: みんながドラッグクイーンに求めているのがおもしろさとかエンターテインメントなら、悪口とか言うほうがドラマは盛り上がるよね。だからわかんないね。マスメディアの中のドラッグクイーンと本当のドラッグクイーンがイコールなのかはわかんないね。自分が好きなのは本当に女性っぽい人が好き。ただ、そういう人ばかりだとドラマが成り立たないから、おばちゃんみたいな人がいるのもわかる。

Int : なるほどね、それは真実かも。じゃあ、あるシチュエーションなり、チャレンジとかランウェイとかでもいいんだけど、すごく共感できた、って思う瞬間ってあった？

Yoko: 勝ちたいって気持ちが見えるときは共感できた。誰よりも目立ちたいとか、あの人たちなりのきれいの定義はわかんないけど、自分なりに武装して、理想のきれいさを目指してるのは、ゲイかドラッグクイーンも女も一緒だなーと。同じ女がいれば勝ちたくなるよねっていうのはわかる。

Int : 自分の性格と通じるというか、関係してると思う？

Yoko: 負けず嫌いだけんね、私。ただあからさまには出さないかなと思うけど。勝ちたい気持ちの持っていくかたとか、見せ方というか、テレビだからプロセスも見られてるって意識してる人と、作品として完成したところだけ見せてる人の違い。バレンティーナとか

きれいじゃん、一般的に。そういうところで勝ちに行ってるのと、話題性みたいなので勝ちに行ってる人だと、勝ちに行く姿勢は違うけどいろいろ計算してるんだろうなと。言ってることわかる？

Int : プロセスも見られてることがわかっていて、わざとドラマティックにしてるようなクイーンもいるってことかな？

Yoko: そうそう。

Int : 誰がそんな感じだなと思った？

Yoko: ナオミ・スモールズがそうだなと思った。結構きつかった。誰か布がないとか足りないとかそんな人もいなかったっけ？チ・チ？その人もあんまりきれいじゃないなと思ったけど…ああいう人は安っぽいなと思ったな。お尻強調、みたいなのか。お尻って、ゲイだからセックスアピールの一つだと思うんだけど、あそこまであからさまに出されると、なんかねって思う。だってさ、女がめっちゃ乳寄せて出してるのと一緒にじゃん。ドラッグクイーンで観てもなんか下品だなと思う。

Int : ドラッグクイーンじゃないゲイの人と、ドラッグクイーンのアピールって違いがあると思う？

Yoko: うーん。例えば、女性のセックスアピールって胸とかお尻だと思うんだけど、イコールセックスじゃなくて、どちらかというと誘ってる？デートとか話するとか、セックスまでのフィルターがあるけど、ゲイの人はイコールセックスって感じがするというか。ゲイ＝セックス＝病気で死ぬみたいなフィルターがあるから、ダイレクトできついなと思う。

Int : フィルターのあるなしがゲイとストレートの女性のセックスアピールに違いがあるってことかな。

Yoko: うん、女性はフィルターがあるけど、ゲイの人は、積極的というかオープンというか、「ヘイ、ビッチ！」みたいな感じじゃん。ビッチであることを喜んで？セックスアピールが過ぎて感じがするよ。それはもうパフォーマンスって感じ。そういうのは本当のドラッグクイーンというより、ただのパフォーマンスに見える。だからなんか難しいよね、ドラッグクイーンなのか、トランスジェンダーなのか。きれいな人はトランスジェンダーで派手過ぎるからドラッグクイーンに近いのかなとか、わかんなくなる。「この人はトランスジェンダーなだけじゃない？」みたいな。本当に女性に近いきれいな人は。ドラッグクイーンで枠からは外れてる気がしなくもないけど。自然に見えるとドラッグクイーンじゃないのかな、みたいな。なにが定義かわかんなくなる。女性の装いが好きなのか、自分の性として女性を目指してるのか。心が女性だから女装をするって言ったら、それはドラッグクイーンなの？ってことになるよね。心と同じ装いをしたら、それ

はドラァグクイーンってことじゃなくてただ女性ってことになるよね。

Int : その人がこうなのかなって思った人いた？

Yoko: シーズン2の人、Raja かな。すごいきれいだから。普通の女性じゃね？みたいな。

Int : 自然な女性みたいに見える人は、トランスジェンダーなのかな？って思うってことかな。

Yoko: ドラァグクイーンで女装家ってことよね？

Int : あなた自身はどういう定義だと思う？

Yoko: 難しいな、性転換してない人で、普段は女性の恰好していない人が、パレードとかイベントとかで女装する人がドラァグクイーンかなあ。

Int : 特定のクイーンのことを考えて、かわいそうだなとか残念だなとか、悲しい気持ちになったり、感情的になる瞬間あった？

Yoko: 女と一緒にだなと思うことは多いけど、ネガティブな気持ちになることはないかな。しいて言えば、ル・ポールから評価される全員がかわいそうと思う。結局さ、ドラァグクイーンの定義って、派手でもいいわけじゃん。キムチーみたいに幻想的、ありえないメイクでも、きれいな正統派でもドラァグクイーンなわけじゃん。定義が明確じゃないところでこの人たちは批判されてるんだと思うよね。みんな悪口言うし。田舎臭いとかそういうの言ったり。女と一緒にだなーとか。都会出身同士で群がって自分より弱いもの見つけていじめるみたいな。ずばずば言うのがドラァグクイーンっていうのあるじゃん。だから審査も辛辣で、安っぽいとかネオンの色使いがどうかさ。よう言うなと思う。

Int : 逆に嬉しいとかポジティブな気持ちになる瞬間ってある？

Yoko: 自分の感覚で良い？

Int : もちろん。

Yoko: あんな毛が生えてなくてよかった笑。いやほんとに。ドラァグクイーンで準備めっちゃ大変やんって彼氏と話してて。だってひげもそらなきゃだし。ただでさえ女は毎日化粧するのにめんどくさいと思うのに、この人たちどんだけ時間かかるんよっていう。毛が生えてなくてよかったって彼氏と言った記憶がある。ひげとかも生えてるのにあんなきれいになるんだよー。だってさ、去勢してないんよね？だからちんちんとかガムテープで後ろにはってるんじゃない？かわいそうだなーって。そこまでしてぴっちりした服着たいのかなって。セックスアピールのためにお尻がぴっちりした衣装着たいんだったらしょうがないんだろうけど。

Int : 一番面白かったシーンとかってある？

Yoko: ないかなー。思い出せないっていうんじゃないで、結構淡々と見てたから。もともと勉強もしてたし、そういう映画も見たことないわけじゃないから、あんまりできたドラマ

だと思って見てなくて。醜いな、って。競わせたり。努力もあるんだろうけど。汚い部分が見えるところが多いなって。人に対する妬み嫉みとか噂話とか自慢とか。作られた感がすごいなーって。だから全部見てないんだよね。もっと美容とかの方が良かった。人間模様の見せ方が汚いなって。悪口が多い、とりあえず。

Int : じゃあ、真剣な気持ちで受け取ったこととか、シリアスなシーンはあった？

Yoko: 話は覚えてないけど、緊張感があるシーンはあったと思うけど、この程度だもんね。そういうシーンは思い浮かばない。インパクトなかったかな。

Int : 一番印象的だったなっていうシーンは何だった？

Yoko: 一番最初に部屋に一人ずつ入ってくるシーン。座る位置とか、人がちょっとずつ合流していくことでコミュニティが作られてくる模様だったり、この人知ってるとか仲いいとか、つながりがもともとあった時の反応とか、ドラッグクイーンでもこうなんだーって。マイノリティだから仲良くしようじゃないけど、そういう一体感があるのかなと思ってたけど、都会と田舎の差とか、そういうのがあるんだなと。マウンティングあるやん。

Int : なるほどね、面白いね。女と一緒にって、さっき言ってたと思うんだけど、嫌なところもありつつ、逆にすごいなって思うポイントがいろいろあったと思うけど、そういうのがもし女性だったらどう思う？

Yoko: 女性だったら、ドラッグクイーンみたいな振る舞いするの、いやかな。良くも悪くも女性性を強調してるよね、化粧とか服とか、カーヴィな身体とかは女性を表してるけど、女性の嫌な、コミュニティを作りたいがとか悪口言いたがとかお節介とかもあるなと。一番めんどくさい女だなんて思う。男性でもあるけどね。

Int : 見た目だけじゃなくて中身も女性性を強調してるって感じかな。

Yoko: 女性性をはき違えてるっていうのは違うけど、それをトゥーマッチにしたのがドラッグクイーン。それが女性だと思ってるんだなーと。

Int : ドラッグクイーンは女性らしく振舞うのが目的なんだと思う？

Yoko: それは違うんじゃないかな？変身したら女性、みたいな。

Int : ドラッグクイーンが女性らしく振舞うとか、体のラインを強調したりとか、もともと男性が女性性を表すのは、どういう点で大事なんだと思う？

Yoko: 理由はいくつかあると思うけど、一つはパフォーマンス。男が女をやっているっていう面白さ。二つ目はエンターテインメント。非現実的だし。あと自己表現じゃない？大体バイカゲイじゃない？マイノリティであることを表面化する一つ的手段なんじゃないかな。エンターテインメント性があると攻撃されにくいやん。男性のかっこうのまま「ゲイです」っていうより、女性の恰好してると女性の共感を得られるじゃん。だからある意味自己主張の手段なのかな。

Int : 女性の共感を得られやすいと思うのはどうしてかな？

Yoko: なんで女性からだけなのかって言われると難しいけど、一つは、不完全じゃん。女性の恰好してるけど男じゃん。妊娠できないし、マンコが最初からあるわけじゃないし。身体もやわらかくない、おっぱいもない、ごついのどぼとけもある。男の要素を持つてるのに女になりたいわけでしょう？かわいって思うよね。自分よりかわいそうな存在はかわいくない？自分より劣ってる人に対して自分の心は余裕もてるでしょ。自分よりテストの点数が悪い人見たら安心するでしょ、それと同じだと思う。女になりたいんだ、美容も頑張ってるし、えらいね、とか言って上からアドバイスできるやん。手伝ってあげてもいいよ、みたいな。

Int : じゃあ、最後のセクションに行こうと思うんだけど、日常の中でふとしたときにドラァグレースのことを考えることある？

Yoko: レインボーフラッグとかパレードとか見たとき？ドラァグレースのことはあんまり考えないけど、LGBT のことは結構あるけどね。街で目にしたり、アーティストとか映画見たりとか、そういう人のこと調べると意外と同性愛者だったりするじゃん。芸術的なところとか何かに秀でてる人はそういう人多いんだなって。それこそ昨日イミテーションゲーム見てさ、アラン・チューリングも同性愛者だったじゃん。こういう性のことは幼少期から影響受けるんだなって。

Int : 身の回りで考える機会は結構多いんだね。もともと勉強してたから興味もあるのかな。

Yoko: それもあるし、レズビアンカップルとか気付くことが多い。女装してる人とか、街中ですぐ見つけちゃう。それに気づくと LGBT のこと考える。私クイーン、フレディ・マーキュリーが好きなの。男性とセックスして歌に変化あったりするのかな、とか想像しちゃう笑。はかない恋をしてると芸術に向いてるんだなって思う。よしのはそう思わん？

Int : そうだねー、どうだろう。

Yoko: だってさ、自分の好きな人がいても、自分が男で男の人好きになっても、かなうことないのかなっておもったら相当辛いじゃん。自分が女で相手が男なら、0 ってことはないじゃん。でも同性愛だと友達ではいれるけどそういう目で見てもらえるかって 0 か 100 かじゃん。好きになってくれる可能性がノーマルより低いなら LGBT の人とか大変なんだろうなと思う。だから切ない思いするから絵とか歌とかの才能が伸びるのかなって。

Int : 誰がターゲットとして想定されてると思う？

Yoko: 20~30 代の女性？男の人より見る可能性が高いんじゃない？友達にそういう人がいるとか、もともと興味ないと見ないかなあ。を見せてる。じゃないとすっぴん出す意味ないじゃん？イヤリングの触り方とか、歩き方、足の組み方とかヒールでの歩き方って、

自分よりすごいんじゃない？って思う。研究してんだなーって。この前見ておもしろかったのが、みんな控室に戻って話しているとき、みんなヒール脱いでるのよ。やっぱ足痛いんだな、って、女もそうじゃん。なんか無理してヒールはいてるけどかわいくてさー。そうだよ、わかるーってなる。

Int : ドラッグ・レースを観た人はどういうことを学べると思う？

Yoko: 自己主張の仕方じゃない？自己主張するだけじゃダメじゃん、社会でも家でも。やりたいてって言うだけじゃ。でもそれをやりたいてって言うのを認めさせるプロセスが見えるくない？どうやって周りに評価されて認められたか、ある種ドラッグって自己主張のツールじゃん。自己主張をわがままじゃなく権利として認めてもらう過程だと思う。服とか女性らしさとかポージングとかもあるけど、マイノリティのせまいコミュニティの中で頑張ってるって、この人たちも頑張ってるんだなって。小さい社会で。そういう姿が見れるんじゃない？いかに上手に見せて評価させるかっていうプロセスは学べるんじゃないかなって。努力の過程がね。

Int : 個人的にはどんなこと学んだ？

Yoko: 男でこれだけ女性っぽくなってるのに、可動域の狭い身体を使って、細かい身振りで女性らしさを表現してたり、しゃべり方とかも、おばちゃんぽい人もいるけど、女性をまねしてやってるのを見ると、私そもそも女なのにいいのかって思うよね。あんなひげ生えてる人がきれいになるんだよ、自分も化粧頑張らなきゃって思うよね。

Int : 努力の過程をみて自分も振り返るというか。

Yoko: なんか、女で生まれただけでこんな手抜いてごめんって思う笑。

Int : ありがとう。これでインタビューは終わりです。いろいろ意見をくれて協力ありがとう。

Interview 4

Name: Jane

Age: 52

Occupation: Teacher

Nationality: Ecuadorians

Date: 23-03-2019

Location: Skype

Duration: 58min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview will be recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Jane: Okay, what I think about it. It's a wonderful way to help people accept who they are, and the way to help, ah, I wouldn't say people confuse, but people who really decide that they want to have tendency, or defining their orientation, and be accepted. The line they ended up with every show, like "if you don't love yourself, how in the hell somebody else gonna something" is just keeping in my mind all the time. Very powerful.

Int : Thank you for your opinion. Can I ask you some basic information? Like when was the first time to watch the show. And then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life.

Jane: Of course. Go ahead!

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first

time to watch Drag Race?

Jane: Ah, 2015.

Int : Why did you start watching Drag Race?

Jane: My daughter, at that time, she was probably 21 or 22, and one of her friends started drag, he came to my house and he started talking, so introduced me to show it. And I just kind of loved that he told.

Int : What did you find special fun about in the show?

Jane: It changed from the beginning to last years. At the beginning, RuPaul was helping these people to make the way of living. Some of them were very poor, some of them were very isolated in the society. But some of them were in the jail. And she cooperated, ah, people without thinking about race or weight or size or gender, everything, everybody was welcomed as human being. That is one of the things calls my attention. And kinky part, it would be like, "how do they do that?" What they put on their things, how they hide the things. That was the thing really intrigues me. Because they have this drastic make-over, fantastic make-over. And that was something caught my attention. Basically, how they do it, and not why because it is very clear why they do it, I mean it's stated everything in the show through nine years. Why is there, and how they do it and, of course the way they make-up, they dress up, everything, I was introduced into the make-up, kind of things they use. It was very interesting because other women we just try to be [???], less fat, or hide belly, that was call my attention. The very beginning.

Int : Which seasons have you seen?

Jane: 1 to 9, of course, and All Stars. All of them.

Int : Which season is your favorite? And why?

Jane: I would say, I don't know which one, but season with the lady who looks like Britney Spears. And season with the lady who is bald head, very weird, very skinny and every time extravaganza in every costume. She was always super weird, she looked like Lady Gaga. She was, ah, she... Sasha, I think Sasha, very skinny and tall, weird. She was always with father helping her. Her boyfriend was always there. It was just like very emotional. She was very creative.

Int : You told me that your impression has changed, at the beginning and now. Could you tell me about how it has changed?

Jane: One of the things, I'm a teacher, being a teacher for 30 years. One of the things really

made the show interesting is things he gives you to make you most, ah you have to sing, you have to dance, you have to seem actress, have to be make-up expert, have to be wig expert, you have to be tailor expert. And besides that, they have to create this kind of outfits and themes and, everything has to be extremely extravagant and extremely creative. They have themes to compete along with, they have artists, they have icons, that is the thing calls my attention and make the show extremely interesting. A couple of times I have been fastidious about language but couple of times. I remember the lady many years ago, was very toxic about surgery here, surgery on the mouth, surgery on the nose, which seems to, she was very bad temper. You see the people who they are, if people are fighter. They have to transform themselves to go out and fight for what they want. And personally, have seen two shows. They were spectacle, they don't touch you, they don't do anything sexual or offensive, very extreme, very far away, artistic and respected audience.

Int : Are you still enjoying Drag Race? I think season 11 is now aired.

Jane: Yes, here in the States, season 11 is aired. I haven't seen it, but watched All Stars. This fat lady, huge lady was there. There's another thing. They always bring something nice, friends, or people help them. Even just, when they made that in the show, you see all the people are telling and working for it. It's another way of exploring and being, ah, an accept, an accept to get the best out of the disaster they might think they were.

Contents and contestants

Int : I want to go on next questions. Could you tell me about queens you like?

Jane: Sasha Velour, that was fantastic! I like most of them, I really like them. Probably couple of them, they have kind of the personality, some people have nasty personality, but that have nothing to do with the show. Ah, I like Sasha, the way she transforms. She's like a chameleon, one, two, three, four, whatever. She's like a chameleonic personality. She went through a lot of things. Her life, his life, I mean, his life was miserable and, even though he was suffering and he could have any excuse for killing himself, she, she tried really hard. She was the person inspires people. When I was watching her finishing as the winner, I was crying. It was beautiful, yeah, really impressive for me. The way she transforms from herself, the way she, I mean, she was extremely artistic. And she was really chameleonic, she was always hiding

something, very creative, very resourceful. Extremely matured, very confident about herself.

Int : Do you have any other queens you like?

Jane: I really like a lot of them! I really enjoyed seeing a couple of them, I really don't know their names, a dark lady, looks like, ah, one of the Jacksons. And ah, I really like one of them, who is making a series on Netflix, like a ballet dancer, she has a dance company, ah, Alyssa Edwards! She has a very dark personality, she is a kind of very conflicted, she has a diva conflict. She was good when she was in the show. She was very nice. She was very sympathetic, and she has, not that, I mean, they look some other contest to help people, like, we have nothing to do with gender or transgender or any kind of drag. Alyssa Edwards was good.

Int : Please tell me about queens you DO NOT like.

Jane: Some of them, they are super huge, I would have a problem with them aesthetically in my eyes. There was one lady said like big is better or something like that. When they make, I mean, I don't like people making, ah, how would I say, dragging others. I'm not sure about people anytime talking about "me and me! I'm the best!" that happens people, when they're very big, show they're better because they are more, they are better, they have more pleasure and good elements, and that's a kind of queen I'm not happy with. Usually this kind of queens use bad words. When they talk, the show goes like beep! Beep! Beep! And the way they make themselves show-off. Latrice was not one of them. She was nice, because she had a very nice personality. Couple of afro American ladies were really really, super gross. Not because of the color, but because, it's like when you see a guy who likes to sleep around, shows how many girls he had, so that is what I don't like. You don't have to show off. That is a part I don't like. Usually afro American overweight women, I mean, queens.

Int : Can you recall episodes or situations when you really sympathized with drag queens?

Jane: Sasha, again. Because of her tragedy, her personality, ah, last one. I mean, when they tell a story. Some of them are, they don't tell us story about coming out to their family, but most of them speak to their parents, and both of them were super offended. When they were shown their own pictures, the age of 5 or 6, and they were asked what would you tell this boy. So those scenes are really inspiring because you can see the bottom of their past and to whom they become with a lot of personality, whom they become diva or queen. Those kinds of dialogues are fantastic. When you see they

were 5 years old, what would you tell them what to do. These reflections, these people of everything that they have gone through. And that is very inspiring. I'm a teacher, everything that has to do with developing as a human being or traumatized kids calls my attention. In the spot, because we are the result how we were treated, or how we were accepted as kids. Some of the human beings, who were traumatized were different, or abused in any way, some of them become nice. They get better out of the worst, but some of them just stay in the darkness, become [???] or even killers. So what calls my attention is why may you just turn it to good side. Anything to get the best way is possible. So, that is what really calls my attention because RuPaul is always, I mean he had a very very hard life too, I mean. And the way he did start from what, the tragedy he had, like abusive mother or something like that, and the way he is transforming himself. He is going back to this moment, going back to the family, what they were, because what they have done is good. Even though, you don't have to win this whole session or whatever, to be a winner, once they have really made a good, big step in their careers.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Jane: I mean, when they are acting like actress or imitating someone, how do you call the name of the game... Snatch game! When they do snatch game is funny. Oh, you know that I don't like is when they have to do like so popular, because some of them are very popular actress, if you're good entertainer you don't do that. That is something I don't like. But the snatch game is funny. And, ah, the way RuPaul has done as female is nice. RuPaul is one of the best guys you see in great outfits. For me that is the best part.

Int : Could you tell me bit more about snatch game? Could you recall the scenes you found interesting?

Jane: When they have done these Joan Crawford, when they have Liza Minnelli, those are like funny and personality. And they all have these special characters of actress, who have been kind of controversial. I remember Liza Minnelli, I remember Joan Crawford, who else, Sofia Vergara, yes, I remember those actors, I mean those snatch games. And the way they finish the sentence, it's very creative. Some of them are funny, some of them are gross. That's part of the ability, the way you show what you have.

Int : I think this question is related to former questions, but what do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Yoko: Well, that will be, ah, the way they accept themselves. When you are pretty, the whole world knows you are pretty. When you think you are good person, the whole world just receives it. So, I would say that drag queen that they are very sure... ah, and they have to be pretty smart, too. Because they are survivor. So, survivor, the person that has good self, a good sense of confidence. And, ah, I would say the person that is sure about, empowered herself, loves herself. When they show it, then you can be completely aware that you are transforming, I mean you dress up as a girl, just to be for that moment, that girl, just like an actress. And when they come back to who they are, not all of them have a problem with it, in the case of RuPaul and all of them are gays, but sometimes they just dress as a good show girl, they dance, they lip-sync for your lives! It's fine, I mean, they have created a culture. And, for me to be smart, to be authentic, to be sure and confident about yourself, and very enough to show the world this kind of beauty not everybody is ready to see.

Int : What do you think about appearance? Like, make-up, clothing and something like that. Are they less important than confidence or being yourself?

Yoko: I think make-up is very important. They learn how to do it. I mean, to be resourceful, I mean, that is artistry how they are. Think of clown, it's important to be artistic and creative. Clown usually wears make-up and hair but we don't talk about that. Yeah, I really think it is very important, but in my case, I was trying to say like, the make-up is how artistic we are, it's something that goes for everybody. Everybody wants to drag very crafty, some of them learn to do that. Many things they do with eyebrow, eyelashes, there are so many things to be an expert of make-up, they have to wear. Again, think of clown. You just don't judge by make-up, you judge the way how they perform. And some of them are more beautiful than others. This is another thing calls my attention. The world is always directed to beauty. So they are very beautiful. This is one part, for me the rest is personality and how they accept themselves, the way they have made the best out of the worst.

Int : You have told that being confident, smart, creative and accepting yourself are important for drag queen. I'd like to ask you if these factors are important for women as well.

Yoko: Yeah, important for women too. For any human being. You are unique and you can choose what to wear, what to do, you can actually what you feel because sometimes they feel different. So, what they have done is just, for me, besides being a guy who

wants to dress as a girl, it's just a human being who wants to show how different he can be, who wants to break the school, to be brave, confident enough to be known. Most people, ah, in some culture they are thought irrelevant.

Int : Okay, then another question is about RuPaul. Do you like RuPaul and her style of drag?

Jane: He's gorgeous. He's gorgeous. Sometimes he's tough personality, he is a judge, he "has made a decision", he makes this kind of vibes, and their lives. I mean, it's very tough. Very tough. Sometimes you can think like kind of abusive in some way, but, in the context, if you are seeing that, force to go to the race, if you don't go to the race, there some rules in different world. Everything is a culture. For me, I'm not a drag queen, I don't have any problem, I don't have any family related situation, you don't know. ...I want to see those who are fighting for the world. That is something, sometimes gets me from RuPaul. But again, you have to change, because they have own rules. Probably in the drag world, they started the show, they were looked upon, or looked down. RuPaul empowers people to fight. So it is something my perception as a teacher, not as a person. The whole thing, just the thing is the cherry on top, the whole life, he has made money to support many many other people. That is what makes RuPaul the best. Ah, by the way, have you watched all of the shows?

Int : Me? Yes, I have watched all the seasons on Netflix. But I didn't watch Untucked.

Jane: Yeah, Untucked is not regular season. My daughter loves Untucked! (laugh)

Int : Oh, really? Do you know why she loves Untucked?

Jane: Because, I'm sorry but she is more into fight and gossiping. And some of the queens say that RuPaul has some arrangement or something. Queens talk about Michelle Visage. So that kind of scene she likes. I don't care.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life and bit more general questions as well. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Jane: Make-up (laugh). I'm always trying to do my eyebrows better, always inspiring my make-up. Every time I look at mirror, I try to do eye-lines and foundation, make-up is something that always calls my attention, it comes me every day.

Int : Do you talk about Drag Race with others? Maybe with your daughters?

Jane: I talk about it with friends, and especially with my daughter. My son too. About the show, about episodes, who are coming there, who wants to see, or something like that.

Int : Who do you think the target audience of this show?

Jane: Young millennials, and probably people in the search of what they are. Because, again, it's not about they have changed men to women, they have changed women to men, they have had, only one had a surgery, transgender or whatever, what they have is not that everybody has, who has a bisexuality situation, or situation is changing, watch Drag Race. Drag is again a show, it's, ah not glamour, it's like talking about circus, just specific amount of people who like it. People watch that is of course millennials, because they are open to everything, and they don't see any, they didn't see any transgression, aggression when they see that. I see young people who really admire artists. Because judges are always singers, actors and actresses. They don't have to be gay or they don't have to be transgender or anything. They're just real people in the world, show business. Everything is show business. So, target will be people who are curious about show business. And basically young millennials, they are always wanting to make money from that. Everybody wants to do it. I don't know mommies who watch in my age. People over 50 years old in my country, I don't think they're targeted.

Int : Nowadays Drag Race is so popular all over the world. Why do you think it is becoming popular?

Jane: Because it's like a fight. Everybody like, number 1, it's real TV show like Big Brother or everything, maybe became popular 10 years ago. So number 1 is real show. Number 2 is competition. It's part of human nature that we love to win or whatever. Number 3, ah, it's popular because it's just making a big show out of a small percentage of population. Not a big percentage of population who really want to do drag. I don't know the number or statistics, but in Washington there are huge, in Holland, maybe couple of percentage, and in Spain maybe 5 or something. But the drag culture is very exquisite taste for all the young people who want to start. I guess because it's funny. People want to see who is winning and who is losing, seeing the fight, sympathy for the loser, and get emotion and cheer for one for win.

Int : Thank you. I want you ask you another question about popularity of the show. I think there are a lot of women watching Drag Race. Why do you think it is becoming more popular among women?

Jane: I think it is because glamour and make-up. I will go for that. The same reason why more women see the contests or Miss Universe or whatever, it's more like fashion and make-up and heels and creativity, and maybe we can look something in those drags. They have fake lashes and fake boobs and fake lips, because we always want to have like a great impression to people around. Beauty is concept, that has to do with make-up, that has to do with fashion, that has to do weight, that has to do with rings and earrings matching your necklace. That is something very I would say beauty. Everybody wants to be a little bit better to what other people would see. I would say women watch that, more than women into fashion, and maybe, I don't like they fight, but some people like that. Young people might be like "wow, she did that, she said that!" like that. Yeah, people are more into "wow". I'm not like that.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Jane: Again, what I said in the beginning, what you can learn is just accept who you are and what you feel against the world, expressing you, love yourself about what made you. And that is for me one of the most important things, I even say the line sometimes, to my kids. "If you don't love yourself, how in the hell you're gonna love somebody else". Because we struggle, I mean I have three kids, they are saying I'm fat, I'm not skinny, or something like that, and I tell them "it's fine, you're beautiful" but they ask me "but mom, you say that because I'm your daughter. You have to say that I'm beautiful for you". They just don't dig inside. Sometimes, when you dig, you never stop learning, you never stop educating. This show sometimes has some highlights about education, how you accept who you are. We talk about gender, we talk about race, it's just more hope, just you give small hands for more aspects, to be more flexible with your world.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Jane: I wouldn't say I have changed. But it has expanded the way of seeing people, it has expanded the way of connecting to others. Young guys, like accepting friend of my daughter who wants to be in the show business and just part of their lives. It made me able to be a part of their lives, they call me and talk about where to the

restaurant or something. I even helped him for the first drag in Ecuador, I was giving him my clothes! He was very nice guy and had my size. And if I hadn't seen that, if I hadn't seen the what the drag is going to be values for, probably I thought like "oh my god, that guy is crazy wearing, dressing as a woman. Why? " That is what I would say. I become more flexible and knowledgeable, pluses identification or getting something from the failure. More flexible at admiring that beauty before that I was kind of "wow, that is strange". So I really changed that. I'm very conservative person (laugh). I just learn this part and so nice. Especially with my kids, I have young kids, they are very, how would I say? supportive, or just enjoy that.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 5

Name: Nora

Age: 23

Occupation: Student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 26-03-2019

Location: University

Duration: 29min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview will be recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Nora: I think it was a couple of months ago, I ahm, I think I read about it on Facebook or something, and I saw it on Netflix list, so I started watching with my roommate and we actually started at season 10 I think, and I worked way back because not all the first seasons were not on Netflix, so. Only few months now.

Int : Then, which seasons have you seen?

Nora: I've seen 6 through 10.

Int : Do you have favorite season?

Nora: I mean I really liked 10, that was probably because it was really more new, I think it

was better filmed and everyone knew RuPaul and contestants knew better what the vision was, I don't know, something like that. And also the contestants were really good. And then maybe because it was my first time I saw it, so I was super excited about it.

Int : What was your first impression of the show? Did you find something special, strange, new in the show?

Nora: It was the first time I really looked at, like, drag, and it kind opened my eyes about that how much more is behind it, because first I thought it was just, like, a man dressing as a woman or female character, and since watching I've seen how an art form it is, and I think it just pretty and I'm also into the drama, or dancing.

Int : Are you still enjoying Drag Race? I think all of the seasons are available on Netflix.

Nora: Yes, I just finished season 7 yesterday evening, so I probably start, because I've already seen season 6, so probably start season 5 soon.

Int : Season 11 is now aired.

Nora: Yeah, but it's not on Netflix yet.

Int : So you are not watching season 11.

Nora: No, not yet.

Contents and contestants

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race.

Nora: Please tell me about queens you like. And why?

Int : Since I just finished season 7, I really like Katya, the Russian impersonator. I really liked she was honest and really funny as a person. And I know Violet Chachki won season 7, in the beginning she was super annoying, kind of bitchy, but I liked her the transformation through the show how she became so much more nice and, I mean, I understand why she was kind of bitchy in the beginning because she was also really young and she wanted to prove herself. I just like every contestants, a lot of contestants go through this transformation or growth.

Int : Can you recall some impressive moments or situations with Katya or Violet Chachki? Like when you found your favorite queen is Katya. Maybe about drama or personality, or some moments in the show.

Nora: I think probably because Katya is kind of really nice and also speaks her mind, like, in

a, how do you say, [blonde wages??] she's funny.

Int : I remember that Katya had an alcoholic problem.

Nora: Yeah, she and Miss Fame.

Int : What do you think about the problem? Does it influence on your mind or thoughts on Katya?

Nora: No, I mean I think when they talked about their struggle, I felt like, it was really good they supported each other and just I really understand how hard it can be to be on the show, be locked up in the hotel, as they are, I really understand that it would feel, make the addiction kind of more to come back or something like, they would feel like they would fall back into addiction. So, I was really impressed with Miss Fame at that point, because before she was also kind of mean or distant from something, from that point, "Oh, she is so nice to help Katya with struggle!"

Int : Yes, I remember that. Then, how about Violet Chachki? You have told her transformation was kind of amazing, how about other things? I think she is admired with her fashion sense, so what do you think about her sense of fashion, make-up or, maybe body-shaping?

Nora: Yeah, her waist is so thin! Her clothing, her fashion sense is really cool, futuristic, and really like the outfit with ahm.. was it Hello Kitty? Yeah, Hello Kitty outfit with the things [with gesture], I loved that one. So it's really cool and futuristic look.

Int : Thank you. Do you have any other queens you like, maybe from season 10?

Nora: Ooh, I think it's ah... Ahm, honestly, I wouldn't know the name now, but I also, because, it's kind of another subject, I also watch James Charles, and he invited, he is also a friend of drag queens, and he also, like, transform himself into drag queen sometimes, like for videos, and also he invited Plastique Tiara from season 11. And that's also I really liked. They interviewed that she's youngest contestant ever to join, and, yeah, that's only one I know from season 11 now.

Int : Then, could you tell me about queens you DO NOT like. And why not?

Nora: Oh, eehm, I always have one queen from each season I really really dislike, but honestly, fuh, to think of right now, I ... I don't know the names now...

Int : Just try to describe the features or characters or...

Nora: Ah, I usually dislike it when they're being really fake or bitchy to each other, I mean I like they're near and the shade [???] stuff, but if they are really dragging each other down, and just yeah, not being supportive, I really dislike those kind of queens, and I

also, ah, when they feel entitled, if young queens feel like they're entitled to the crown because they are young and new and fresh, but then there're some older drag queens said, well, "I've been in this game for fifteen years, so I'm better and young stars are not". So, that's what I don't like.

Int : Who do you think the most beautiful queen? And why? Do you like her?

Nora: Ahm...the most beautiful one...I really admire it if they look manly, like in the normal outfit and stuff, and then they suddenly transform themselves into, like, a "fish". That's really, I admire that a lot. And I also with [??] make-up and outfits in everything, ahm, I really got that with Miss Fame how she looked all tattooed and, on her case it's not really manly but, she has strong jaw line and then, as a woman, she's like perfect, I don't know, just pretty, and then, as a man, she is more, like tattooed, you don't see that on her outfits.

Int : Do you think she is really like a woman in drag?

Nora: Yeah, in drag, yes.

Int : How about Kameron Michaels, from season 10?

Nora: Oh, yeah, he was really pretty as well, as a woman, as a drag queen, he was really pretty and as a man, I was like, "oh, he is so hot!" hahaha. That was so wired to see how much you can transform through make-up and clothes.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Nora: Well, definitely the make-up and clothes, and the also, they need to be ah, strong attitude like confidence, they, all good drag queens all have really big confidence, and, ahm, they also, I feel like a lot of winners are like helping other people. For example, I think Bianca del Rio was really good helper with other contestants, and she was not just really nice but also really funny, like all the criteria were there.

Int : What is acceptable behavior for a drag queen? You already told helping other queens and confidence.

Nora: I think they need to be a role model for young people who don't feel good with themselves, so they need to be nice people and helping, just kind of, accepting, they should not be like mean or I don't know, how to say, like, they should not be like pushing away some part of, like, "all those type of people I don't like" or something like that, they should be accepting everyone, and just showing how to be a good person.

Int : Do you think it is applicable to women in general?

Nora: What do you mean?

Int : I mean, ahm.. you told me being a role model is important for a drag queen. Do you think it could be applied to women?

Nora: I mean, all famous people should be role models, I mean man can be also a role model, so but, I feel like drag queens as a winner of Drag Race, should really be like, for example, for young gay or trans or just normal kids as well, to just see how to behave, because most of the Drag Race contestants come from troubled abuse, or still hiding being gay or drag person. So, they should be role models too for those kids.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Nora: I really love the snatch game, one they impersonate some other females, that's really funny always, well, some answers are not funny, but then. I also feel influenced by background music, and then, when they focused on the shot on RuPaul's face, and like, he's not amused or something, then I feel, I'm kind of influenced by that. Sometimes I, if they would not put the music behind or something, then I would like "oh, that's funny", or I don't know. But as soon as you see RuPaul's face, like, blank or something, "oh no, it wasn't funny". And I also remember the part, the contestants need to dress up someone else, as a twin, and then, once they did it with filming crew, and they were all super manly men with beard or everything and never wore heels ever, they suddenly dressed up as queens and walking in heels pretty good, that was really funny.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations, challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Nora: Ahm...yeah, most of the time when they're talking with, not specific episodes, but when they're doing their make-up and they're talking between each other, it feels like, kind of set up to, like, "this episode you talk about this" but stories are real, that's what I really feel empathy, but when they talked about, like, they were abused or how they were brought up, how they've grown up really poor or abused or something, then I feel empathy. And also, it's the episode before the last, I think, one day RuPaul shows them their pictures of childhood, and "what would you tell little someone's name?" and that's also when my tears come to my eyes, so sad.

Int : Yeah. Could you recall some specific moments? Or just give me some example?

Nora: From season 7, from, hmmm, from Pearl, how she, she didn't go to details about her youth, but it kind of felt like, oh she was probably abused by her father or something, and, you just really saw emotional face and it was just really sad that moment I really had my tears in my eyes.

Int : You got emotional.

Nora: Yeah.

Int : OK, it's close to the former question, but what do you think the most serious moments? Can you recall scenes?

Nora: Well, also those kinds of moments when they talk like, you see that when they talk to the pictures of themselves as a kid, they also kind of talk to all the other kids who are going, or might be going through the same thing, to just like support them and give them straight to go on, and you also see how RuPaul also, I mean, it's really funny show but RuPaul also makes it serious by just helping them and talking to them personally behind the scenes, just really supporting them.

Int : Do you like RuPaul or her style of drag? And why?

Nora: Yeah. When I started watching, I didn't know anything about drag queens or Drag Race, so, it took me I think one episode or two to realize that was the same person! It was a shock because I mean these kinds of feminine as a man, like RuPaul, but it is like completely different person with hip and everything, but I didn't know there were hip pads and silicon breast or everything I didn't know that they use that. So, I was in shocked, yeah. I really like her style.

Int : Have you ever felt that a choice by RuPaul was not fair? In which situation?

Nora: You mean, as how RuPaul makes a decision who goes one?

Int : Yes.

Nora: Ah, well sometimes, I mean, he makes a decision based on the...ah, what's it... lip-sync for your life, am, sometimes I feel like, "oh, they were both so good, why don't they, doesn't he let them pass both of them!" because he's done that before as well, so I feel "make them both or let them go through!", and but sometimes the other one, just so good and, I don't know, sometimes, I feel like, whole episodes someone was just better than the other, but then because of the lip-sync, when others are better and they continue, I was like, "no, you shouldn't do that". But, most of the time is fair.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life in relation to watching Drag Race and more general questions will be asked. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life? And about what do you think at the moment?

Nora: Oh, I don't know, I don't, I mean maybe doing make-up or something. Then just, "oh, how do they do that?", but they do like much more, of course, but, you know, just the shape of it, all face, so, I think that is what I think about it.

Int : Do you talk about Drag Race with other people? With your roommate?

Nora: Yes, with my roommate, and also with my cousin, she also watches it, and, yes sometimes with friends but they don't watch it so it's not really something you can discuss and just me talking.

Int : About what do you talk?

Nora: Ahm, well, because I watch it with my roommate, so we obviously talk about episodes we've seen, or who we dislike or like, or something, and, yeah, more about current events of the season, or the future episode or something.

Int : Why do you think Drag Race became so popular?

Nora: I think because it's different, people, there are so many normal series and normal Next Top Model stuff, and this is kind of, I mean, maybe think of, like Holland's Next Top Model or America's Top Model, but it's so different because of the drama, actually, and it's just, yeah it has lots of fun but also serious aspects instead of just teenagers trying to be model.

Int : Who do you think the intended public of this show?

Nora: Ahm, I think, probably gay men, and then also just other drag queens, but I think it just, [???] just women who like this, I mean, I don't know any straight men who like it, but there are probably some as well. So, yeah, I think lots of different people.

Int : Actually, I think a lot of, ah female fans are increasing now. Why do you think there are a lot of female fans?

Nora: Ahm, I mean, I don't know actually, well it's also make-up and fashion, and that's also interesting to females, ahm, so, that's probably big part of it. And the drama but also serious side, I mean, it's also an emotional show and that's more appealing to women than straight men, I think. So yeah, I think that's why.

Int : I remember that you told you recall the program when you are doing make-up. But, at the same time, the make-up of drag queens is really different from our ordinary make-up. And clothes as well, clothes are extravaganza.

Nora: So, I don't really think of Drag Race when I'm buying clothes or putting on clothes or something, because it's not same type of clothing that I wear, but when I go out to the party I put on more make-up than to university, then it's like, eye-shadow, lots of colors. So that's I think more about putting make-up.

Int : Like, when you are transforming.

Nora: Yeah!

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Nora: They could really learn about the community and backgrounds of the show, and also people who are participating, I think a lot of people might think that drag queens are doing same things as transvestite, because they're dressing up as women, but that's not the case, and, I mean, just understanding other communities as same as understanding another culture. And one of the most interesting cultures. That's why I really like Drag Race.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Nora: Yes!

Int : How?

Nora: Because they are using a kind of slang or language, other types of words, kinds of jokes they make, I just sometimes I incorporate but it's more, I think I do it with my friends that also watch Drag Race, and then they would understand what I'm doing because if I just talk to my normal friends who don't watch it they don't understand the jokes, so what's the point making it, ahm, but, or even singing the songs I listen to BGM, such kind of things. I think I incorporated in my daily life or something.

Int : Is there anything that you want to say?

Nora: I don't know...

Int : If you have nothing, we can just finish, but if you want to say anything...

Nora: I mean, I started watching the show just for fun, I think I was about go out just drinking with my roommate and okay that's a show meantime, and then we kind of got sucked into the universe or something, and, I just really like show not only for

drama but also for like the background and the emotions, and yeah, just really nice show.

Int : Thank you, thank you so much! This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 6

Name: Erika

Age: 24

Occupation: student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 04-04-2019

Location: at a café

Duration: 62min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Erika: I really have to think... I think the first season I watched was one with Miss Fame, it's season 7? Yeah. It was the first one that I saw because I found it about Miss Fame online and I was like "oh my god, that's amazing!" and I heard some YouTube videos like "oh, I joined RuPaul", then "what is RuPaul exactly? Drag queen?" And I think, maybe 5 years ago-ish, that I first came across, it was like "oh, I'm gonna watch this". I usually watched only on Netflix, so at first there were like few seasons, maybe like 3 or 4, I watched all of those, and I was like "oh, I have more" and then over the years

more seasons came on, and I watched everything.

Int : What was your first impression of the show?

Erika: I just absolutely loved, I love, I'm huge fan of make-up and stuff myself, so that's why I got first really interested in Miss Fame, because she is very much like the beauty queen, you know, usually knows how to do her make-up, and I totally loved that in whole like the artistic, that was my first impression, "oh my god, these people are so talented, so amazing". That's what I really loved about it. Creativity, and talent.

Int : Has the impression of Drag Race changed through watching it?

Erika: Ah, I guess a little bit because the first was really about how, what they look like, talent, and over the years more like, I really investigate into drama (laugh). Still really like the fact you know the whole talent and creativity, but so much fun to see them [???] and fight and, I love the whole exaggerated thing, you know, it's like always way too much. I don't know that's really what kind of keeps going, that's also really fun to talk about with friends, it's like a few friends watch it as well, and usually just talk about, "oh, did you hear what she said!?", "did you see what she did!?" and then "I know! she's such a bitch!", and you know "stop like that!", that's more reason to kind of watch the show. Well, it kind of changed, because I love the drama around them.

Int : You have watched every single season, right?

Erika: I don't think I watched season 3 yet. I haven't watched other things not on Netflix. I haven't watched Untucked, All Stars, I haven't seen them. Just regular RuPaul's Drag Race seasons, I watched. And I haven't watched season 11 because it's not on Netflix.

Int : Which season is your favorite?

Erika: Ah... I think season 7 because I love Miss Fame, I love Violet, it's just really good season with all the more just kinda artistic things, and I think after that, before that kinda like more comedy queens, and I don't really like comedy queens because I often don't get all the references they make and RuPaul to the jokes, some kind of always lost, so that's why season 7 is really, yeah, my favorite season, probably also because that's the first one I saw. It's kinda like "oh yeah, I remember watching this for the first time! Cool!" like that.

Contents and contestants

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race.

Erika: It's a fun part! (laugh) Okay, well, ah, I guess one of the things I really like about it is of course Miss Fame, I do remember that she was very, I don't wanna say dumb (laugh) but a little bit dumb yet whole the things about, "how's your head?" and every time I watch, I was like "oh my god, how can you not get this joke!" And whole chicken thing! She can talk like chicken, I don't know that's also why I like her, she was just very simple, funny, not as smart as the group, you know, she just, she was very more relatable. Because other ones are more, you know, over the top, and she was more like, you know, a farm girl, you know, she felt more relatable to me because I really liked her. And then you also had Pearl, she is also one of my favorites, because she was so bitchy at the beginning, and like, no emotion and I absolutely love her style, at the beginning I was like, "can you smile? Is that even possible with your face?" And I really like that she made a kind of change in the end, she became more herself. I really like her character as well. And one I did know from new season, ah, I kinda forgot her name, in the first season it's one of the black girls, and she was constantly messing around, and having fun, screaming, and I thought she was so annoying. Oh, what was her name...it's kind of food-like name. I forgot her name, but she was just shouting and kind of getting all the attention and I normally do not queens like that. It's just, you know, having control over the show, it's same thing with Nina Bo'nina Brown, when she thought whole group was against her, and I was kinda like "you're not that great, everything is about you and people try to fight you?" That was a kind of characters I do not like, who wanna try to gain so much attention from whole group, more, more like underdog. For example, Pearl, Miss Fame, and Violet Chachki, she was kinda like, portrayed as bitch, and in the end, you know, she won. I kinda like underdog, kinda character, way more than one tries to get all the attention immediately.

Int : Okay, then could you describe your favorite queens' personalities? About Pearl and Violet?

Erika: What I really like about Pearl was the fact she tries to be herself, like more chill, laid-back, she didn't wanna change, because you know, you have to show more a view of emotion, at one point, she was like "this is me. This is who I am. I am not that vocal, I am not constantly smiling, screaming and having fun, I'm more like chill and laid-back". That's I really like about her character, she just really tried to be herself, it's not just being like, "oh, I'm just gonna do really over-the-top things even though that's not

who I am". And that's what I really like about those kinds of contestants, don't conform, don't necessarily win, but that's fine, you know, that's the thing with Drag Race, doesn't really matter whether they win or not, every single one gets fame and some kind of way, or attention, you don't care actually who wins, for instance we have Kim Chi, she is always my favorite, she, also again, she's kind of like, you know, she was so nice, and so sweet to everyone, and not bitchy at all, which is why I like her as well. Also, she's kinda underdog, more relaxed, when she couldn't dance, walks a little bit weird, she didn't have like all the checks for Drag Super Star, but still, she did, you know, I remember her. I don't remember anyone else from her season. I remember her because she's such a good impression by being herself and not trying to be something else. I really do like when they do as their characters.

Int : How about Violet Chachki?

Erika: Ahm, what I like about Violet Chachki is that she owns the fact that she was mean sometimes, because, that's a thing, I do think she was unnecessarily mean sometimes, but again, I like it when they just kind of you know, admitted they are, sometimes they stop [??] behind their back, Untucked or something, they don't really like, "oh no, I didn't even mean like that". She was like "yeah, I did. I'm just, I just don't agree with you, I don't like you". She's kinda like that. Whole thing about just being themselves without making excuses for it, which is I really love. And the confidence, just be themselves, and that's so great. Definitely I like about that.

Int : Thank you. I think you already mentioned about queens you do not like, for example you don't like those who want attention. Could you explain a little bit more? Or about other queens you don't like?

Erika: I didn't like Bob the Drag Queen, because just trying to be funny, all the time, it was so annoying, one time, I was like, "I get it, you're funny. Can we just give some attention to somebody else?" I would say same thing with Ginger Minj, that was whole thing about "I wanna big queens win", which you know, I support that idea, but I just feel like "you should win because you're a good queen, not necessarily because she is big". That's kinda like issue, those queens in seasons always say like "oh big queen should win", I'm like "no, the best queens should win no matter what their size is". So again, they try to get kind of attention for something, I just, "ah..." I don't know, I don't like it, it's very... dis-genuine. Not nice. I don't know. I don't like it, what kind of characters, I just still away from because... I don't relate them at all.

Int : As for big queens, what do you think about other big queens? For example, Eureka.

Erika: I did like Eureka. I thought she was very fun, the thing that Eureka was also, she was very nice, always try to help people, she had like in the first season, she had injury. I remember the episode with like Farrah Moan, the funniest ever, but then, you know, they had to make like bikinis and stuff, she didn't know how to sew. And Eureka was just, you know, "I will show you how to do it. Just use glue gun and you'll get it". It was so nice because she did that. It's not necessarily the big girl things, probably Eureka didn't make it story about, you know, "I'm big, so I should win". She was more like "I just wanna win because I'm good at what I do". I think, for example Ginger Minj, she tried to put focus on that, you know, "a big girl should win". There are few other girls who did that, ahm, I think one of the Davenport girls, I don't know there're so many, don't remember her first name, one of them get as well, you know, "I'm a big girl, I should win". I'm like, "no, you should win because you're good at what you do, not necessarily because of the way you look".

Int : Who do you think the most beautiful queen?

Erika: Ooooh, that's a difficult one... Then I think I'm gonna have to go with Kim Chi. Because I just like her art style, it's the most beautiful to me, the way she dresses up as drag queen, absolutely stunning. And very unique. That's why I think, she is the most beautiful to me.

Int : How unique is she, compared to other queens? Could you describe it?

Erika: I don't know, she really just tries to really change things up with her make-up, you know, usually they just kind of like the, the similar kind of shape, what they cut like [???] and everything, but she really tries to do something different, different with colors, and I really like the story one that they did what they show, develop, it was like the three outfits one, and they had to show their own stories, and she just really take it whole new level, just how she interprets it, how she shows that in her art style, in a costume, always, also, when she told the story, I really loved, and she has the unique point of view on everything. She always surprised me in a way, "oh yes that's also how you can, could have done it". That's why I really like her. She's doing something else, like no other queens. And she really surprises me every single time. That's why I really like her.

Int : Who else do you come up with? As for beautiful queen?

Erika: I kinda forgot her name but in one season where she refuses to take off...the thing

one she had to lip-sync for your life, I don't remember her name, but she really was like pretty one in that season she only did it like six months, and, I don't know she was really beautiful. It was like one of those girls who would be like I can't even tell you actually a God[?]. So, she was very pretty as well. I can't help, I can't think of her name. She had a whole drama story, because she refused to take off the mask, because she actually didn't know the song to lip-sync, that she tried to hide it, and RuPaul wasn't happy, but she was really pretty, beautiful as well. And RuPaul herself, obviously.

Int : How do you describe her style of drag?

Erika: From RuPaul? Ah, I think what RuPaul really tries to do is actually look like a woman, with me a little bit extravagant, but really like try to look like a woman also. Some other queens, you know, go little bit over the top, but still trying to look like a woman, but you know, they had like really exaggerated make-up whereas RuPaul really tries to do natural kind of things, so I guess that's what I really describe as natural and feminine, whereas others who are little over the top stuff. If you, for example, Latrice Royale comes to mind, she was like really up[?] contour stuff like that, that's not really RuPaul does. Way more natural.

Int : Is anyone you really really relate to? Or you can identify with?

Erika: I keep naming same people, I think. Still stick with Miss Fame, then. She is really, so simple and so dumb and funny, like relatable to me. I don't know I really like, because, I don't know, she just seemed really nice. Like someone I would have like a cup of coffee with and just hang out. There's other one who's a little bit too much for me, personally, probably nice, but with Miss Fame, I could hang out, also because she really loves the make-up things, I also really love to do, so, you know, I would definitely stick to Miss Fame.

Int : Could you recall the scenes that you felt like "oh I love Miss Fame, I can relate to her"?

Erika: Hmmmm, basically, it was the first episode that like, ah, entrance. She was wearing like, this, purple mermaid-esq[?] dragon queen outfits and her make-up with like blue and red, and it was so beautiful. And what I really remember from the episode, she also can be quite bitchy because she came up with some, like who had like newspaper with her, and she grabbed the newspaper and "let me show you something, this is how you blot" and blot on her face, which is of course kinda like hint for faces greasing or something about it, so I kind of really like that she tried to

sort of help, it was kind of bitchy, I don't know, I like that. I really like the episode when she came in. She really made a statement with herself when she came in.

Int : Statement? Could you explain a little bit?

Erika: Statement, my kind of like, "I'm here, and I can be recognized, I can be here, and be awesome", and also she owns the fact that "I'm more about beauty-look queen, more of model queen" instead of funny or performance kind of things, she really just owns that from very beginning. And that's the statement she made. Like you know, "I know I'm pretty, that's what I'm gonna do, I'm good at, deal with it". So, that was I really like, you know. That was really cool.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Erika: Oh, definitely, like the final episode that all of them come back together again, and always had like the review or recap of everything, and I always love that. Because that's where the drama comes together, and they just, everything is just spilled up, I really love that. And, ahm, but if I just think of some scenes... I think... I really love the scenes with Farrah Moan, what is I'm making fun of her accent or her way that she talks, with the "highlighter" stuff like that, that came a thing. I love the one when they kept saying "Vanjee", I have that in mind, stuck in my head, like a week, we just were calling my friends "Vanjee". Stop like that! (laugh) The episode was hilarious, little small things, just blown up, I really think that's funny. Yeah, stuff like that, like the funniest moment "Vanjie". I really love that. I still make fun of Farrah Moan's way of talking as well with my friends, every time we see each other, it's like "Hiiieee!", and when we go away, "Byeeee!" (laugh) It's just stuck in my mind forever the way she talks and behaves. Those are also funny moments to me.

Int : On the other hand, what do you think the most serious moments? Can you recall scenes?

Erika: I think it's in season 1, one of the contestants comes out that she has HIV, that is, those are the moments, I don't know, I really get to me, because I'm like, "oh, wow", is that kind of like, usually, kind of feels like they have on mask, which is of course kind like drag personality, but sometimes it feels kind of lost to me, like how they are as a person, when they kind of open up, like, you know, "I have these going on", I don't know, I really like those kind of things. It feels way more personal when they do that, because in the end, always kind feels like, "oh, they're drag queen, that's what they do, that's what they are", but sometimes it's like also there's like person behind

as well, that came to be this drag queen. And I really like it when they try to show that kind of things. That's really nice those kinds of things they really come out with that. And you saw that in one of the episodes the contestants came out she was a transgender, again, you know, when, just telling very personal about themselves, I think that's amazing that they do that. You know, it really makes feel more real instead of RuPaul's Drag Race. That's more like the life as well. They try to show other people to inspire. I really like that serious moments as well.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations, challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Erika: Ah...I think the one really stuck as well, again, the one with Kim Chi, the book story, they tell their own stories, again you know, that's so personal and such a personal way of doing something like that, but I think it's really good. Ah... and I also always like when they do the interview with RuPaul when you have like final three contestants that's not really challenge or anything but, when they have little interview with RuPaul, RuPaul really asks the questions that fans are as well wondering, like, for example with Pearl, why do you have like this wall up, Pearl kind of explained that, you heard the relationship with her dad, family stuff like that, I think that's very important that they actually have that in the episode, when the season they have this moment, I can just be really serious, you know, you can just be like, "okay, what is actually going on, why are you doing it like this?" or "what do you really want", so on. I really like that RuPaul does that, even though it's like two or three minutes, could be longer in my opinion, I'm like I really set down the episode for example with all the queens kind of have more details about how they feel about everything, but, you know, I will write them (laugh). I'll tell them. No, but I really like those kinds of things. Yeah.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race? And why?

Erika: I usually have that when you have the lip-sync for their lives, when they just sometimes they just break down, because when they like win, but then they are sad for other one to leave, one point two friends battle against each other, I'm sorry about I don't know the season or stuff like that, and then two best friends, they have to lip-sync for their lives, and then the other one won and she starts crying and the other was like "you won!" and "but I didn't want to lip-sync against you" and I was like, "oh my god, this breaks my heart!" Stuff like that, they really get to me, or when, sometimes when RuPaul tears, I feel RuPaul is someone who is very hard to tear up, you know, it's

gonna like, strong, but when RuPaul starts getting sad or very upset, and I'm like, "okay, now you're getting sad or upset, now I'm getting upset too". Those kinds of stuff got to me. When RuPaul starts crying for example, I'm lost. Yeah, stuff like that. They get to me.

Int : Could you describe the most impressive moments for you?

Erika: Ah....I think that's in the season they have the nicknames each other, the heathers and the boogers, I absolutely hated that, in that season. Maybe I dislike entire season, because it's like high school, so I do like drama, but that was just childish, and I really dislike that, especially when they got back, with that Reunited, they just kind of like "yeah, but it wasn't mean thing", but I was like "you're calling them boogers, that's the mean thing". So, I don't know, that was I really didn't like that season, I can't even tell which season that was. It was just so divided, usually there is kinda like, you know, competition going between the girls, obviously, but with this was just girls groups against each other. You had the boogers and the heathers. I'm like, I don't know, that was the worst season for me. Because I just didn't like that. It's kinda like whole competition between these two groups trying to make fun of each other the most, trying to sabotage each other the most, no, not my thing. I'm more of, I really like the seasons they talk about RuPaul's Best Friends Race, sometimes they make joke when they talk, those are my kind of seasons, I like just help each other and have fun. I like that too.

Int : How about season 7? Do you think it's RuPaul's Best Friends Race?

Erika: Oooh, I think it's kind of middle, because of course everybody at one point hating Violet Chachki, I like Violet Chachki from the beginning already, so, but I did understand why they thought she was a bitch because she was so. But I thought it kind of between because in the end they all come together and it's kind of finish when they had reunited, it wasn't like "oh, you still a bitch", but the heathers and boogers thing, it felt that way when they had reunited. They were still talking about, yeah but even the necklaces, in the group they had the necklaces of the heathers, still try to make the statement like, "oh yeah, still against you". That kind of thing lost in the end of season 7, so that's why I like the season 7, there's more like Best Friends Race, because they, you know, in the end, they all became friends. And in that season, that just didn't happen, at all. I mean they sort of pretend it in the end, but with the necklace things or everything, it wasn't. They were still fighting, that was stupid.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Erika: Oh, they have to be confidence, they have to be, ahm...have to be creative, they have to be... they have to have empathy kinda like relatable to other people, they have to be like friendly in a way, you know, just be, because of course in the end they have to be like speaker for their people, for drag queens, for the gay communities stuff like that, so they really have to have these empathy for other people as well, I think that's important one too, ah, enthusiastic, I think that's good one too, you know, that's kind of like why Pearl is not like in my top 3, because in the end she was kinda like, a little bit, you know, silent, and I do like it when they do little more vocal and enthusiastic about what they wanna do, it's very important. Just be themselves, yeah, I think that's the most important criteria, they just own who they are, and that's kinda like confidence things. Just be who they are, you know. I think those are important points.

Int : You told that, confidence, creativity, empathy or relatability, enthusiasm and being themselves are really important. Do you think these 5 elements are important for women, in general?

Erika: Oh, definitely. What I like the most about watching RuPaul's Drag Race is, I always wish I had like even one tenth of their confidence, when they're on stage, that's what I love. They just own who they are, exactly how they want to be, there's message like something that females, women, really can learn from Drag Race. Like "okay, difference, that's totally fine. You can be as strong or powerful as you wanna be". And also with enthusiasm and empathy, I think that's basically everyone should have, like you should be enthusiastic about what you're doing in life, should be happy with what you're doing in life, and you should always, you know, show empathy to other, try to be, you know, as kind as possible you can. Yeah, I think that's all those characteristics is you could learn. Even not just necessarily women but everyone, but for myself, as a woman, it's more like confidence that they have, that's what I try to take from it. I could be that too, like that confident, on the stage, you know, that's what I really love about it.

Int : On the other hand, what is not acceptable behavior for a drag queen?

Erika: Ah, to come up with excuses, when they're on stage, I really don't like it when they come in like "yeah, but, ah, I had a hard time with this, hard time with that, this was very difficult for me, I can't sew" even another one comes with argument, I'm like,

“you know you have to sew, stop like that!” When they come up with these excuses for what they did, or when they did something they didn’t, something bad, bad costume or bad outfit, and I’m like “then just admit you did it wrong. And try to improve”. But sometimes these queens keep talking like “but this went wrong, that person tries to sabotage me”, trying to put them blame, and anyone but themselves, I don’t know, that’s stupid for me. And I just, deliberately try sabotage people, that’s also (unacceptable). Because, you know, they don’t deserve to win, because apparently you couldn’t without cheating, or you know, sabotaging people, so I really don’t like that either. Yeah, stuff like that. Those two things, definitely.

Int : You said you like RuPaul or her style of drag. I want to ask you if you have ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Erika: Hmm, no, no really, I always kinda like agree with RuPaul, sometimes I’m like “that’s a shame but I do understand why RuPaul said like that”, it’s not gonna happen, usually I agree. What I didn’t agree with her was about Kim Chi, but I didn’t get the explanation about decision because of course it was final three, and it is big show, it’s never clear to me why one of the three wins, I don’t know, that’s the thing. But, usually, I agree with people that leave, either their experience or, they’re just not growing enough. So, no, I usually feel RuPaul is very fair towards contestants.

Everyday experience

Int : We are moving on to the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life and bit more general question in relation to Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Erika: When do I think of RuPaul’s Drag Race? Ahm...I tried to put it in more everyday life, it’s more about when I see how some people treat people from like gay community or transgender community, any kind of gender-free community, sometimes I just see things, or hear things like not acceptable things in that way about people, I just wanna put them down, and show them RuPaul’s Drag Race like, “just see how fun they are, they’re just human being as well, they just wanna be who they wanna be”. That’s usually when I kinda like... I had this thing today as well, we were talking about gender-free bathrooms, and somebody went like, “no, I feel like that’s stupid. There should be male bathroom and female bathroom”. And I’m like, “can you even imagine what those people are going through this transition and they don’t know

whether they're male or female or both or either", I just kinda like "you should educate yourself, go watch RuPaul's Drag Race! Just see how much fun they can have, how much human they are!" So, that's what I usually think about RuPaul's Drag Race in everyday life. When those kinds of issues come up. Yeah, definitely. They just kinda like, you know, I get really angry when I hear people just being like, "they should be woman or man, or they are just so gay dressing up like a woman", you know, that's not even, like, same thing, and what I also have YouTube, I watch a lot of beauty bloggers, also watch like guys who do make-up themselves, stuff like that, and I like, you know, that's fine, and then, some friends of mine, "oh that's so gay", and "yes he's gay, but it's not because he uses make-up" and I'm like, that's not same thing as, "oh, he's drag queen!" and, "no, he likes make-up", and "what's the different, they're trying to be like a woman", and "no, he just likes make-up!" And then, I'm like "ahhhh, you just don't understand anything you are talking about!" Those are the moments I everyday life when I just get upset. I just, you know, I'm just glad when watching everything is just accepted. At least my mindset is that way as well.

Int : I've heard you have Whatsapp group of Drag Race. Could you tell me about the group?

Erika: It's just, what happened before, I was with one of my friends, I usually talked to him about Drag Race, I was just constantly spamming when I was watching it, "oh what's happening right now?", "why is she doing that?", would be during the lip-sync, "she's gonna win", "no, she is gonna win!" and he would be like, "wait, I will add you to whatsapp group", he was like "stop bothering me, only me, every single time, just put it in this group", and it's totally fine, in this group, it's just during watching the episode, we talk about, like, what's happening in this episode, who do we like, who don't we like, who do we think actually should have won, who should have left, stuff like that. It's just a lot of fun because we discuss everything and it's a lot of fun. It's just spamming all the time, we have like, one of the guys in the group, he usually posts like whole paragraphs about the episode, and reading like "okay, okay" (laugh), it's just like fun, we just share opinions about whole episode. I feel it's just nice because it's really much we should talk about with our people. I mean you can watch by yourself, but it's just fun to discuss with friends who really watch the same thing you know, who can relate to it. It's just bullshit (laugh), to be fair. And a

lot of memes and pictures and we make like GIFs and impressions stuff like that. It's a lot of fun.

Int : That's great. What does the group chat mean for you?

Erika: Oh my god, it's just so nice, I haven't had outlet, we can just talk about it without being like, "what if people find it weird that I watch RuPaul's Drag Race?" Even though I have friends who watch it but we don't really talk about it, more of my female friends, I talk about it with my guy friends. That's, I just realize that's kinda weird, but it's nice that I can just be really enthusiastic about it without being like "oh, you won't understand why I really like seeing this". Usually, when I'm like, for example when watching it at home, I live with my parents and then, my parents are like, "what are you watching?", then "it's RuPaul's Drag Race", "oh, it's just guys dress up like women", and I'm like, "it's little bit more than that". But they just really don't get it. And that's something that happens a lot, it would be like, "I don't really understand why you like this. It's just guys dressing up as women". It's really nice to have the group that I can just talk about it, without, you know, being judged, I have to explain why I like it. They understand why. I can just share my opinion without having any shit or something like that. I'm really glad that my friend added me the whatsapp group. It's just really nice.

Int : Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram?

Erika: I follow a few on Instagram, I follow of course Miss Fame, but she usually doesn't upload that much, which is very annoying, but I follow Chachki, and Pearl, because I really like the photos. They make really pretty pictures about what they do every single time, I really like that as well. And same with Kim Chi. I love Kim Chi. I also love Kim Chi's Instagram story is she often talks about food, which is just so relatable as well, like you know, I love food, she loves food. It's just, she just shows you what she's eating every day, and I'm like "yes! That's what I want to see what you're eating!" Usually on Instagram, I don't even have twitters.

Int : Do you think Drag Race became so popular?

Erika: Definitely. There was like this point, it became mainstream, in a way, when they, at one point it just exploded because I only start watching season 7 and that was still kind of small, my personal bubble, you know, and now, when you talk about it, it's little bit more like, "oh, yeah, I would love to watch that!" And you know, when I watched few episodes, "oh this is pretty fun!" But it is more mainstream now. If you

now say RuPaul's Drag Race, everybody kinda knows what you mean. When I started watching it, people would be like, "you're watching what?" and I'm like "RuPaul's Drag Race! You know, about drag queens!" So, it has become more, I think mainstream.

Int : Why do you think it's become mainstream?

Erika: I think the fact that all those seasons show on Netflix really helps, and just the social media thing. It's kind of like exploding on the internet when something happens with whole RuPaul's Drag Race, and they have like hashtags as well on twitters, it's just everybody just know, I think I can just imagine people like "what's happening? What is this hashtag popping up?" and they explore that, and "oh, RuPaul's Drag Race! It would be my interest, let's watch the episode" and then hooked to it. It's just social media thing, that's kind of makes it more mainstream, because everybody is seeing everywhere.

Int : How about contents itself? What makes it more popular?

Erika: I think that the contest, the whole becoming RuPaul's Drag Super Star, is not like most important thing about the season. I think that's not really like mainstream thing. It's more like watching it, being involved in those queens say each other drama, not really about winning, to become RuPaul's Super Star, because in the end I never follow up, okay, what they actually do, when they won the title. Usually, I'm like "okay, next episode, next season". And when they come back, "oh, you won last time. I kinda forgot you won! Because I'm already into the new season". So it kinda feels me that the title is not the most important thing to gain from the contents, it's more sharing their experience, their personalities on TV, letting people know what they are like, and I guess it's good way to get bit more mainstream because more people being exposed to those kinds of things, those kinds of people, and create more empathy as well. And people know more instead of being just like "what is drag queen? I don't know". They can now, just you know, explode themselves in the [???]. Is it like about the contests being mainstream? I don't think so. It's more about the girls, those queens, their personalities, not very much about contents or competition itself, in my opinion.

Int : Who do you think targeted audience of this show?

Erika: I guess, the target audience would be the drag queen, gay, gender community, and not necessarily just everyone, but I watch it (laugh). I don't know, I guess it is more

directed to their community because they will understand the references more, they more recognize those queens. I'm like "I have no idea who they are" but you know at the end of the season, and fans would be like, "oh I know the queen, that's from NY" and I'm gonna be like, "okay, sure, she's from NY" and I have no idea. I guess it is more targeted towards their own community. But I do think they try to make it more again, mainstream. It is accepted, you know, available for everyone, but I do think it's more their own community.

Int : Who is included in this "mainstream"?

Erika: I guess more younger people? I guess I would say in their 20s and 30s-ish. I think that's more like, at least younger, I don't think, I can't imagine older people really watch RuPaul's Drag Race, but I might be wrong. But I think it's targeted towards younger people, you know, who like social media, and stuff like that. Because those are also young people who don't give shit about Instagram or twitter and they are probably not getting into RuPaul's Drag Race that fast because there're no expose to the contents. So I think just people who are social media, who are lot of YouTube videos, and stuff like that, and pretty young still that's kind of including mainstream, mainstream group. I don't know, I don't study sociology or stuff like that (laugh).

Int : I want to hear your opinion, so that's totally fine. It's really interesting.

Erika: Okay, good.

Int : I read an article that almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. What do you think about it? Do you agree with it?

Erika: Well, I think it makes sense, because it is, ah I have to be careful, it is a more feminine show in a way, I mean it is drag, make-up and clothes, dresses and they do portrait female, try to be female, you know, I guess it makes sense more straight women would watch it. Because it appeals more to them. I can't really imagine straight guy watch it, although my boyfriend, when sometimes I watch the episode on the corner of the room when he working on something, and I can see him sometimes watching it, like "what happens?", "do you like this?" and "no" but sometimes he just really starts watching with me, maybe. He's gonna hate me telling that (laugh). You don't know his name, that's fine (laugh). But, ah, I guess, it kind of makes sense to me but I don't expect it would be 50%, to be honest. I thought it would be more, yeah, what I said like more their community, gay community, the drag queen community, they would watch it more because it's their

friends, their family on the show. So, I'm kinda surprised that it's 50% actually. I would guess maybe it's 30 or something instead of 50. But I think it's great, though. Yeah. I think it's great that you know, it's not just exposed in their own little world, I think it's nice that like everybody should be exposed. I think it's great that there are also like the straight community I guess, it's also acceptable to watch this. It doesn't really matter what your preference is in your relationship or your gender. You can just watch it whenever you want.

Int : But you don't think straight male enjoy Drag Race.

Erika: No. I don't think so. Is it on the article? No? I'm curious (laugh). But I don't think it really interests them. Maybe like for just know about it, it would be great. They are maybe interested in just about concept, but I can't imagine them binge-watching 11 seasons of RuPaul's Drag Rae. Unless it's a guy who is really interested in make-up, then, maybe. But I don't know, in my mind, it's just, I don't think so.

Int : What do you think the difference between men and women?

Erika: I think that women are more relatable, you know, they talk about stuff as female, like how they should do make-up or talk about body issues as well, as we talk about big queens stuff like that, what I really love is big queens wear really tight dress which is I would never do in my life. But they would be just walking around, you know, "this is fine, I look fucking gorgeous". I really love when they do that and I think that's more relatable to women, you know, like I want that kind of confidence as well to wear tight dress without worrying about how big my butt looks or something like that. I don't think that guys find that relatable. So I guess that thing, it relates more to the insecurities and struggles that we as women deal with, that they deal with. I guess that's kind of like why they attracts us more than straight guys.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Erika: Ah, to be themselves, to be confidence, not to be afraid of expressing your own creativity I think that's really important one as well, because like, I like drag queens who just do what they want, and just you know, even though others might think "oh that's really ugly what you made", and they're like "but I like it, I don't care". I really like that as well. Only what you like and what you do, and definitely empathy towards people, I think, when I watched the episodes most loving people, imaginable especially at the end of episode, also message like "if you can't love yourself, how in the hell can you love somebody else?" I think that's like the most

important thing to know, to learn from whole show. Just to be like okay, love yourself, your perfect way you are, you don't have to change anything. So I guess, you know, it's a good thing that is repeated every single episode because it's the most important thing. Yeah, I would say that's the most important thing we could learn from it. Just love yourself. Then you can learn to love somebody else. I think that's great.

Int : Is that what you have learned from Drag Race as well?

Erika: I think so. It makes me like more aware of just being who I wanna be, instead of thinking about "oh, I'm scared what people might think of me". Ever since I started watching Drag Race, well, I often wear like a lot of make-up because just I love it, but when I started watching RuPaul's Drag Race, it's like, more be comfortable with what I want to wear as make-up, so I sometimes wear blue lipstick, other people would be like, "oh, ahm... cool..." and I would be like, "yeah, I think so". And it's just kinda like, it shows me, to me, it's actually fine that I want to wear that even if somebody else think it's weird, and I would be like, "yeah, it's weird, and I love it". So, I guess by watching RuPaul, that is kind of what I learn from it, more okay with what I wanna do instead of thinking about what people might think. Yeah, definitely.

Int : Thank you. That was the last question, but is there anything that you want to say?

Erika: Ahm, Netflix, put all the seasons on there, put All Stars as well! Put Untucked there! Hahaha, no, what I just, I think it's very important that this is a topic to discuss. I think it's very important that, it's not just, you know, fun, show, competition, reality things whatever you want to call it, it deals with, engage people into talking about this kind of things. Discuss like, why do you watch this, why should be watched. Not just fun show, it can really learn yourself. I think that's really important that you're doing discussion as your thesis about this. You know, people keep talking about it, instead of just being like "oh yeah, it's fun", but it's also you can learn something. We should talk about these kinds of topics, all the time. That's what I would say.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 7

Name: Helena

Age: 22

Occupation: student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 04-04-2019

Location: at a Café

Duration: 55min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Helena: Well, my best friend is kind of drag queen-into it, we were just chilling, we had a party a day before, and it was like, he was always talking about it, and forced me to watch it with him! I just I like it so much, it was, it has just, got out on Netflix, so I was like "yeah, I'm gonna watch it". And started watching myself. It was two years, or one and a half years ago, something like that. Sort of recently.

Int : What was your first impression of the show?

Helena: It was just so fun, I don't know, I didn't have like, certain expectation, I just didn't

know what to expect, I've never really thought about drag queens like, that they could be so feminine, and so beautiful, I was just, I always thought it was bit like something out of my, you know, out of my world, or something, yeah.

Int : Has your impression of Drag Race changed since you started watching it?

Helena: Yeah, I'm not sure, I actually didn't have, real impression, because I didn't, never really think about it. When I started watching it, I just, yeah I think that my opinion started at, like, for me, started at that time, because I never incorporated with it. It was like sometimes I saw like queens like at gay parade like in Amsterdam or something, but I never really had an opinion, it was like, just existed, you know. I never really took time to, you know, get to know queens better.

Int : Okay, then could you explain your opinion? About drag queens?

Helena: I just, I love them. They look so, also strong. Like, you need to be strong, I think, in that world, but they really know who they are, and what they want, and they are really unique all of them, there are not all, but, a lot of them are really beautiful, I think they are really inspirational.

Int : Have you watched all the seasons?

Helena: Almost all the seasons. I didn't watch season 1, because the image quality is very low, I couldn't bear it. Because it was so many years ago. So I started from season 2.

Int : Which season is your favorite? And why?

Helena: My favorite season, oh, that's a tough one. I think, I think season 6. Or, maybe season 5, because there was a lot of drama in season 5. You have Coco Montrese and Alyssa Edwards, yeah, there was like a lot, like every single episode there was something going on. I like that.

Int : Are you still enjoying Drag Race? Season 11 is aired now. Are you watching it?

Helena: Yeah, I am watching season 11.

Int : I want to come back to what you told me, about your opinion on Drag Race. You said they are so strong. What do you mean by the word "strong"? Could you explain a little more?

Helena: Well, they are, they had a lot of, they went through a lot of things, a lot of shit. I feel like they all came back stronger, and of course, a lot of people gave negative opinion on them. They just don't care, they're just who they are, and unapologetic. That's nice. I think people should be like that.

Contents and contestants

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race. Please tell me about queens you like. Who are you rooting for? And why?

Helena: Queens I like. This is gonna be so cliché but I love Adore, Adore Delano. She is just so, she has just smile, if you look at her, she has just happy aura, something around her.

Int : When do you feel Adore's aura?

Helena: Just all the time! She is like always happy and she is always, she is, yeah, I would love to hang out with her, it's just something like that.

Int : Could you describe some moments?

Helena: When she came into the room, for real. I didn't like her as much in All Stars 2, because she quit, that's was like so, not like her, I mean I get it not everyone is always in a state of happiness, she was just mentally not really, you know, there at the time, but, I just that was she is still sort of example, I thought it was just a shame, you know, that she quit. Just for her as well, because she didn't like really believing in herself, was little sad. But I really like her. She really has this unique style, definitely unique personality, even more personality, even more unique in her style, I think.

Int : Could you describe her style?

Helena: Her style is punk, her style is even not my thing, actually, because I'm not really punk kind of girl, but personally, just makes her everything.

Int : Her punk style is kind of unique for you?

Helena: Ah, yeah, it was a little unique, but I think it's more like unique for drag queens, because I didn't see a lot of like punk drag queens, her personality is just, I think that's got her so far in this season. Her personality [???] out her style.

Int : Do you have any other queens you like?

Helena: I love Katya. She's so honest, and so funny. She just, she is so real. She tells like her problem or everything like, she's just very human. And she's very funny too.

Int : Could you recall some moments, your favorite moments of Katya?

Helena: I like every challenge concerning movie or something, she's always funny and she was on points, and there was also one time, she was discussing anxiety, it's so

good that she just speaks about that. It's kind of like making us stronger and personal, she just talks so openly about it.

Int : Then, on the other hand, do you have queens you do not like?

Helena: Ah, let me think... I thought Eureka was kind of annoying, because, I don't know, she's just obnoxious a little, in my opinion. She always sort like, she just sounds like, the attention all the time, and, I just wasn't feeling her, she wasn't "it" for me.

Int : Do you have any other queens you do not like?

Helena: Ah, this section is hard, because I like many of queens. But I didn't like Roxxy Andrews in All Stars. That was mainly because she was like, you had all the ROLASKATOX thing, they just got her through. She deserved to go home way earlier. She didn't deserve to be top 4.

Int : Why didn't she deserve top 4?

Helena: Ah, because she always got through by Alaska, because she won all the time, and like she was in the bottom 2 with Tatiana, and also with Alyssa Edwards, and both of those times the other was better than her. But she only got through because she was so close with Alaska and Alaska didn't send her friend home. She was just, she didn't deserve to win. She can't really help herself, but it was annoying.

Int : Who do you think the most beautiful queen?

Helena: Well, right now, I really like Plastique Tiara. She's so gorgeous. And I think Adore is gorgeous as well. She has really nice face. Ah... let me see...there are a lot of pretty ones.

Int : Why do you think Plastique and Adore are beautiful?

Helena: They are really fish (laugh). They could be women, they just, they have such like a soft aspect on their face, they're more beautiful than me (laugh). It's not fair! (laugh)

Int : Is there anyone who you can really relate to? Or you can identify with?

Helena: I think Katya. Yeah. Because she was so open about everything that she was going through, and I feel like "yeah, girl I get you", you know. I sometimes get suffer from anxiety too, and she was just, you know, yeah, I just felt her, I think, you know, covering things [??] with you, she was so honest about everything.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Helena: Ah, that's hard one, let me think...I loved, I just I loved fights (laugh). Like when Coco Montrese and Alyssa Edwards had this fight, I love watching this drama. Also, like Phi Phi Ohara and Sharon Needles, they also went in, I love that. That's

supposed to be funny but I love it. Also I had like I always love the acting challenging. A lot of them are so funny, like, not all of them, but a lot of them have great humor. And I'm just, oh, reading! I love reading as fundamental. I love that! That's always so fun to watch. Just read each other down.

Int : What is interesting or funny about reading?

Helena: Well, it's like, knowing, but, yeah, it's obviously like sort of like weakness, they just could point it out, then it is harsh, but not like, you can say it for once or something, it's not insulting most of them, sometimes they go a little over the line, it's just nicely balanced. It's maybe they know each other, most of the time, yeah, you know.

Int : It's really important to know each other to read.

Helena: Yeah, important to know what you can say and what you can't say.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments?

Helena: There are always like, I think, every episode has like a moment one queen tells about something she went through, I, first thing I come up in mind is Roxxy, she told about she was left by her mom at the bus stop, that was so heart-breaking, I actually cried. I cry easily, but still. There's also, they went through so much shit, that's kind of heart-breaking. And you see what they became, that's what makes the show beautiful to me.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations, challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Helena: Well, obviously Adore, when she had to leave, because I was like "girl...!!!!" She believes in her little more, you know. And every time when they like break down or show something like that. No one deserves that, it shows that America is such a shit country sometimes, being so unaccepting, it's not fair because they're all just human and just wanna be like who they want and America is just like, some people in America, I just I can't even get it in my mind, I just don't understand how people can be like that. One day their parents kick them out or something because they are gay, it's just, how could anyone... It's just really hard for me.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Helena: Yeah, definitely (laugh). Definitely, most of the time. Literally all the time. Like, every time when they tell sad story and literally start sobbing, because I cry so easily (laugh). When my brother saw me crying, and like "girl, you're watching Drag Race, why are you crying?" He doesn't do that so often, so, yeah (laugh).

Int : Could you recall episodes or moments that you really got emotional?

Helena: Let me think of one, there are so many times, that's hard to think because it is a little while ago when I watched everything, ah, yeah, definitely in All Stars, when Alyssa told that her mom passed away, I think. I think Alyssa's mom passed away, that was a story in All Stars 2, and she reconnected with her sister for the first time, she actually came, and that was so, like, pure. I was like "oh...can't handle this..." It was amazing. Also when Ben De La Crème told the story. And also, who was the blond queen, season 3 or like maybe early season, oh, Pandora Boxx, she also, they both talked about tried to commit suicide, that's just...horrible. Just because they're gay, people around them don't accept them, that's just, they can feel so lonely, it just breaks my heart. So, those times. But, like every season, there're always multiple queens' stories like that, like, countless stories.

Int : Could you describe the most impressive moments for you?

Helena: Ah, I don't think if I can speak of one moment, but some queens they try, so much better than other queens, like, I think, ah, oh my god, what's her name, ah, Violet Chachki, she was so talented, to me it was so obvious that she's gonna win, because she was, so, ah Raja, Raja was so high fashion. They have like fashion aesthetic there. They stand out from the others. That's pretty impressive to me. Like the things they come up with the looks, that's it.

Int : How do you describe these queens' style or sense of fashion?

Helena: They're super high fashion. They're like a little bit in their own [???]. They're doing something that never been done before. And that's really something, get into the crown, obviously.

Int : Do you have particular look that you really like? Of Violet or Raja.

Helena: I love every single look made by both of them! But, I like Violet's two different looks in one costume. It was so good, and, purple one as well...It's difficult to recall my memories because it was one I watched for the first time, and Raja was also like, it was really earlier season, and it wasn't like, she was a little bit boyish, that was really new concept, a lot of people didn't really understand it at that time, but it became such a big thing. She was really like a pioneer.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Helena: Ah, definitely, you know, everything they always say is, Charisma, Uniqueness,

Nerve and Talent. That's just a joke as a CUNT, I think (laugh). But, yeah, it does, uniqueness definitely, you need to bring something, that people haven't done before. Because, there are like, drag became such a huge thing, and it's hard to, be refreshing and renewing this entire round, although it's definitely possible, I feel, this season, Yvie Oddly, I'm not sure if she's gonna win, but she's very, she's bringing something new. That's nice. So, and you need to be like a little bit Jack of all trades, you need to be funny, you need to be real, you need to be pretty, you need to know fashion, you need, yeah, you need to own everything, a little bit.

Int : I'm wondering if these factors, like, uniqueness, being funny, pretty and fashion, these factors are important for women in general.

Helena: You mean, women in general?

Int : Yeah.

Helena: Ah, well, I think so, I mean, we're not, you know, competing for a crown, but, I think it does make strong women, it's not like we all need to be great actors or singers or things like that, just, you know, be... like a strong version of yourself, because it makes really what they are. They really know all the strength, they really [???]. And I think it's important for women.

Int : And as for RuPaul, what do you think?

Helena: I love RuPaul! I love her! She's beautiful, she's compassionate, she's just so great, she has just all the star power.

Int : Can I ask you what you mean by compassionate?

Helena: She's, she treats all the queens like her, actually her daughters. Also, she's strong enough to send them away. You see that she's struggling sometimes as well, not just sending them home. She's really, it's not just she cares about them. That's really nice.

Int : Have you ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Helena: Ahm... let me think...No. I always like, sometimes I don't really agree, I think, I can't really think of one moment, but I always get what she's coming from, it's her opinion, obviously. She probably knows about it more than me. She's never unfair, sometimes I was hoping someone else, you know, went through instead of like, but it's also obviously because of lip-sync, like. Yeah.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general questions in relation to Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life? About what do you think at the moment?

Helena: Ahm, there is a thing that Ru said actually like, when you feel confidence, about one part, you can translate it to other parts, and I just always say it in my mind every time I feel a little bit insecure, I still like, [???], pretty often I think. Or when I am going out, like “yaaas, slay!!” something like that.

Int : I've heard you have Whatsapp group of Drag Race. Could you tell me about the group?

Helena: We always discuss about latest episodes, that's only thing we actually talking about.

Int : How do you enjoy the group chat?

Helena: I like it, but sometimes, one of my best friends, who can send, like, super long going on about it, sometimes it gets so personal, he doesn't like Nina West, he was like, “she should have gone home” or something like that, and every time he found something, post a super long opinion (laugh). It's just hateful. “Nina should go home!” It's just so personal.

Int : What do you say usually in the group chat?

Helena: I usually only say thing, when I actually, really like something. I usually, I'm not like, because I like most things, like people really have to do something to make me dislike them. So, obviously go “oh, she looks so beautiful!”, just that.

Int : You are enjoying the group chat.

Helena: I am enjoying it!

Int : So, what does it mean for you?

Helena: It's just like little [???] of just ourselves. I just really enjoy it. And I like caring others do. I like discussing something shocking, like, Brooke Lynn Hytes and Miss Vanjie thing, that's never happened before! Romance, yeah. Kind of shocking, it was like, wow, never expected such kind of thing during the series.

Int : What do you think of the relationship?

Helena: I like them and they're so beautiful! But I already know that's not gonna last, unfortunately. I read about it.

Int : Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram?

Helena: I am. On Instagram, Adore Delano, Katya as well, I was following Carmen Carrera, because she had the gender change, so that was like, she was like first one who went to the transition. After that, more people start, though. I like that she is so openly about it, so I started following her. And I'm following Raja, RuPaul himself, obviously, I follow Plastique Tiara as well, right now. I like Plastique but I don't think she's gonna win. Because, or maybe, she's gonna like, she needs to open up little more. Because I just feel she's not really showing herself. She's so beautiful, I do remember a little bit Miz Cracker, I really thought she was talented but she just couldn't open up enough or something. And I feel like that's same thing with Plastique Tiara.

Int : Do you think Drag Race became so popular?

Helena: Yeah, I feel like it's becoming bigger and bigger. Definitely partly because of RuPaul, like the whole, because people just start watching it and start getting into the world more. The whole, cultural [???] more, big, becomes bigger. And, ah, well it's really fun. I don't really know, I'm just letting people watch it, they should watch it because it's a great show, actually, teaches you a bit about what they go through as well. It's not just superficial. It also has that. So, that's nice. I don't really know, it's just, I'm glad that's getting big.

Int : Who do you think targeted audience of this show?

Helena: Ah, well definitely for parts, gay boys, they always say they really try to inspire like boys who watching it, it's okay to thinking about getting into drag or coming out of the closet, yeah, and definitely also women, yeah, ah, I think mostly those two groups.

Int : Why do you think women are intended target?

Helena: Ah, it's not intended, I think that is just, it's just I think, it's bit like America's Next Top Model, different. That's kind of show is mainly for women, so, it's sort of like same thing, which is like sort of logical but women watch it. Yeah, but, ah, I don't know really...

Int : Ah, then can I change my question a little bit? I've read an article that almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. What do you think about it? Do you agree with it?

Helena: Yeah, yeah, because definitely it's so much about like fashion and just a lot of like feminine things, because they're drag "queens", they're mainly feminine themselves. And it's just drama, women love drama.

Int : Could you explain more about feminine aspects?

Helena: They are like, clothing, and the make-up, things like that. And drama.

Int : Do you think straight men can enjoy Drag Race as well?

Helena: Hmm, I think they definitely can enjoy it, but most of them don't, be given chance, because, sometimes my brothers watch it with me and they really like it, but, they wouldn't put it on themselves, you know, they just sometimes watch with me when I'm watching. It is not actually further.

Int : What do you think the difference between men and women? I mean, why women love Drag Race, while straight men are not so enthusiastic.

Helena: Ah, I just think it's men usually they are not into make-up or clothing or things like that. It's just not really their interest. What interests them is cars, or thing like that. Super masculine things. There is nothing wrong with that, it's just not what I'm interested. I think it's a little bit same thing. It's not just what they like. Most of the time.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Helena: Definitely confidence. Like, how to channel confidence to different aspects in your life, that's what I learn from, trying to learn from it. It's like, I really love this feel they have, it was the first time that I heard like if you're really confident about one thing, you need to find like the pace just coming from it, like, you see the other aspects things as well, and I was like "oh, that is what I never thought about it!" And that's really actually help me, but also, accepting people who they are, not like judging people, you can tell those people their back stories, things they went through, you can maybe like, sometimes feel like "she's such a bitch!" something like that, but then, they start opening up, then you can like "hmm, she went through so much and I get why she's like", Phi Phi O'hara, a lot of people really don't like her, but she has had such a hard time, so, I mean, I just, I don't say love her, I don't dislike, but I get her, where she's coming from. Unfortunately, I feel she's still struggling, then, people shouldn't be so hard on her.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Helena: Yeah, I do think, I did get a little confidence since I started watching it, maybe weird, but, yeah, it is cool, as well. And, ahm, I try to like do my make-up better but I'm still too lazy (laugh), most of the time I just don't even have time to do it so well. Sometimes I look at their face and "oh, that's so beautiful and I wanna do my make-up like that!" But, ah, mainly like, a little bit part of confidence. But I'm glad, I'm just so glad that I started watching the show.

Int : Okay, thank you. That was the last question, but if you have anything that you want to add or say a little bit more, could you tell me that?

Helena: Ah, just I have one more queen I dislike, she popped in my head later on, because I was talking about, most of the time I feel really real, but it is Laganja, actually, I thought she wasn't real. She was just, she thought really like, fake, just fake. So, I dislike her as well. Only coming with something negative (laugh).

Int : That's fine! I'm curious what is fake and what is real. What do you think?

Helena: I thought she was putting, she was playing this character, like this wasn't really her, like people around her were feeling that as well, they were confirming her but she just kept holding on to this, she was like, "no, this is who I am", everyone just sees it was [???] it was almost awkward.

Int : It is really important to be yourself.

Helena: Yeah, because people can, they pick it up when you are not, especially in the place like that. What I really like about show do, I can feel, from sisterhood. Like, sometimes they don't really get along but they still, you still feel they really care about each other, because I thought it really sort of sisters. And drag really brings into a family, it's just beautiful. I love that part of the show too.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 8

Name: Maria

Age: 23

Occupation: worker (graduated high school 5 years ago)

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 04-04-2019

Location: at a Café in Leiden

Duration: 60min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Maria: The first time I think was when it came on Netflix, my friends said, "yeah, I just found this and it's interesting", and I was like "oh, then I'm gonna watch this, too", I think it was two years ago, sometime, like that. Yeah, and I started watching it and I'm addicted. I was watching with my mom, I love it so much! So fun to watch!

Int : What was your first impression of the show?

Maria: The first impression I think was "wow, this is so cool", I thought, like "these guys are so talented, they make themselves whole different person, they make this whole different

character themselves", and I thought very impressive, like how they did all the things, how they knew all the stuff, you know, and yeah, it's just really, I think would be hard for me to be like entertaining, be funny and pretty at the same time. Yeah I think it was very impressive, the first impression was really funny.

Int : How has your impression changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Maria: I don't think, I think it's kind of same, yeah.

Int : Which seasons have you seen?

Maria: I've seen all of them, which are on Netflix, only one season I didn't finish because the lightings were so bad, I don't know, it was kinda [???] version, so I stopped watching season 1. Then I started, I watched everything together, it wasn't like, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. How do you say, yeah, I jumped from season to season.

Int : Which season is your favorite?

Maria: I think, I don't really know, which season it is, but I like the one with Aquaria, no, no, no, I mean, Violet Chachki, then I really like it. Is that season 6? 8? Ah, or season 7? It was really my favorite, there was also fashion involved. I liked Violet Chacki, I was really happy she won.

Int : Can I ask you about Violet Chachki? She is your favorite queen?

Maria: I don't know she is my favorite, I really like Adore Delano. I'm going to the show of Adore in Amsterdam this month! She's gonna sing her songs, and maybe tell her story or something. I'm really looking for seeing that. I have never been to the drag shows, I always wanted, when I started watching Drag Race, I was like, "I really wanna see the show!" because it would be nice to see what's going on, I don't know, in the Netherlands there are many things goes on, but, yeah, I wanna see it sometime. Have you been to the drag show?

Int : Yes, once.

Maria: Oh, how was the show? Did you like it?

Int : Yes, absolutely. I can tell you later (laugh).

Maria: Yeees! (laugh) That's cool!

Int : Are you watching season 11?

Maria: No, because it's not on Netflix. It's on youtube, right? But I don't watch it. I don't know why, but I'm watching other series as well.

Int : Are you gonna watch season 11 if it's on Netflix?

Maria: Yes, of course! Because it's easy to watch it on Netflix, you don't have to wait for next episode, because I'm kinda binge-watcher, so I like to watch it all day (laugh).

Contents and contestants

Int : I want to move on to the next section. You told me your favorite is Adore Delano. Could you tell me more about her?

Maria: Like, why I like Adore? Okay, I like her because she is very, her feeling, she expresses her feeling, I think she is really cute, very pretty as well, she is like, bit younger, so I can relate to her, and also I don't know, she's just very fun, outgoing, very expressive about feeling, that's what I can relate a lot to. I want to be friend with her, meet her actually. I think we can be good friends. I mean, that's kind of character I want to hang out with.

Int : Do you have any other queens you can relate to?

Maria: I think there are more, I don't know, I think I can somehow relate to all of them, not all of them, but, you know, a lot of them, yeah, because they are so much different, so you can always find some little piece you can kind of, I can understand what they were going through.

Int : Could you tell me some queens that you can relate to?

Maria: Ah, let me think...I think, Tyra, from season 2, the winner of season 2, she has like, she was like bitchy, and then she came to open up more, like, I think that's something I can relate to because sometimes I come across, bitchy people think, you know, people get a reaction of like, "I don't like her, because she is like that" and people change their opinion over time, so maybe it's not really Tyra relating to, but the other people, I don't know, let me think about more queens...ah...there's so many queens! It's really hard.

Int : Can I change my question a little bit?

Maria: Yeah, sure!

Int : Could you tell me about your favorite queen, other than Adore?

Maria: I like Raja, I really like her, because she is kinda rock, oh, I can relate to her, because she's tall, she's like fashion, you know, she's also like, yeah, I think she's really rocking, very rock-chic, I think that's really badass, sometimes I would be like her, you know, like, I admire people they are bold, and encourage to be who they wanna be, and I think that's really admirable. So I think I look up to them, also because, yeah,

it's really, it's not, I don't think it's easy to just like, "oh, I'm gonna become a drag queen" then you just, you know, change a lot of self, you have to have, ah, how do you say, courage, and self-esteem, and thick skin, because people are gonna be mad at you or something, I don't know, I'm also very tall as well, so people sometimes, like when I was younger, I was also tall as all the boys, that was kinda hard, because I was insecure about myself, I was like, "oh", and I think now I'm not anymore, like, because I embraced it, that's who I am, I can really change it, so, I think that's also something I can relate to, you know, it's not same kind of thing but, yeah.

Int : That's beautiful. Okay, can I ask you about queens you do not like?

Maria: Okay, ah, I was watching season, I don't know, season 2 I think, no, ah, what's her name, Chi Chi or Pi Pi or, I just thought she was kind of bitchy, she was in the season with Alaska, when she was in top three, well, never mind, I thought she was just a kind of bitchy, you know, I thought she was maybe not that confident and then she [portraited?] to other queens, like, mad, I do like when they're fighting, it's funny, but they are getting mean to each other, I don't think it's necessary. And I thought she was kind of mean to people. So, I don't think, that's something I really didn't like. And, which one I didn't like...maybe, I didn't like, oh what's her name, Valencia? Not Valentina, I did like her... Yeah, I liked Valentina, but I heard that in the end she was just like fake-nice, you know, when it turned out, I didn't like her after that, because I thought she was really cute and she was really sincere about stuff, and then, after I heard she was only fake in the end and kinda bitchy, I didn't like, that's when I turn around my opinion about her. I also I had that, what her name, Michael, Chad Michael, no, muscle queen, ah, yeah, Kameron Michaels, I also liked her, I was really rooting for him because thought he was just very shy, after, I also heard like of Kameron also, he was also like bitchy, and he was kinda shading everyone, I was like, "uh, no" I didn't like him either, in my opinion. Also he changed as well.

Int : When did you realize that Valentina and Kameron are bit different from that you thought.

Maria: I think when they come together like Reunited, you hear all the queens talking about what happened and stuff, and then they talked about like how they really were, like, on camera, they were really nice or very shy, very kind to people, and then off camera, like, that's what I heard, and I was like "oh, that's really...ah...". You have like different image of them, because you only see that you know on the camera, like on the show,

and to see really what happened, like also, in Untucked and stuff, it's, you can like, different image of them. That's what I found in Reunited, and, just, I don't know, I'm just down with them. But, still think they're beautiful (laugh).

Int : Then, as for beautiful queens, who do you think the most beautiful?

Maria: The most beautiful queen, oh...I though like, ah, Naomi Smalls, that's really, I think beautiful. I think she's the most beautiful. And I also thought, what's her name, ah, she's transgender, into a woman, again, what's her name, but I thought she is beautiful as well, she has really good body, oh, what's her name!

Int : That's fine. Maybe you can just describe what she was like.

Maria: She was like, I think she knows she's beautiful, you know, she was like, she was always showing off her body, skin, and booty, you know? I think that's, she was confident about her skin, like that was also very, I think that makes someone beautiful, like, confidence, it shows, so... Oh, Cameron, no, ah, Carmen Carrera! Yeah! I think she was very beautiful. And Naomi Smalls, also I thought Aquaria was very pretty. She was like, just different kind of pretty, very model kind of. Who else... they all beautiful in their own way.

Int : Could you tell me bit more about Naomi? Why do you think she is beautiful?

Maria: Oh, I don't know, she's really tall, she's very skinny, just her skin is really beautiful, and lips and, just I really thought she has beautiful face, and beautiful body, and I thought she was really cute, like, she wasn't really, like, out-there, because, when I saw her, I thought she was gonna be like very loud, you know, very, yeah, I thought she had different kind of personality than her, but she had like calm, kinda thing, and I thought her make-up was beautiful as well. Yeah. What I look at now on the Instagram, kinda, because, when season 2, I watched season 2 most recently, but, it's like a lot of years ago, actually, and they changed so much. Because when I was looking Sharon Needles, like, what I saw her in the show, she was, just her, and now I looked at her on Instagram, she changes so much in her face! Because she had a lot of work done, you know, Botox, and lip lift, and, I didn't recognize her.

Int : What do you think about the transformation of Sharon Needles?

Maria: I think, ah, I don't know, I really don't know, I don't think she got more beautiful because I don't really, I don't like discourage work, like, plastic surgery or something, but I think she didn't really need it, maybe like her teeth, it is something she was insecure about, but I don't know. Like, a lot of them had work done, like lip lift,

everyone had done it, but it's just sometimes because who they are, like Detox, or Chad Michaels, they just have, it suits them, but, I don't, yeah, they have their work done before on the show, you know, that's why I think it's really interesting to look at them now, because a lot of them have really changed, you know. So, yeah.

Int : What do you think the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Maria: Well, I always find the snatch game very funny, that's I think the funniest part. I really like that.

Int : Do you have favorite snatch game?

Maria: I think so, I think it would be one with Eu...ah, she dressed up like Honey Boo Boo, ah, Eureka! I don't know which one won then, but, I like all of them, you know, I think that was the funniest moment.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments?

Maria: I think when some people open up about their lives on stage, you know, because, I don't know what happened to them all, like a lot of them, really, have done like, urged, to open up about them, I think that's, yeah it's really good because they can share and then they can help, maybe, some can help to heal, you know, that's really serious and, I think it's so sad because sometimes crying as well, you know, like, there was this moment when I can think of right now, ah, what's her name, but she was left by her mom, at the bus stop, you know, that was really sad because she said "I've never cried about it and now, I'm crying about it and actually I'm not okay", you know, "it's not fine, that she did that". Yeah, I think that was very serious moment for her as well. Because she said, "I've really never talked about it, I've really never cried about it", you know, the thing is, yeah, "maybe I would hate her, I'm not okay". Yeah.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations or challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Maria: Okay, I think, like, ah let me think...I sometimes I don't know, I just, they're trying to do something and they know they can do better because I've seen them doing better, and then they just kind stuck in their own minds, and then just like, "come on! You can do it! Just go for it!", you know, that's more chance, different kinds of challenges and, yeah, I think these challenges are that I can feel empathy, they can handle it because I watch it, you know, because I can understand if I were there, like you don't contact with home, you're not speaking to anyone else than the group you are in, it's just like, just so hard, everything, like, every week, again and again, do my best, and

get everything, I have to do, I can win, I can be at least safe, you know. And I think that's why I feel empathy with them, they just break, like fall apart.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Maria: Yes, I have. I'm really emotional, I cry a lot, like when I'm watching TV, definitely cry.

Int : Can you recall when you got emotional?

Maria: Oh, I cry when I just, like with the bus stop thing, and also with, I don't remember who it was, but at least they told they were like abused as a child, and that is the moment, like, a lot of them had things like that on stage, you know, on the runway, then they just talking about what happened to them, and sometimes, also when RuPaul hold up their pictures, "this is young you, would you like to say to them?" I tear up so much because you feel like the same and the emotion and voice, that's really emotional.

Int : Could you describe the most impressive moments for you?

Maria: Oh...that's a hard one! Ah, hm... there are a lot! ...Okay I think when, also when Violet Chachki, when she turning around, like because first she was kind of bitch as well, and then she kind of turn around a lot nicer and chill people, I think those kind of moments, like they change, like in the race, because people there critique and stuff, you know, I think when they grow, I think that's really impressive because, they are all person, they, because people show them they can act differently, or do whatever, then they grow like as a person, I think that's really impressive. I think it teaches them as well, you know, being on the race, because, I don't know how they come over there, I think it would be like chop game, to be like better than everyone else, you want to make more money, you know, you have a lot of people on the show, and they are kind of very competitive, and I think like, if you come there, you are also very competitive, but like become friends as well. So, it's kinda you wanna win, but also you love those people, over time, you become friends with them.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Maria: Okay, I think that should be like, I would like drag queens to be funny, like, it's not really, but, most of them are, you know, they try they can be funny, so I think like funny, that they will be the one. And know how to dress their body, like have knowledge bit of the fashion, maybe not like today's fashion in NY, Milan whatever, it's like their body, know what their body type is and how to dress it, know how to put their make-up on, and I think, be able to grow as a person, like be kind, but also like not really like, they

should be kind to everyone but be like bit respective to other people as well, don't only put yourself and just look at everyone like they are nothing, just embrace everyone, I think that's kind of, just what I think. I think that makes a good drag queen.

Int : Okay, you told me that to be funny, to know fashion, make-up, their own body, and but also...

Maria: Become compassionate to others.

Int : Yeah. These are important to be a good drag queen, right? Do you think these factors are also important for women in general?

Maria: Well, I don't know, maybe some of them, I mean, not all of them, not everybody has to be funny, it's just you can be whoever you wanna be. I think for women, it's, I don't really know, all women are different but I don't feel like women has to be like smirky or bitchy or whatever to other people, like compassionate thing, I think that it does come to women like to be a nice person, you know, like I think that's a part of being women as well but just a part of being a person, because, I don't know why people are bitchy to people, I have been in fight, you know with bit of friends, don't agree on something, but you can keep it simple, you know. And, like make-up, you don't really need make-up, as a women I don't wear make-up right now, and clothing, I do think you have to know your own, like what suits your body type, but fashion not really, you can like whatever you like it, you know, my opinion is not yours, like if I like something you don't have to like as well. Also, that's why there are so many clothes, you know. But I do think, I know some girls, and they would look better if they would dress according to their body type, like, if you wear some sort of clothing instead of others, and I feel like, I'm feeling good if I'm wearing clothes I like, suites my body type, and I feel really confident, which is true to other people as well. But I don't wanna be mean, I don't wanna be like, "oh fuck, what are you wearing!" you know (laugh). But I always try to like, I'm not saying like fashion icon or whatever, I have just my own style, but I would like to, some friends of mine, would like to see them maybe just wear some different thing, because I have one friend and she's like construction builder or something, and I asked her "show your ass!!" and then "no!!" (laugh). But she doesn't care, you know. I would put her some pants (laugh).

Int : As for RuPaul herself, what do you think about RuPaul? Do you like her?

Maria: Yes, I love her. I think she is so beautiful, like, but also like, I think she is perfectly balanced, you need to know telling them "just do it", and just gets together, being like

heart felt. I think she, because she knows what they have been through, like she has been there, makes you like perfect, you know, for judge Drag Race, because she can decide, well I think she just has good decision-making skills, she has, she knows how it works, where they take to be a good drag queen, when they're ready. And I think she's so beautiful. I think all the dresses she wears are just "wow".

Int : Have you ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Maria: I think, sometimes, maybe because it's more who we are rooting for a person, just stay in a race, and maybe I didn't like other person, you know, I was "send her home! Send her home!" Maybe that's why I disagree with her, but not really, like "no!!!!", that's more like, if they are my favorite person and don't wanna get them out of the race, you know. I don't think it's not fair, because, like, for example, with Valentina, when she had like the mask and she didn't lip-sync, in the previous season, 1 or whatever, but they don't really try lip-syncing from the beginning, because they were more dancing then, and it was really, I think was fair of her, just send her home, because there was a lip-sync, just how they do that. So, yeah I think it's, she's quite fair, yeah.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general question in relation to Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Maria: I think maybe on the daily basis sometimes, come across my mind, like, words they use, like, just whole language, you know, I think I use them a lot, because I just like it, I have friends also watching it, so you can just joke around it. So, I think on that kind of thing, I think about it on the daily basis. With the language and the stuff they say, they're just hilarious.

Int : Could you give me some examples that you like to use?

Maria: What they say? Ah, okay, "shade of it all", or just like "halleloo", just, I don't know, kind of like the way they speak, you know, not always all the phrases but like "gurrri" (laugh). I like using those kinds of things.

Int : Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram?

Maria: Yeah, I'm following quite some queens, actually. I'm following Adore, Tyra Sanchez, because but she only had only drawing pictures, but now she started putting on

pictures of herself, it's interesting because I want to know, like the before and the after, you know, I want to know how she looks, and I think that's really fun to look them, so I started following them. And Raja, and also Carmen Carrera, and I don't really use twitter, so I don't follow them there. I think there are more, but I don't really know, because I see stuff coming all times. But I think it's really fun to follow them because most of the time we can see beautiful pictures of themselves, or just fun stuff they do. Yeah, I think it's fun to keep up with them.

Int : Do you think Drag Race became so popular?

Maria: I think so. I think it's becoming more known by people, because it's on Netflix, there are a lot of people talking about it, other people get to know it, because there are getting, like, more drag queens known and famous through Drag Race, I think they have more shows, I think it's becoming a lot more popular among a lot of people. Yeah, I think it's becoming bigger and bigger.

Int : Who do you think targeted audience of this show?

Maria: I don't know, I think it's a lot of girls, because they love drama, you know (laugh). And I think, I don't think really know, gay guys like to watch or not, some do of course, I think this also, I don't know, I think a lot of girls you know, I know a lot of girls watching it.

Int : Yeah, actually I have read an article that says almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. Do you agree with it?

Maria: Yeah, I do!

Int : What do you think makes a lot of women like the show?

Maria: I think girls like watching it because there are a lot of drama, a lot of things going on, and then it's also empowering people like "wow, look at them, how beautiful they can get", I don't mean to be rude or anything, but they go from guys to beautiful women, you know. I think it's also empowering women like, just like, yeah, "get it, girl!" I don't know, I think a lot of girls just feel like that.

Int : How about straight men? Do you think they can enjoy Drag Race as well?

Maria: I think they can if they are open-minded about it. I know this guy I was dating, he didn't like it because he had like this vision of, you know, "oh, guys getting into girl's clothes", but I don't think it's the right way to look at it because it's so much more than that. And I think if guys like who step aside from the way they stick to, then

they can enjoy it because it's really fun to watch, because there are a lot of fun moments.

Int : What do you think the difference between straight female and straight male?

Maria: I think because guy's ego is too big, like "oh no, it's only girl's show", you know, I think it's big part of why they don't watch it. I think just men's ego is too big to open to it. That's what I think.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Maria: I think people could learn to be confident, even if you are, if you stand out, even if people don't like you, there are always people who like you, who will like you, who will be acceptant of how you are, and everyone has family, if you don't have family, you don't have to get along with anyone, as long as you have like some people to get along with. I think that's like a big thing also from Drag Race because they are always have like drag family, and they don't, if, you don't have to like all the drag queens of course, but, I think it's because they have like the same backgrounds, some of them, they can unite, you know. I think that's very strong message that they send out to us.

Int : Then, could you tell me what you have personally learned from Drag Race?

Maria: I learn from Drag Race like, ah, I would love to meet some drag queens (laugh), I think I learn from them that you can be confident no matter what, you know, just go for it. Because it's very, if you watch it on the TV, you are just watching TV show, it's very different from your personal life, but still I can be empowered. I think that's what I learn, like the biggest thing I learn.

Int : Then, how about straight men? What do you think they could learn?

Maria: I think they can learn to be more open, learn to be maybe less, maybe because I think I feel like some guys are more easy to say like bad stuff to them, like insult them, and I just, maybe they see them just as people, you don't have to, because some people are different, you don't have to bash them about it, you don't have to make them feel any less because they are different. I think that's guys could learn from the show because guys always have like, I don't know, guys have some mind, weird.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Maria: I think my thoughts haven't really changed, but maybe the way I talk sometimes, maybe I can be bit more dramatic, I was already bit dramatic, but maybe a little bit more, I think it's just a part of it and I love it. I think that's maybe I changed, but don't really think that much changed, like tiny things, you know.

Int : Is there anything that you want to say?

Maria: Ah, I don't know I covered all of them, I think.

Int : Okay, then we can finish the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Maria: I think it was really fun! Thank you! I enjoyed it!

Interview 9

Name: Eve

Age: 22

Occupation: student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 04-04-2019

Location: at a Café in Leiden

Duration: 70min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. You said you start watching Drag Race 3 years ago?

Eve: Yeah, I think it was 3 years ago. Back then, it was on Netflix, and a friend of mine, I started watching season 2 because season 1 wasn't on Netflix then, and one of my best friends told me "you need to hurry up because they're gonna remove it!", so I was like, season 2 to, I don't know 6, or something, it was just a few months to catch up before they remove it. Yeah. It was really intense. And then after that I followed seasons every time they're aired.

Int : Could you tell me why you started watching Drag Race?

Eve: Yeah, I have quite interesting people in my friends, ahm, my two best friends are gay, homosexuals, and they were huge fans, so they kind of told me about it, and then they were super enthusiastic, so I was like "oh! I'm curious what inhales", and I wanted to see what was about.

Int : You have watched every single season, Right?

Eve: Yeah.

Int : Which season is your favorite? And why?

Eve: Season 6. I think in that season there are the most fiercest queens. You have, like top 5 I think, are all quite fierce and I really miss that in the current seasons, like most recent seasons. There's Bianca Del Rio, she is my all-time favorite queen. She is so funny, and you know, on the show, like, when interactive with other contestants, she was funny, but also when she was talking about in the, ah, what's called, ah, like confessionals, she is also hilarious. And on the outside as well.

Int : Outside?

Eve: Yeah, like, you know, just you tube videos, there's spin-off channel. I really wanna see her, one day.

Int : Yeah, definitely. So, could you tell me about the first impression of the show? You started with second season, right? What did you think about it?

Eve: Well, what I thought was it's so much more than just a competition, you know? For example, I think it's based on lot of different types of competition, like Project Runway-ish, because they have to design, and so like modeling, like Next Top Supermodel also in there, because they need to be on runway after, they need to have so many different skills, they need to be able to act, they need to be able to sing, to dance, to entertain, to be hilarious, to sew, and, yeah, it's the full package. If you're a good queen, you need to have full package, and that's required so much talent. And I think it's impressive. And what else I really love is, all these queens have been through a lot. That's part of, you know, being gay, most of them, or being transgender, that's part of dressing up as a female, there's gonna be people whoever [???] about that instead people gonna be mean to you, you feel that through all of, they've been through a lot, that's super motivative, they're so mature, and so wise. Really inspiring.

Int : Yeah. Has your first impression changed through watching Drag Race, by seasons? Or do you have a same impression until now?

Eve: I think my impression still mostly stays the same, but I did notice was they can be really

fierce to one another. Especially when I started watching Untucked, I wasn't watching it because I was running up time, because I had to watch all of them, but after that I started watching Untucked and I was like, "wow..." It's really back to back, sometimes. But, that's, ah, my favorite queens are also like really honest to one another, they're not talking about others behind their back, so really, it's, they would say it to your face, so I really appreciate that, as a whole in your life, also in Drag Race. If a queen is up-front with you, I really like her, already, yeah.

Contents and contestants

Int : Thanks. I want to move on next questions. You already told me your most favorite queen is Bianca del Rio. Could you tell me more about queens you like? Maybe about another queen as well?

Eve: I have a quite few queens I like! From the same season, Ben De La Crème is really likable. She is really, ah I think relatable for a lot of fans.

Int : Relatable.

Eve: Yeah. You know she really has insecurities, she's really, first in competition, she gets a lot of critique, she is really figuring how to deal with that, how to, ah, take it and work on things, and I think that is relatable. When she came back for All Stars, she really slayed it, you can totally see the growth, she's been through, really see how she's taking all the feedback and how she does prepare herself actually for All Stars, like "I did good in the regular season, but I'm only gonna do for All Stars because I'm ready for it." And actually I see she's ready for it.

Int : Could you recall and describe the scene you felt "oh, Ben De La Crème has so grown", or something like that?

Eve: I think it's also visible in sending herself home in the All Stars season. Because then you could see she was like "okay I think I've learned everything I had to learn", because she was literally slaying each episode, and I think it was for her was right time to go, because it could only have gone downwards from then. So, she really stopped it, and I think for her there was the moment she thought "okay, I've learned everything for me to learn this season, so I can't even take anything out of it anymore."

Int : That's interesting. Ah, is that season 6 you think there are top 5 queens?

Eve: Yeah.

Int : You think other queens are also really good...

Eve: Definitely. For example, Courtney Act, I didn't find her very likable in the season, because she could come across quite arrogant or bitchy, but, she's amazing. I thought she's really good example of all the queens who made it so far, also outside of Drag Race. She has really made her mark, brand, and has, I don't know, given drag queens a good vision and good opinion in the general public. But also Adore Delano, I think very likable for many queens of my age, maybe, because she's really young-adult, you know, like a millennial. She's SO millennial. I think that's really likable.

Int : Millennial, could you describe a little bit more about millennial?

Eve: Oh, she's really figuring out who she is, you could also hear even from her behavior, like "party" or "fuck", yeah. It's obvious there, but she also, I think she has also grown in the season. And that's also partly because of Bianca Del Rio. That's, I keep coming back to her, sorry, but she's like total-package, she's really a star and can be totally bitchy in front, she's also got sweet side, and I think the combination of those two Adore and Bianca is beautiful. You really see that Adore is really appreciating Bianca's help and really flourishing. I think that's amazing.

Int : Among those queens, who do you think you really relate to? Or maybe another queen of other seasons?

Eve: It's very difficult...I think I can relate a lot to Ben De La Crème, you know, she's kind of girl next door, like she's really normal, she doesn't have huge personality like some other queens, which is really genuine, I think. Bit humble. She, if she walks into werkroom, she wouldn't have first word, for example, Laganja, she is always "okurrrr", I'm just, I think it's so annoying. Some queens do it as well and might not be annoying but she is. I think I can relate Ben Dela Crème, she's more like introvert? And I see myself as more introvert, so maybe that.

Int : Okay. Then, on the other hand, do you have queens you DO NOT like?

Eve: I think Tyra Sanchez from season 2, she, but back then, I had also like really conflicting feelings about Raven, because Raven could be bitch as well, but somehow I like Raven more than Tyra Sanchez. I think Tyra she never won because they were looking for Charisma, Uniqueness, Nerve and Talent, and I'm really missing Charisma on her part. Jujubee, would have been a lot better winner in that part. I think Tyra Sanchez is really unlikable, I, (laugh) somehow I totally dislike Farrah Moan, I think she's so much, maybe she is the real millennial, because we've kinda known her for having helicopter parents, and really know how to deal with stress and I think she's a perfect example of

whiny little bitch who doesn't know how to deal with anything. (laughing) She's annoying.

Int : Even though Adore is like a millennial, but...

Eve: Yeah, she's relatable, but she's not likable. She's like millennial who's extreme.

Int : What is the most influential factor for you that you don't like Farrah Moan.

Eve: I think her being really whiny about everything, I'm like, "you join the competition on your own, you wanted to be, be in, show us that you want this challenge thrown at you, because they are, like a platform to grow, that meant for you to learn more about yourself, to develop, then use it!" She's thrown like, "oh, no, I can't do that, oh I've never had such a thing in my life". Girl, you signed up by yourself! You asked for it!

Int : Okay, thank you. Then I want to ask you, who do you think the most beautiful queen?

Eve: Most beautiful, oh...I think Valentina is very beautiful. She's gorgeous because, what I like about her, she was bitch to Farrah Moan, which is unfair to Farrah, I have to admit, but she really shows something new. And I think that's very rare in such a [???], she's from season 9? Yeah, she really showed that telenovela realness. Mexican realness. And I really think as one of the very few queens from recent seasons, she's shown something new that we haven't seen in the previous, once before. I really think she's beautiful. She's so beautiful.

Int : There're other Latina, Mexican queens as well. What is different from other queens, I mean, about Valentina.

Eve: I don't know I think she embraces her Latino side more than other queens. Her really coming out of with bolero, Mexican wedding gown, she's really telenovela realness. Not just in the looks, also in the confessionals, in All Stars season, you see her dramatic, and living in her own world. She's like telenovela, herself. And I haven't seen that before. I really liked it. I watch a lot of telenovela myself, so I can totally relate to that (laugh).

Int : What do you think makes her beautiful? I mean, make up, face, or...

Eve: I think she has kinda classic face, wavy hair, and that body! She killed by the body! She's beautiful.

Int : I remember that she had eating disorder, right? She confessed it in the wekroom, and some other girls, Sasha and Shea as well... there was a fight between Eureka and...

Eve: Oh! Yeah, I remember that. Yeah. I don't have strong opinion about that fight, but, yeah, I remember it. That's true.

Int : Okay, then let's move on to next question. What do you think are the funniest moments?
Can you recall scenes?

Eve: Yeah, what I found funny was Monet's fake sprits. I remember almost [shed tears?] over that. It was so clever, so clever, I don't get why no other queen before have done that, because I thought it was amazing. I mean we have seen all of the lose already like, wig, under the wig, taking away, so you could show off really strong tuck, we have seen it all, but it was so dorky, I really liked it.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments? Can you recall scenes?

Eve: I think one of the most serious moments was from season 1, when Ongina reveals that she has AIDS, or HIV herself. I was so heartbreaking over that. Because she won that challenge about HIV, so fiercely, so positively, and then fell, break down onto the stage, and tell everyone she had it herself, I was filled with sorrow. It was heartbreaking but really inspiring. She really showed that you have to move forward, you know, you have to stay positive, raise awareness. I think it was amazing. Oh, by the way, there's also another queen, really coming out for serious topics in the current season, Nina West, she's really one of my favorites in this season. She's also really talking about, like the murder back in the days, and also about how they should stand up for transgenders because they don't actually achieve the same thing they did, back in the years, and she's quite political, I really like that. She's really there to make the statement, and to, to, I don't know, discuss serious topics on national television. I think it's amazing that she takes this opportunity to move it forward.

Int : Yeah, that's right. Do you think Drag Race is getting more political?

Eve: I think it's been always political, but I think it's getting more popular now, back then, it was years ago. So I think the platform is reaching a lot more people, so in that way, it might be more political. And, I mean, there's also Trump the Rusal. Yeah.

Int : Thank you for the opinion. I think I have heard about this, but have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Eve: Also when Roxxy Andrews told about her mother left them at the bus stop, it catches my radar, I also read about it but the moment itself, it was so, so heartbreaking. And only goes to show how much they've been through to get where they are. How strong they have to be!

Int : Okay, then, I think this is also you've already mentioned, but what do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Eve: Yeah, as they define as Charisma, Uniqueness, Nerve and Talent, and I think that all these challenges are different challenges actually, to see if they have that full-package. And I think it should be full-package. Like, they need to be able to act, to sing, to dance, to entertain, to be funny, to sew, to, ah, they really need to know how to model and catwalk, I guess, so, yeah, that full-package. They don't have to excel at it, but they need to be good enough, at least. And excel at different aspect.

Int : Among these aspects, which one is the most important?

Eve: Oh, I really don't know, I think, for me, firstly it's to get, to be funny, but it's because I like the queens who are funny, like the comedy queen. And I think, drag is also character, so in that case, I think acting challenges are quite important, because they're putting on characters all the time when you drag, I think. I've never done drag, so, I think it's for them to be in the character, maybe another persona they have. I think these are really important and from the Charisma, Uniqueness, Nerve and Talent, I think all of them are important. I think confidence is also really important. Because I think once, if you have confidence, then you can't sing for club but if you can sing confidence, people like it anyways. I think it influences all of these different challenges. I think it's really important.

Int : On the other hand, what is not acceptable behavior for a drag queen?

Eve: Not suitable for a drag queen... Drag Race is also for "good TV", a lot of drama, a lot of shades going on. And I think shade is okay, as long as you can talk about it later and discuss it, I mean, if there are really fights or talking behind someone's back, or wishing someone unwell, I think that's not really suitable for America's Next Drag Super Star.

Int : Could you recall some episodes or scenes that you felt really uncomfortable to see, like not suitable.

Eve: For example, the fight between Farrah Moan and Valentina, it was really terrible in the reunion. It was so awkward to watch, but after that, they actually made up, so I think that's okay, and then, in the All Stars season, it was between Farrah Moan and Gia Gunn, like, "what happened here, I was expecting more Farrah-Valentina drama! I don't get it! But I got a drama, okay." And she (Gia) always really set out to be the villain, she got really villain [???], but, I don't know, if she's really like that, because she got added at least, but really go after the queen to make her less confident in the challenge to set her up to fail, that wasn't really nice.

Int : I want to ask you about RuPaul. Do you like RuPaul or her style of drag?

Eve: Yeah. RuPaul's so beautiful. Sometimes she goes really different and I was like "hmmm , this isn't mark for me", but most of the time she's so gorgeous. And I think that's suitable, she is the host star who is picking other stars. But I think she's really good example for the other queens.

Int : Good example? Could you explain a little bit?

Eve: Yeah. She is beautiful, but she, I know her laugh, I really like it. And, but I also really like, Michelle Visage is now in all seasons because I think she gets really good critiques, better than RuPaul herself. Michelle is more able to say what it is. I sometimes missed RuPaul, she was too sweet, keeping nice face, but Michelle really told what she thinks of it, if she thinks it shit, then she will let you know. And I think that's a lot more helpful for the queens. So I really like the combination of two, actually.

Int : Have you ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Eve: Yeah, definitely some rip-synchs were, this was not double shantay, or should have been double shantay, or let them both go home because both were terrible, or picked wrong winner.

Int : Could you recall specific moment?

Eve: Ahm, sometimes when picking the winner, ahm, Aquaria won season 10, I think, I didn't like her at all. I also missed the Charisma part of her, also bit like Tyra Sanchez, yeah, they are the winner but I really missed their personality.

Int : So, you think personality is really important.

Eve: Yeah, I think personality is the most important thing.

Int : Then, who should have won in season 10?

Eve: It's very difficult because I found queens, they were not really special in that season. I actually like Eureka in that season a lot better than previous one. I though she did really well especially scene that she was baby. I really love Miz Cracker, I hated she was gone, she was so good, and if she hadn't eliminated back then, I think she really could have won. Because I think she had that quirky but genuine personality.

Int : Genuine personality. What do you feel genuine about, from Miz Cracker?

Eve: I... I don't know. She's really just honest with herself, being able to self-reflect, and always gets not defensive when she gets critique. I think that's more genuine. And also more able to grow, open to critique.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general question in relation to Drag Race. In which situation do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Eve: When, you mean?

Int : Yes, when do you think of Drag Race?

Eve: When I notice in the conversation, sometimes coming back to the quote of queens, like “party”, like that. And or “the shade, the shade of it all”. Sometimes you use it in everyday conversations. For example when watching TV and come across the show, for example America’s Next Top Model, I also start thinking about it. I’m really comparing them, I think RuPaul’s Drag Race has lot more depth than all the other competitions. Because it’s more well-rounded and so more diverse.

Int : Diverse.

Eve: Yeah, there’s a lot of different challenges not just by the looks, it’s not about just dancing or acting, there’s all of them.

Int : Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram? Or do you use SNS when enjoying Drag Race? What do you find interesting about it?

Eve: I don’t use any SNS so I don’t follow any queens via Facebook or Instagram, but if I had one, definitely I follow Bianca Del Rio. And recently I really dive into Nina West, because I really like her, she’s really queen with big heart, really using her platform to make the world better place. I don’t think she’s gonna win, because she’s not fiercest contestant of the season, but she’s so likable, so likable. I really want to see her get, more, explore herself to strengthen her opinion on TV and let the world know “this is what we stand for”, right?

Int : Yes. I’ve heard you have Whatsapp group of Drag Race. Could you tell me about the group? What do you talk about?

Eve: I think there is, I don’t know, 6 or 7 or like that. We all watch Drag Race and in the app group, we just, yeah write down the comments, like “who has seen the newest episode”, “I think of this”, “oh, I really hate this”, something like that.

Int : The conversation includes not only looks but also personality and...

Eve: Yeah, definitely. For example, Yvie Oddly, it’s really conflicting, because what I see is that she always gives back feedback to the other girls, in an honest way, I really like it. I see all of the queens taking it wrong way. And getting all offensive or defensive

like “oh”, you should look at yourself first, you know. And that really, just annoys me. I’m like, finally there’s another genuine queen, who goes say it as it is, no filter, finally! I’ve waited for that! And they take it wrong way, and I’m like “don’t be fucking sensitive on this competition, you know you’re gonna get critique! You want that because you wanna grow, then accept it”. Yeah, so her comments are always taken the wrong way. But I also noticed, two of my best friends, I have like four or five actually really close friends, six, maybe, sometimes, it depends when everyone is able to meet, but three of us watch Drag Race and we do notice it every time we get together, we talk about it constantly, and it’s really, needs to pay attention we don’t overrule the conversation or don’t [??] smaller groups existing because, I don’t know, it’s just a program to talk about. I mean, it’s a competition, so you as a viewer you gonna have everything, every look and everything someone wants to say, I think it’s really stimulating to talk about it with your friends.

Int : That’s true. It’s beautiful that you have friends to talk about it.

Eve: Yeah, I also noticed that it strengthens the relationship as well. If you watch the show together and if you are able to come together almost every week and talk about it. But I do think we are getting too many seasons in a year. I mean, regular season, All Stars season, regular season, and All Stars season, it’s too much for me. I’m like, I’m very able to cross that, we had all two All Stars winner and then the next season has already started. It’s too much. And we are also getting the UK version and like “how in the hell am I gonna keep up!?”. Otherwise do you think it’s good to going to the UK, because what I notice in the last season, there’s really less good queens. I mean, season like 5 or in 6, or even at the beginning there’re a lot of fierce queens and now I notice the more, a lot of queens are basically all the same.

Int : Why do you think it becomes less...

Eve: I think we’ve known about good queens. I think really good queens have already been on Drag Race. Most of them. So we are get fewer queens last seasons because they’ve already been there.

Int : But do you think season 11 has a lot of, or if not, some good queens?

Eve: Yeah, I think there’re some queens, I think Vanjie is really likable this season. I think fans are super glad that she came back. I think Yvie Oddly is really fierce competitor, she’s also more alternative, bit different from the other queens, so really like that. And I really like Nina West, because she’s really here to make a statement. And use

her airtime for something good. We have Brook Lyn Hytes, but for me she's quite regular queen. She's good, she's really good in the challenges, but for me she doesn't bring anything new or anything special. The Uniqueness, I can't see. You also have Silky, she's got huge personality, but that's kind of arrogance. I don't really see anything else. It's not really likable personality, that's, sounds as problem. What is interesting of the season is combination of Brook Lyn Hytes and Vanjie. I mean, we haven't really had that before, so that's also good reason to discuss, about Drag Race with friends, I mean we're really wanna see this, I think, I haven't heard of fan who's against their relationship, everyone thinks it's super cute and I really wanna see if it works. I'm really curious.

Int : Yeah.

Eve: Brook Lyn's arm is always on Vanjie's shoulder and Vanjie's holding the hand and... that's really noble. So noble.

Int : So, let's move on to next question. You told that Drag Race is becoming more and more popular? Why do you think it is becoming more popular in the past few years?

Eve: I think part of it is social media, that's all over the social media. And queens are using it a lot. So I think that's how they reach the global public. But, it's again on Netflix, there's also I think lots of people who start watching it. because it's easy to access to it. And I think, once you have a fan base, I think almost all of the fans are really enthusiastic about the show when they start talking about it to other people, and I notice myself I constantly recommend it to everyone. So I think that way you also, multiply, sort of, so that's I think also reason why the fan base gets a lot past few years because strong fan base's really spread the world.

Int : Who do you think targeted audience of this show? Why?

Eve: Oh, that's good one. I think for drag queens, or Netflix audience, I think homosexuals are also interested males, at least what I hear from who's watching it, but also think, actually, it should be for everyone. I think it's interesting show for everyone but I see what is happening is mostly women, like homosexuals and other drag queens who watch it. But I think it is really interesting show for everyone, because it shows a lot of talent, it's hilarious, there's always something happening, there's barely you get bored, although there's boring season, but there's always something.

Int : As you already told me, there are a lot of female fans, and I have read an article that almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. What do you think about it? Is it true?

Eve: I think it's true. Because I see that's what happening, there's a lot of female who watch it. I don't know why I'm attracted to it as a female as well. But, yeah.

Int : I would ask you why there are a lot of female fans.

Eve: Ahm, I think as females really admire how they look in drag, how they can go, can transform themselves from sometimes really manly dude to a beautiful woman. I think we really admire that. I mean, I myself I never wear make-up, but already for me it's weird to watch the show everyone put on make-up, I find it interesting anyway. Because I think, I've seen so many queens on the show whom I think they look more womanly and more beautifully than I am. They are gorgeous. If I would [??] as women, I definitely don't [??] that. I, that's what think a lot while I'm watching the show. So I think it's a lot of admiration we have, appreciation for make them, they look so, real and so beautiful. So even have a voice, really do something like female. Like Courtney Act, when she sings, it's amazing! You really wonder is her actually singing? Is female behind her? Are you sure? Like that. She's really talented.

Int : You didn't mention straight men enjoy Drag Race?

Eve: I noticed when I recommend it to straight males, they are not really into it. Maybe they think, maybe they think it's weird for them because they can't really relate to dressing up in drag? I don't know. Maybe that's something they never do, I mean, if there would be a drag queen show or party, and I have to dress them up, I'd love to see it, if they are more beautiful than women, as a woman, I don't care (laugh). For males, it's not really relatable? I don't know. And I think a lot of homosexuals are, I think it's really weird to say and I don't think they really relate to drag, but because of back stories queens also have. They talk a lot about how it was for them, coming out to their families, and their friends, in the community, I think those stories are so inspiring for them to hear that maybe they're not alone. And to see that they went through the same thing and they can have so much talent, so many amazing things, I think it's really inspiring, very well.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Eve: I think it's over all talent that you don't really see in other TV shows, how you can relate to other queens, how you can see it like "oh, I have that as well, I struggled

with it as well", it's nice to see that you're not alone, so I think their talent, I think it's just really funny show, especially, in my opinion, the season with Bianca Del Rio, she always had something to say like, she was always making amazing comments, I think there's a lot of people who wanna be like that in real life. Just that witty, as smart, and funny.

Int : Then, what could you learn personally from Drag Race?

Eve: I think they're role models, I think quite a few queens are role models, for me, that's mostly Bianca Del Rio, because I wanted to be, as honest as, bit more time[??] that I must admit, but I also wanted to be honest to everyone, I wanted to be as she, you know, as quick to respond. And I also really like for example, Katya, she also comes across as really genuine, really overcoming the problem that she struggles, for me that personally that something, I think almost everyone needs as well, that every day overcoming thing she finds difficult and learning. So I think its really nice to watch. For me personally, it's really about learning from your mistakes and trying better to stay motivated. You also see queens who just gave up, it's really painful to watch. I mean, Nina West has taken 9 years to get on the fucking show! Some queens really want it and there you're gonna give up? That's not only painful for the queen itself but also for all the other queens who are watching, also auditioned and who didn't make it. I think it's almost insult to those queens to give up on the show. Let's say, "no, I can't take it anymore, it's too much for me". We also had a queen like that in the previous season, I don't know who was that, but it was, ah, really like, "you guys always give me negative feedback" she was really, yeah, like giving a mouth to judges about that, but that's just what you ask for coming here. And I notice that I feel that even though judges say something, it is what you signed up for this, you knew this gonna happen, and use it, see it as a chance to really improve yourself, because you're never gonna get this opportunity like this again. So for that queens just saying "no, I don't want this", never mind if you're only gonna give negative feedback, never gonna do anything", and gave up, I thought it was really painful, because it might have been another queen who was just as talented, who would have sent through, who would have improved. And would have got a lot more out of the show. And I think this is actually different from Ben Dela Crème because she was, she was done. And for her to give up, it makes sense because we all still see her as a real winner of that All Stars season. So, she didn't actually win, but for every friend it is like "she

won this challenge, she did win". Even if, maybe if she stayed on the show, she would have filled everything else, but you don't know. She set a line, she would have won, like, "hands down", there would be no discussion. But because All Stars season is also the season when you eliminate other queen, once she back, one queen out, like Manila Luzon, there was also like, "what the fuck!?", also shows why most of the All Stars winners aren't ready for that season because Manila Luzon was also the most, viewers see as the winner of the season. Trinity the Tuck is, I think it's fair that Trinity won as well because she was really good and really wanted to play a fair game. She really wanted to play fair to send those queen, and other queens didn't, other queens were really there to bring others down so they could win, and then, you won. Was it fair? No. Will everyone love you forward? No. Because everyone were gagged because she (Manila) was eliminated. And I think both Naomi Smalls and Monet X change had Manila Luzon's lipstick. She eliminated her. And I think that was, the [mood?] for them. Naomi Smalls did win lip-sync, so she had to show it, but Monet X Change would have done same. And, I don't really like how Drag Race fans sometimes get really violent, verbally, really fishy on the internet and really attacking other queens, and I really hate that queens have to be more "politically correct" on the show in order to prevent that. But...honestly, if you know that's what fans do, then both Naomi and Monet X Change should have seen the comment, especially Naomi, she should have seen comments fans come after her for eliminating Manila. Because it was unfair. She was doing great. And I think, so for Ben Dela Crème the same, she only could have been eliminated unfairly, because she done, she was such a good track, and there is always unfair to eliminate, and only she could have been low, so it was smart move for her to go because she done all growing she could during the season, and she was like "I'm gonna get other queens chance to grow, time's up, I'm only gonna get down", so that's just ok. That's what I thought.

Int : I think that was the last question, but is there anything that you want to say?

Eve: What I wanna say is there's a lot of, I think the quality of the season really varies a lot. And I think it was really smart of RuPaul to start doing All Stars season. Because I think, what I said before, I think there's really running out good queens in the US, so I think it was really smart for her to bring back old queens, because some of these queens were really popular on the show, the fans love them, I think it really strengthens the bond of fans with the show if you bring back the favorite queens.

Because it makes me wonder “oh, she’s gonna win this time!” I think that was really smart move. And I also really like other, like Ruveals, Rudemption, I really like that. The best Rudemption in my opinion is Valentina’s lip-syncing “Into You” by Ariana Grande in the All Stars season, it was one of my favorite lip-sync, but you can see there the story, it’s reality TV show but it’s, really planning for things to happen. I think that’s sad but makes it good television. It’s difficult. I also really like the changes RuPaul makes. I mean, first double shantay was like such a shock “oh my god” and then there was double sashay, that was, also shocking, as well. And last lip-sync, six queens, save for life. In my opinion it could have eliminated four of them, but then there’re never even more episodes (laugh). So, that keeps queens on their toes and then they can’t really fuck it up, they could all go home, it makes them aware that they need to perform every single time. It put pressure on them for sure, yeah, it’s competition. I wouldn’t definitely be able to deal with the show, I mean, I would be sensitive too if I get critique every week, probably, so it’s easy to judge other queens but it would be hard for me as well. So I think that’s really smart, I also really like that RuPaul uses a lot of same words, like “hello, hello, hello” and “shantay, you stay”, something like that, you really set a platform because people are gonna say that as well in their real life. I mean, I remember breaking up with my ex-boyfriend, and I hear she saying “sashay away” and I was like “oh my god, I shouldn’t be thinking this right now!” But, I really push the show in your head, then you will be able to put it into your daily life. Because there are so many quotes really recognizable. Sounds like “okurrr”, you really know them immediately they are fans, and already have bonds. You really start thinking in that language, in that slang. So I think that’s really a brand. I think it’s really smart that they created the brand with words like that or “the time has come for you to lip sync for your life or for your legacy”, it’s really smart, like “bring back my girls”, so there’re a lot of language in every episode really predictable, and really makes you, yeah, really invested in the show. Because everyone knows the lines, fans immediately recognize. So I think that’s also really smart. And with the guest judges, I really like it when the lip-sync song is song from guest judges, I really like it. And but now they bring these guest judges to back stage in Untucked, I don’t really like that, because it’s more, yeah, meeting with queens, nice to see that, there are so many people open to them, who say “yes” about drag, that’s beautiful, but it really prevents all the drama between queens to queens. I think that’s what I wanted

to add. I think it's really smart show. Because of branding, creating All Stars seasons and I've heard there's Drag Race Thailand, it's gonna be Drag Race UK, so it's really spreading, I love to see where it goes.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 10

Name: Irene

Age: 22

Occupation: kinder garden teacher / master student

Nationality: Dutch

Date: 09-04-2019

Location: at a Café

Duration: 55min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview. I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race. Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race. First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes. In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential. Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Irene: I think the first time I watched it is about a year ago or something, my roommate XXX, she introduced it "oh, we have to watch this program! It's great!", and I was like "really? Well, I have some spare time, so okay, let's just watch it for the first time", and just I think that's about a year ago now, and then we've never stopped (laugh).

Int : What was your first impression of the show?

Irene: It's, the first impression I watched, it was bit bizarre to me because it's all extravagant, it's like the world of extravahanza in this series, and but, at the same time, there was also some vulnerability to the contestants, and that was really interesting to me because, ah, why guys become drag queens, what triggers them to do so, and it takes time and a lot of money, and then during the program, you see like some

evolving from the guys, why they are doing this, what do they like about it. That was my first impression like, “why? Why would you do this?” And the, the longer you watch, the more you start understanding, I think.

Int : Which seasons have you seen?

Irene: I think, 6, no 5 till 10, and now I'm on season 1. Like the very first one.

Int : Which season is your favorite?

Irene: Ah, I think season 6, maybe because we started with season 10 because that was the first one on Netflix, so we start with that one, and there was also a lot of bitchness, between the people who are, those contestants, and but season 6 in my mind at least, there're some hate maybe but still connection each other. And respecting each other as choices, not just like “oh, he, she is wearing some super weird” but like more accepting them. I think that's my favorite season.

Int : Has the impression of Drag Race changed through watching seasons?

Irene: Well, my first impression was super bizarre, like “why? So much money and time investment, just for Drag Race?” but as you watch the series, for me at least, I understood the drag queens' background, for their reasons for becoming a drag queen. Yes. So it evolved, I think.

Int : Can I ask you why they spend a lot of time and money for drag?

Irene: I think, the extravagant, that is in the show, it's inside, there like extravaganza from within, it's a way to express themselves, maybe I think also a way of dealing with emotions in different way, so you can still cry or love or anything, but there's like a mask on, it's not directly themselves, but it's a part of them that they can show. I think that's for me what I see. That's the way to express themselves, true drag.

Contents and contestants

Int : Next, I would like you to talk about your thoughts on contents and contestants of Drag Race. Please tell me about queens you like.

Irene: I never remember the names, I like the one who can self-criticize, so they can joke about themselves, not too serious. You have some seasons, there are queens who are so serious, “look at me, I'm great, I'm so good at what I do” and then other queens when they are like “yeah, I'm fine, but there are also people better than me, but at least I can laugh about myself” and that queens I always really like. Because they're not too serious and they just go with a flow and when something goes wrong, they

accept it as well. I don't really know the names, but that kind of character, I really like.

Int : Could you recall some moments or scenes, maybe from season 6?

Irene: Ah, I can see her face, but I don't know her name... They had to sing and dance at same time, and then, firstly start singing and then she is okay, and then start dancing, all wrong, and then how she says was, the queen I don't know but, "this is not my part, but I just go with it" and smiles all the time and makes a joke instead of singing, but she still tried her best. So, she's accepting that maybe she can't do everything, but she's not giving up. She's just joking about it, so she can say "I'm not the best at this, but I still try". That's one of the things I really remember.

Int : Is there anyone who you really relate to? Or who you can identify with?

Irene: I'll come back to the question. I look her up on the internet when we are finished.

Int : You can do it right now.

Irene: Ah, okay, I check it right now because I know her, I just can't remember her name... there are so many queens... oh, Bianca Del Rio! Yes, I love her! She has like, she can laugh about herself, she can make jokes about herself and also about others without really insulting them. She's just saying like, it's bit strange, but nothing actual mean things. Yeah. I don't remember the question, but she is my favorite.

Int : I wanted to ask you if you can identify with her.

Irene: I think I can identify with her, she was, she really knew what she was, she was good at. For me that's really something I would like to be able to do as well. Because if you know what you are good at and what you are not good at, then you can accept it as well. She was so true for herself even though she knew she wasn't good at everything or she wasn't perfect at everything. So, I think that's why I really related to her because she was still confident even though she wasn't able to do everything. And also, that's also what I don't like being mean, she in the program, she also tried to be herself not be mean to others but stick to her own thing without insulting anyone else.

Int : On the other hands, do you have queens you DO NOT like.

Irene: Ah, well, not in particular one, I don't think just one, but there are some queens who are so full themselves, like "look at me, I'm the best queen, I know everything", in season 1, there was Shannel, I don't know if you know her, she was like "I'm gonna win this" in every challenge, and I was just watching and thought "but did you look at other girls what they are doing? How good they are at something, maybe what you are not good at doing", but she was very confident of herself, but not sticking to herself.

She was saying mean things about the other queens. So that's why I didn't really like her, no.

Int : Who do you think the most beautiful queen?

Irene: Most, ooh! Ah, I think her name was Sasha Velour? I look it up, let me see... Sasha Velour, she was the bold one. Even though she hadn't have like big wigs on, but I think, because she hadn't have, didn't have that on, she stays true to herself, but still very feminine, even though she didn't have the hair or everything. I think she was really pretty. Yeah.

Int : Why did you think she was so feminine?

Irene: Ah, in the way she dresses. She had amazing dresses on, like during the whole season. That really fitted her, not too short, not too deep in the chest, not too covered, but just right, all the aspect she was just right. Even though without a wig, make-up was never too much, like just right.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments? Can you recall scenes?

Irene: All seasons, I don't know, but you also have the part where they have to impersonate someone, I don't know how that called... ah...snatch game! Yes. I think that's the funniest moment because then you can actually see which queens are actually humorous and which ones just try to be. There are some of them, even though they really don't have a lot of humor from within, in the way they dress, the way they sit or something, they know it works without overdoing. And if you are just trying to be humorous, then you overdo it because she'll do too much. And that's a good way to see the difference and also it's just best moments, I think.

Int : Could you recall some queens in snatch game?

Irene: I know some of them, one of them impersonated Adel, it was really good. And some of the characters they impersonate are also American, so I do not always know all of them, but that's already stuck to me, because it was just so right, in the way she did it. It was Adel.

Int : Could you tell me a little bit more about it? What did you like about it?

Irene: Well, I know when one of the queens did Adel, they were really, ah, how do you say, making her real British. So, accent was just extra, but not too much British. You could still tell it was British accent. And, there was always the award, because Adel won millions of them. And she was just putting it into that, everything they asked to Adel, she backed to awards that she won. And that was so not over doing it, but still knew

it was Adel, it was kind of true because she won all those awards. So it was just right. Yeah.

Int : What do you think the most serious moments? Can you recall scenes?

Irene: The most serious moment? Ah, just before the finale, they introduce, in season 5 or 6, they show the queens, the pictures of their younger self, and I think that's also very true moment, because they can actually say like, last 20 years, so much was happened, but you know get through and get to this point. So, don't give up. Some of them even get really emotional. That's just for them it's also serious moment. And then you can just see how much they've been through sometimes in such a short time. I think that's together with snatch game, I like the most, the moment I like the most.

Int : And then, what do you think the most impressive moments?

Irene: Ah, when they have to make their own clothes, I know some of them always make their own clothes, but some of them never do, and I don't know how to sew. So, for me, it's always impressive that they can make from basically nothing, from toys and just some fabrics, they can make such beautiful things and when they walk on the runway, which is amazing, and then, yeah, I think that's the impressive moment because also they're really proud of what they produced.

Int : Could you come up with some looks they made?

Irene: I know that's Hello Kitty challenge, and they also had to make their own outfits, and they get like a lot of stuff, the animals and plastic things, and I was like, "how do you make anything out of this?" And then, they do the challenge, they come down the catwalk, and they were actually proud, really pretty clothes as well, not what you wear but, on the catwalk, it's really good. I think that's one I remember the best.

Int : Yeah, actually that was one of the best moments.

Irene: Yeah, because they had like umbrella, plastic umbrella, and all this stuff, Hello Kitty, what do you do with them? I don't know. But in the end, you see the progress they make as well, because sometimes they have no idea what to make, and some light goes on somewhere, and then they start creating, and then something beautiful comes out in the end. So, you see their own progress as well, like struggling with starting something, and then finishing with something great.

Int : Why do you think they can come up with something great?

Irene: Well, I think they need to have some kind of creativity, because you also, when they

do their make-up, I would never know how to do that kind of make-up. It's like so much, but if you don't have any creativity, then you won't see it on yourself. You have no idea where to start. I think they have some kind of, imagination, to see from the start where they want to end. So, you want, they, from start they know what I'm done and look like this. And that takes another kind of thinking, I think, which I don't have, but I think they need it to put their make-up on or to make those clothes.

Int : Can you recall episodes, situations or maybe challenges when you really felt empathy with a contestant?

Irene: Ah, they did the challenge, with the camera, ah, the team of the crew, they were transforming them into drag queens as well, and I was really feeling with them. Because it's really hard, and like, the crew was really manly as well, so, how do you turn them into drag queens. But at the same time, you saw the queens connecting with the crew so well, really talking about why they are doing this, and what do you think about drag queens, and just deep conversations, and that was like, it's really important for the queens to talk about why they are doing this as well. And it's also, they all liked it, that the crew into queens. Because it's a challenge for them as well but it's also really personal because you know this people, because they work with them.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Irene: No, not really. But I never really get emotional with series or films, I never really had that, so, but, the moments that they talk to younger selves, that's the moment always, not really emotional, but I feel with them. Yeah.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Irene: Well, you have to, some queens who overdo it, so it's just, dresses are like too much or too small, not right, ah, I don't think they are good, best drag queens. I think they are not overdoing it. It's just, not too much make-up, not too weird dresses, too short or anything like that. I think being a good drag queen takes knowing it's enough. About their looks, about their make-up. And other thing I think really important is, have respect for other drag queens. Because it's still their community together. And on one hand, they really empathize with each other, but on the show, they can be also really mean to each other, like we, women together, almost. But I think good drag queen won't go with the hatred within the group.

Int : Do you mean that women are mean to each other when they are together, I mean, in a group?

Irene: Not always, but sometimes. No. But, if you study at group with women, and there are like 15 women in a big group. And that's almost like 14 drag queens together. And they never go as well, there are always gossiping or just like somethings they say, which are not, don't pretty sound mean at first, but when you think about it, then it's like "that wasn't nice thing to say". And that's what you sometimes saw, also see in Drag Race. They're not directly mean sometimes, but just like just below. But women are not always mean, but there's a lot of gossip, most of the time. A little bit different, but a little bit same as well. I think it's feminine side to, drag queens as well. They have some, feminine side I think, in the behavior as well. In the way behave with each other, yes.

Int : What is not acceptable behavior for a drag queen?

Irene: Ah, I don't really know, I think, that is, ah, hm... I think taking somebody else down to get on the top yourself, I don't think that's acceptable because in RuPaul's Drag Race, it's one community. So we also support each other, help each other, and then if you take someone else down to get on the top yourself, I don't think it would be really acceptable. No.

Int : You told me about good and bad behavior of drag queens. I'd like to ask you if these behaviors could be applied to women in general.

Irene: Ah, like regular women, you mean?

Int : Yes.

Irene: Ah, yes, I think the way you see the drag queens is sometimes the represent as women act, each other as well, you have like the same good drag queens, they can laugh about themselves and they can still make jokes but not in the mean way. I think for women that's also good aspect to have, or quality to have, and then, at the same time, women should also support each other, not taking another woman down to get on top themselves, yeah. I think it's really representative, yes.

Int : Then, how about men?

Irene: Yeah, that's same, but I think, ah, like women gossip a lot and say mean things, which don't sound mean at first, and men just say what they think. If you're annoying them, then just say that "you're annoying and go away". Ah, when they fight, if it's end, it's over. When women fight, it's not over when the fight finishes. That's all gossip after

the fight, like, “do you know what happened?” Women tend to do that more, I think, than men do. So, I think ah, the good aspect and bad aspect also go for men and women, so I don’t think men should take each other down to go to the top, but, in my opinion, men don’t make such a big deal out of, that I don’t think that they do that as easy as women make to do that.

Int : That’s super interesting. Why is it so different?

Irene: Yeah, it’s also same because the, the qualities that women should have, I think men should have, like, good qualities and bad qualities go for men and women as well. But the way, ah, we work with it, for men and women, I think it’s different. Like men are more direct, and they have fight, it’s done, then don’t leave each other hatred, but women may say, “oh, you’re fine” but then at the same time, “you’re not fine”. No. I think that, that happens to women more than men. Unfortunately. (laugh)

Int : Okay, thank you. Then, As for RuPaul, do you like RuPaul or her style of drag?

Irene: First of all, I think, him as a man, so in the regular suit, he’s very different from his RuPaul as a drag queen. Ah, I think he is beautiful as a drag queen, really. But now on season 1, we started with season 10, then you also see some kind of change with his style. I think he evolved as well in his way of drag, hair and make-up and everything. But I think as a drag queen, she is really pretty.

Int : How does she change?

Irene: Ah, it’s also bit of the fashion style, go through with, because it’s like ten years season 1 till 10, so I think that changed a bit because we look at fashion 10 years ago, we don’t like it either. Maybe just a little bit more sophisticated even, just it looks like taking a bit more time, just bit more precise, bit less wild hair, more styled in my opinion, of course all takes a lot of time. But also I think it’s bit like fashion trend all over the years that changes.

Int : How about her or his personality? What do you think about the personality?

Irene: He’s like very positive, with the program he makes, he really wants to empower the drag community, like you don’t have to be afraid, just show, don’t be ashamed of the world, and that’s really what he tries something, during the show what he promotes, and at the same time, when one of the drag queens says something to him, ah, that he doesn’t agree with in any way, he is very direct. So he doesn’t ah make up excuse or “oh, you are fine” or something, but he goes into the things that other drag queens say. Well, I remember he’s discussion with someone, one of the queens, and she

didn't know how to make clothing, and the drag queen, just she said "yeah, I'm not a tailor, so I don't make clothes". And then RuPaul, he said, "yeah but you know, on the show, I'm sorry that you don't know how to make clothes but you're gonna have to try to make some, because it's part of the show. And if you don't know how to make them, then maybe you shouldn't be here". And he is actually right. And it sounds, may sound little harsh, but he is straight to the point and I think it also motivates the other queens to, like maybe step up the game. Like they, maybe "he's right, and I have to make the best of it", which is maybe a little harsh, but still ah there's no turning back. When somebody says that, then you either go to work or give up. There's no in between.

Int : Have you ever felt that a decision by RuPaul was not fair?

Irene: Ah, no, I've never, ah, some other queens say each other because they don't like them, but in the judging, she has, her own opinion on why someone should go through and why the other shouldn't. I don't think it was unfair during the seasons I've seen. No. Even one time, one of the queens came back I believe, they bring one queen back, ah, and some of the other queens didn't agree, but she could actually tell, "yes, but there's my reason to bring her back". So, there's the stuff into the things, the decision that she makes. It's, yeah, always reasonable. It's not just because I like her than the other one, no, that's actual thought into it.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general question about Drag Race. Do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Irene: Ah, no. No. It's not in my everyday life, so, in a normal life for me, I really don't think about it. Which I do have is people just like in regular outfit or extravagant ones, like a smaller version, but not really, drag, no.

Int : Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram?

Irene: No, no. From XXX (her roommate), she sends me pictures via Instagram sometimes, but I don't follow them myself.

Int : Do you have any reason that you don't follow them?

Irene: Ah, not in particular, I don't think. I like the show a lot, but I don't have to see in my timeline every day because some post they have been done, for me just not

interesting. I know I like make-up, but I don't need to see it every day, like how they put it on. That's not important for me.

Int : So, for you it's more important to see them on the show?

Irene: Yes, to see their progress on the show, it's important for me than everyday things that they do.

Int : When do you feel the progress, the queens making progress?

Irene: Ah, well, when they start the season, there are always the first impression you have, but every queen on the show has like a moment, like, it's not really a break down, but there's always emotional moment, where they get more real themselves to the other queens, like, why they are becoming drag queen or where their behavior is coming from. And I think that's, for me, I really like to see the transformation from their first impression to ah the actual reason behind the impressions. And I don't think you really get that on Instagram or twitter or anything.

Int : Do you think Drag Race became popular?

Irene: Well, I don't think it's really popular here in Holland, or not as far as I know. But in the States, I think it really became popular, yes. Even though some cultures may not accept, because there's always the case that some cultures don't accept drag queens, but I do think it got, it created the name for drag queens. Like when you watch the show, and later in big cities like NY or somewhere else, you see a drag queen just walking somewhere, there's nothing like just weird staring, but some actual understanding "oh, she is a drag queen". It's becoming more normal. Maybe you still think it's weird, it's an option, but at least you understand where it's coming from instead of just thinking it's weird.

Int : Why do you think it becomes more popular?

Irene: I think in general, like in Holland as well, people get to be more extravagant. It's more accepted to be extravagant. Just don't be like everybody else is, that's why hipsters are coming, everybody is coming in different styles, and I think that's why drag queens are more accepted into like all these extravagant themes going on. People become more understanding what they are doing. Because you understand where the drag queens are coming from if you watch the show. Why are they dressing up like, the first time I watched the show, I didn't understand why and what this program. Now I've watched few seasons and I understand where they are coming from.

Int : It's really important to understand to accept it.

Irene: Yeah, it is. You may not agree with someone, but you know what they're coming from, where they're coming from, so it's easier to accept. Don't have to agree, but you can accept that the way it is.

Int : There is an article that almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. What do you think about it? Do you agree with it?

Irene: Ah, well, maybe, because like, I would never dress that extravagant, or put that make-up on, but there's still some relation to it because we still put make-up on just not as much, we still dress up just not as much as drag queens do. So, you can relate to them what they just go like five steps further than you ever go. I think that's one of the reasons and also because what we talked about earlier, like the drag queens behave sometimes almost same as women do, that's also the way you can relate to, your own behavior is relatable to their behavior. Because I know one of my best friends, he is gay, and but he's like still very, if you see him, you never know he's gay. He is going out with some girl friends sometimes, he always says "I don't understand why you gossip all the time", but WE understand because we all participate in it. That's why I think it's more relatable to watch than for men who never understand where this behavior is coming from and never relate to the behavior. Because, I watch Drag Race with him, and he asked like "why would you watch this?" And I thought it was fun, I thought actually he would like it as well, but all the gossiping and just taking so much time for make-up, taking so much time for the clothes didn't interest him at all. But I think you can relate to it as a woman because normally you do that make-up and everything as well. I think that's why we watch it.

Int : This is bit similar question, but do you think straight men can enjoy Drag Race as well?

Irene: No, I don't think so. Because it's like watching 45 minutes of make-up, clothing and gossiping, guys or queens, I don't think men would enjoy that.

Int : Why?

Irene: Ah, because I think men interact very differently, from the way women interact, we can actually relate to the drag queens. I think, that's for men harder to relate to the drag queens. I think that's because they behave so different and they spend so much time and energy on clothing and make-up, and then, well, most men never do

any make-up, or just wear clothes on the top shelf from the closet, it's fine. So, they don't put time and thought into what they wear and what they look like, or at least less than women, so I think they can't relate to what you see on Drag Race.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Irene: I think accepting yourself. I think so, because that's also when they show their, ah drag queens pictures of themselves, (interrupt by a waitress) ah, when they show them a picture of themselves, then they are always like "you are gone through such a hard time but you'll be fine", and it [???] the progress becoming a drag queen, you almost have to accept the way you are, the way that you like drag or put yourself into drag. If you don't like the part of yourself, then you never become a good drag queen. You are just miserable at the hardest time. And then you get out of that fear and actually become a drag queen, that's a way of accepting that part of yourself, and expressing yourself in the way you might not have tried in your regular all day outfits or, yes, I think that's a big part that you could learn, just accept the way you are.

Int : Could you tell me what you have learned from Drag Race?

Irene: Well, not to be afraid always, because in the show they also have to do things they know or think they cannot do, they are not capable, but they have to try. You can't be afraid because then you won't make it in the show. And when they try, sometime to practice, they actually get better. So, ah, for me it was like, when if you never try something you think you are not good at, then you never get better at it. And then, they would not still be the best, but at least they tried, then it got better. I think that was important thing for me to see.

Int : Do you think your thoughts or behavior has changed since you started watching Drag Race?

Irene: Ah, well, not so much, I think maybe a bit of accepting myself and not to be afraid of too many things, ah, because I think that's what I saw the most, like, "it's fine who you are" and "just try then you can learn", but other than that, I don't really think it changed my opinion because I never really had a problem with drag, I knew about drag before I watched the show. And then I always found it interesting already, so that didn't really change.

Int : Is there anything that you want to say?

Irene: No, I think we talked about most of it.

Int : This was the last question of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.

Interview 11

Name: Amy

Age: 26

Occupation: Academic writer

Nationality: Ecuadorians

Date: 01-05-2019

Location: Skype

Duration: 61min

Introduction

Thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I study sociology of arts and culture at Erasmus university and I am writing master thesis about how female fans think about RuPaul's Drag Race.

Today's interview is a part of my research for master thesis and I would like to know what you like about Drag Race.

First, I will start with asking you some basic information, then your opinion about contents and contestants will be focused. And finally, I will ask questions related to your own life and more general questions as well.

This interview will take around 45 minutes.

In addition, this interview is recorded, but all information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Please feel free to talk anything you would like to say.

Introducing question

Int : Let me start with questions how you have watched Drag Race. When was the first time to watch Drag Race?

Amy: My first time to watch Drag Race was actually season 1. The first time uploaded on Netflix in Latin America, they only had three seasons. And they only, because, since it was hard to watch, like they only aired season 1 like a year. So, the first time I watched season 1 and I watched first three seasons in a row on Netflix.

Int : How many years ago, ah, you watched it...

Amy: Ah, I was in my first year at the college, 2012.

Int : You have watched every single season, right?

Amy: Yes.

Int : Which season is your favorite? Do you have particular seasons you like?

Amy: Hm...maybe. I would say four, and five.

Int : Why are these seasons your favorite?

Amy: Four was the first one I saw live, I saw on the actual time. It was going on, I watched it when I was very young. And, ah, I really really liked Sharon Needles, so weird, like, it was the first time in my life I have been exposed to someone like Sharon Needles. Never seen someone like her before. That was interesting. And I liked season 5 because it was really strong.

Int : Strong?

Amy: Yes. Like, all of the drag queens were really fierce and strong.

Int : Could you tell me the first impression of the show?

Amy: My first impression of the show, was, that was something I could only watch when nobody was in the house. I remember that, because I was 18 or 17, I was really little when my parents never approved, and I remember that it was something like forbidden to watch but it was interesting to me. And I started watching because I love make-up, I have an obsession with make-up. And that was the thing that most called my attention, at first. And then, it started to be a lot about the stories about the humans, that was so different from me.

Int : Okay. I think your mother also likes watching Drag Race, right?

Amy: Yes. I actually made her watching with me.

Int : Why do you think watching Drag Race was forbidden at that time?

Amy: Because I was, my mom hated that at first time. Because my mom watched Drag Race, when I had already watched most seasons and when I watched it regularly, and, she was exposed to it for like two or three years before she actually watched. I wasn't allowed to watch it when XXX[her younger sister] was home, for example, because XXX was too little. Like, my mom didn't want XXX knowing that I watched the show like this.

Int : How did she change?

Amy: She loved it after the second episode she watched. She started realizing... I have always gay friends in my life, since I was very young. And first my mom didn't, she is very catholic, she was [???] catholic traditional, she didn't really, like completely understand my friends. But after that, my house, like after she watched the show, my

house was the house where my secret drag friends came to put make-up and clothes, wigs and shoes. My house was the house they got ready and I did their make-up and it begin from being somebody hated everything, we took queer culture, not gay people, queer culture. She was somebody completely to it.

Int : It is really beautiful!

Amy: Yeah, it was really interesting to see the change in her, because I was always open to it when she wasn't. And through the show, she became, so much understanding.

Int : Yeah, that's really nice. Thank you for talking about that. I want to ask you other questions as well. Has your first impression changed through watching Drag Race, by seasons?

Amy: Yes. I don't feel I'm watching something forbidden, not guilty pleasure anymore.

Int : How did it change?

Amy: Ah, when, I started getting identify with certain people on the show, specially Michelle Visage. Because I have, I don't, I'm very happy with my body and my gender. That's not part I identify with. But I do identify with surrounding myself with people that have different sexual identities as mine. Most of my friends are gay. And I started realizing that a lot of people like me that is just being surrounded by gay people, because they have something in common when it comes personality, not because gay yourself.

Int : It's really interesting to hear your opinion. You have nice experience.

Amy: I can talk about a lot of topics because I study gender and sexuality.

Contents and contestants

Int : I want to move on next questions. Could you tell me more about queens you like? You said you like Sharon Needles?

Amy: Ah, I don't like Sharon Needles that much anymore, because when I started seeing her perform outside of Drag Race, and I have seen most of those queens live at certain point. When I started seeing her performance, I realized she's very racist, and very white supremacist. She believes in white supremacy and it was something turning me off her, specifically. The only queen I really liked at the first and then I realized that what you saw on the show and what she really was like complete [bifurcation?]. And I know that reality TV is not really real. But that was like complete two different personas. Ah, but queens I like the most, ah, I really like Detox. I really really like, ah, Valentina. I like Detox, I really like Valentina, ah, I like Sasha Velour. I had an opportunity to see

her live and that was one of the most [???] I've ever seen. And Bianca Del Rio makes me laugh a lot. And Violet Chachki, I saw her in cabaret performance. Yeah! First time drag queen turned me on! Yeah, it was very sexy. Because it was pure cabaret, she was on the glass and she was kind of naked, spinning around bubbles. She was brilliant.

Int : Wow, how nice. I want to ask you why you like those queens.

Amy: I think because I like people who represent, ah, drag queens already represent a community that is very shunned, very like. They already represent more than anybody else, especially Drag Race, the queer community in the world. But thing is I like people have very unique artistic point of view and I think all of them have artistic point of view. Like with Violet Chachki, she does what nobody else does. I don't see much queens doing cabaret like she does. With a complete tease, and she comes to top of burlesque world. Same thing with Sasha Velour, she performs like weird, bold art, that is not feminine nor masculine. And very intellectual. I, Detox, because I love her music. She always looks very good. I also like Alyssa Edwards a lot. She's a great dancer and I like her a lot. And Bob the Drag Queen is also very funny. I like Bob the Drag Queen and, Bianca Del Rio, for the same reason, incredibly funny but incredibly smart.

Int : And what do you think about their personalities?

Amy: I think, I like complex people and I like honest people, like, Valentina for example, she lives in complete bubble, but she knows she looks play like bubble, she tells [???] I think it's the fact everybody else thinks because it's her bubble. The same thing with Sasha Velour, like I like people who, I am Buddhist, so I hate people who are violent and contentious. It's not in my nature to admire somebody who takes the [???] towards violent and [???] all the time. And I think the queens I like mostly because people who, as you can see them on the TV, they know who they are, they know they can make mistakes, they are able to try navigate through this competition without losing exactly who they are, without winning the competition get along.

Int : I want to ask you about Michelle Visage. Tell me about her, what do you think about her?

Amy: I love her. I really do. I have dressed as Michelle Visage more than once, for Halloween, yes. More than once. I like her aesthetic, very, I would never dress like that, but I love to dress like that, when they, you know. I'm not somebody who produces as self a lot, like I do make-up, I can do very good make-up, I can change my face, but I'm not the

type of person, who's always wearing fake eye lashes, wearing fake nails, and, [???] eyebrows, and wearing foundations, I never do. I do it twice a year to go out. Even if I go out more, I do little make-up, but like whole production, maybe twice a year, I think. But I like the way that she produces herself and also like the way that she has found a place in a community that is not really her own, she's been straight cisgender white female, which is, like, besides her personality, she's no different from any people, [???] she is so strong, she's white cisgender straight female. But being that, she made herself, she made a place for herself in a male, gay male driven community where people are gender bending the whole time. And I have met a lot of drag queens that sometimes reject women just because they have easier than that, and to make yourself low in that world, because she made herself famous in that world. It's something that I found really interesting. I grew up with, it was not about my image, it was more about the fact that I grow up in a religious, only girl's school. With my father, when my parents got divorced, she (her sister) was very young before my father was very conservative, very strict, very catholic man. And my mom followed in that pattern too. So, for example, when they discovered my friends were gay, they forbid me to see and hang up with my friends because they thought I was gay, or, they gonna turn me gay somehow. My cousin, my older cousin who was gay, I wasn't allowed to talk to her, I wasn't allowed to be with her, I wasn't allowed many things. Because, (they thought) "Oh, bad gay people are going to do something to you". Because, by the way people, I have gay family who was always being shunned, it's been like a sin. And, in my dad side's family, he always questioned the fact that why all my friends were gay. Even friends when they had come out of the closet, that was twelve or thirteen, the friends and I, he didn't understand why, he was always the thing. And I've seen Drag Race, I understood those people who have more affinity towards gay people. It doesn't necessarily mean that I am gay or, I am happy with my body or my gender or my sexual expression, you know. Somehow, I always put in like, "What is wrong with you, you always have friends like those?" That's changed by the show. The show changed my mom too. Like my mom started seeing things different. And when my parents divorced, whatever my father thinks is not strong, important any more. It changed.

Int : Drag Race kind of influenced relationship with your mom.

Amy: Yeah.

Int : You identify with Michelle Visage because of your, ah, friendship or something like that.

Amy: Yeah. The way I create my relationship with them.

Int : Okay. Thank you. Then, could you tell me queens you DO NOT like?

Amy: Well, Sharon Needles. I do not like Sharon Needles any more because of her abuse.

Tyra from season 2, it's somebody I stop liking too. Because of her way she, I don't know, I saw the videos of her yelling the people, being incredibly disrespectful and hateful. So. Roxxy Andrews was in first season I didn't hate her, but when she's All Stars season, I started hating her. Because she was a bitch. She was mean, she was trying to play games. And I didn't like that, just because as I grow up in the school, with girls, rich, catholic girls, which I had mean girls, I really didn't like that. Yeah, I was never bullied or anything, but I really don't like that. And then, Phi Phi, I didn't like her when I watched her season. But then, I watched her work, and I liked her work. She did this whole year, she did different drag show every year, and when in Puerto Rico, the hurricane hit, she organized whole thing for donating money for Puerto Rico. That I found really cool. She's doing a lot of charity work.

Int : So, you changed your mind after knowing that...

Amy: Yeah. It's weird, I hated Phi Phi but I turned to love Phi Phi. I changed my mind. I realized that reality television is not real. And not everybody, not every type of personality is the type of personality as good in competition. I can try to be fair and everything, but I'm competitive. If you're put in that situation, you are hostage with all the people. I don't know. I don't know if I turn out to be a villain. But I don't think I put myself in the position to go to the reality TV show, I don't think I would be good.

Int : Who do you think the most beautiful queen?

Amy: Who do I think the most beautiful queen... that's hard question... I would say Courtney Act. And Miss Fame, I thought she was beautiful.

Int : Why do you think they are beautiful?

Amy: Because they have most androgynous faces, ah, they can with little make-up go to women very easily, and they look very natural. And I love all kinds of beauty but I love like the natural better. That's why I like Plastique Tiara from new season too.

Int : You think she's beautiful as well.

Amy: Yeah, but as a girl, not as a boy. As a girl, she's very pretty, she gets this very pretty face.

Int : Do you come up with other queens that you think beautiful?

Amy: A lot of them are! They are beautiful. Farrah Moan is beautiful, Valentina is ridiculously

beautiful. And [??] I think Aja is pretty. Delta. One of the weird, Jade Jolie, she has weird face, but I like her make-up.

Int : Do you think there are queens who are not beautiful as well?

Amy: Well...Yeah. I think there are queens who do not identify themselves as beautiful, who do not do beautiful, you know. But I think that, those queens, even though they don't play beauty, they play camp, they play mystery[?], and I find that attractive. I don't really try any queens like, off-putting. But I don't like them all beauty because I don't think they all do beauty. Like Sharon Needles, she never did beauty, it's not her brand. Or Bianca Del Rio, it's not her brand, she doesn't look bad, but it's not her brand.

Int : Yeah, they have their own style.

Amy: Yeah! The aesthetic is one way of making image of yourself.

Int : What do you think are the funniest moments?

Amy: I like Snatch game. Snatch game, I think it's my favorite all the time. Snatch game, I really like is season 6, with Ben De La Crème. I liked really that. And I liked season 2, which was the first one they did, with Pandora Boxx doing Carol Channing. I like season 7 too. There was double winner, I think it was really good. I hated season 11, I think it was the worst, all of them were bad, like Silky who won was bad! Because they focused towards more looks than towards comedy. And I think that's fine, that's not my favorite, I kinda like comedy better than looks, but, they had funny moments, but Snatch game was really bad (laugh). And... I was thinking about the funny moments, I think the moments that I found the most funny are normally not challenges but between the scenes, how they read each other, how they talk about each other, how they talk about themselves. It's like a strange window into somebody who is nothing like me. And I like that.

Int : Could you tell me some examples that you find interesting?

Amy: Ah, Tatiana, for example. From season 2, the way that she talked about everybody else. She was... so bitchy but so funny and so true all the time. Valentina, always leaves her own head, every time she is talking about her experience on Drag Race on interviews, I find her hilarious. Ah, how they react to the way other people say stuff about them, for example, this [??] specifically in my head because I had some, how Silky Nutmeg reacts to the whole thing with Yvie Oddly, interviews how she talks about it, "That bitch called me talentless!" She reads herself. Everything that Adore Delano, comes out of mouth of Adore Delano, for me, precious. Also, Bianca Del Rio, like you

can see she is a bitch but she has a heart. Kind of, [???]. And also you can know, you can kind of see the absence of all the queens don't have anything interesting to say. Like, I don't like people who don't have anything interesting to say.

Int : Okay, could you tell me more about that? Could you give me some examples, who was that kind of person?

Amy: Who was that kind of person, queen that does not have much to say? Tyra, from season 2. She barely had interviews. Brooke Lynn, season 11, barely has interviews. Sasha Velour, was that somebody you had a lot to say. But, kind of being quiet, part of her personality, which is kind of a little bit different. But she was my favorite, she started, I'm still loving her, when I saw her live, before she started her live, she was my favorite...Am...Violet Chachki never had much to say, either. Milk, I'm sorry, that wasn't one I wanted to say, who...Pearl. Pearl, also somebody for me had zero personality. Milk had one, ah, that was one of the queens that I find less attractive when she does [???] because I don't understand her aesthetic as much. Like sometimes she does things for me just like weird or crazy, but not in a good way. Ah, I can't think anybody else right now.

Int : That's fine. You already told me a lot of things, thank you. So, I want to ask you about the most serious moments?

Amy: Ah, I think when they talk about their past. Like serious moments when they talk about the past. There is a lot of people that have very sad stories on that show. When they talk about their identity and come out that's transgender, like being able to see that human being must be incredibly hard, ah, I don't identify with it, but I imagine it must be incredibly hard to be said that you are not allowed, you are not who you've always been. Or people who have been HIV positive, like, Trinity and Ongina. I think that those are most serious moments, to hear actually, really strong, fierce, funny, creatures that we think barely that human actually have a lot of pain. I think both are serious moments in general.

Int : Have you ever got emotional when watching Drag Race?

Amy: Oh! So many times! So many times, I get so emotional with what they are doing on reality TV.

Int : Could you recall some scenes that you got emotional?

Amy: I, like the one scene, I think I lost it, ah in All Stars 1, when Jujubee and Raven sang against each other, I keep dancing on my own song, it was incredibly sad. Yes, I

remember that. I...when Roxxy told her story about having been left on the bus stop, I cried when I saw that. It was so sad. Ah...Untucked, I've got emotional with those, when someone talks about them. I remember why, but some, I don't remember episode, but got emotional with Eureka. When the family comes in that, I'm crying and sometimes I get emotional. And when they leave. When someone leaves, you can see their emotion. Yeah, that's it.

Int : What do you think makes a drag queen a good drag queen? What are the criteria of a good drag queen?

Amy: Ah... an aesthetic, any aesthetic, it's something that makes sense, like, they create an image, that is consistent. Ah, even though the images that are not worked, or difficult to achieve, for example, Bianca Del Rio always create a same image, like same silhouette. She does not have best dresses, best make-up or best wigs, but she has, she looks good in her crown make-up, like, always like same. Or Lady Bunny, always looks the same, doesn't matter, she has, ah, a personality or message, even if it's you're funny when be funny, like Sasha Velour, you see just intellectual creature, or creative things around this intellectual personality. Violet Chachki with her burlesque self, she does burlesque herself that's so she is. People are versatile, RuPaul is versatile, but, RuPaul, he has an image, he is the Supermodel of the world. He is Mama Ru, that way. You know, you have that image, you have to have a talent or skills, strong skill, and whatever it maybe. Ah, and a lot of hard work. I think there is a lot of really talented people that don't do as well, because they're not willing to sweat it, then you have people that are making almost no money but traveling to every corner of the world, working 24/7, I think those people make it. I think that is important, literally a lot of hard work, a lot of, ah, sacrifice.

Int : You have to make a huge effort.

Amy: Yes! I think one of the [???] those who have talent and don't do any effort and don't go anywhere.

Int : Yeah. I want to ask you, ah, you said, ah, having consistency and your own image, making effort are really important. Do you think it is, it could be applied to women in general?

Amy: (...) Yes. That's too. I think anybody who wants to be successful or do anything to have strong skill, be what it would be, like, mine is writing, I'm very strong writer, so I'm gonna work on that, for example. And it's not only having really strong skills or being

really good at something, having, being able to put all the amount of the work you have. And being able to maintain an image. That doesn't have to be physical, but an image, a personality, ah, persona, people identify with. I don't think anybody can be 100% real all the time. We all have part to play in the world, with different from who we really are.

Everyday experience

Int : As the final section of the interview, I would like to ask you questions regarding your own life, and bit more general question in relation to Drag Race. Are you following queens on twitter or Instagram?

Amy: I don't have Instagram, but I follow them on twitter. Ah, I follow Bianca Del Rio, ah, I follow, The Vixen, Adore Delano, I...like James Mansfield, which is first one to leave, I really like her, Derrick Barry, Eureka, ah...Well, I'm following Milk, Silky Nutmeg, Violet Chachki.

Int : What do you find interesting about following them?

Amy: Well, I follow Bianca, ah, I was following Lady Bunny, I like her because she makes most incredible jokes, she's so funny and she's politically incorrect, but she is very political. She follows a lot of politicians. She's constantly talking about things actually happening in United States. For Bianca Del Rio, because she is very funny. Violet Chachki because I like her videos. Silky Nutmeg, because she's very funny. Yvie Oddly, I follow her too. I kinda like her, she's weird. But she's contentious, I don't like about that much, but. Mostly, because they have good pictures are because they post funny jokes all the time. Sometimes I follow queens for one or two weeks and unfollow them because they're only just gossiping or talking about shit.

Int : Do you think of Drag Race in everyday life?

Amy: Sometimes, depending. Sometimes it's personal conversations I have with my friends. Ah, there are a lot of GIFs and memes, references too, so. Sometimes, I do. I would say, 30% in everyday life, 25%. I mean, I'm not obsessed with that, but does come like two or three times a week, end up talking about queens and memes. I want something funny, and when I watch new episode coming.

Int : Do you think Drag Race is becoming more popular?

Amy: Yes, I do. I think they have found formula to present something. I think that, everybody is not really curious, I wonder presented such a non-winning way, ah, it's getting more and more popular because people just wanna see it.

Int : Why do you think people want to see Drag Race more and more?

Amy: Because, I think, for girls, it's become... I think that, well it becomes gay people, I think, that those come up point in what she can be a gay male who does not watch anything has to do with Drag Race. Not because every gay male like drag queens, just because it's such a big part of queer culture right now. I guess, you can begin watching it because all your friends are going to talk about it. At least in the United States and in higher social classes in other countries do watch international TV and speak English. Because that's another thing, you have to watch international TV and speak English. Ah, I think women like it, even watch somebody else doing such a transformation, it's fun. It creates an impact. And I think everybody who watches all that has to do with Drag Race is there, but I think there are a lot of people at least pick up one or two episodes, just because this is such a beautiful creation of art. And I think that men are really kind of either curious or attracted, they do not want to admit it, but curious. For example, my brother, he's a very cisgender. I wouldn't say homo-pho, but not completely tolerant man. Like, he's not homo-pho, but doesn't have any [??] thing about queer people. We went to drag show and when one of them came to us and he was kinda freaking out, you know. Even he has watched certain episodes, just because, kind of finds a weird man can be such a woman. It's kind of a thing he watches it because kind gets scared, like "This is cool, but this is not cool, oh my god! Oh my god!" But when people are like that, end up watching one or two episodes. Because it's curiosity. And everybody wants to watch, because there's still so many people that are forbidden to watch it, that calls your attention, makes you wanna watch it.

Int : Actually, I have read an online article that almost a half of fans of Drag Race are straight female. You told me girls are interested in Drag Race, while cisgender straight men are not so interested in it. Why do you think there a lot of female fans while straight men do not enjoy Drag Race?

Amy: Because I think women enjoy most of all to be able to see non-threatening males. I think that we have been fed in such toxic masculinity images, that somehow watching non-threatening men on TV as the main character at least gives you a sense of security. Or sense of commonality, like they are men but they're like us, like. Without putting any [??] of, of... I wouldn't say sin, because it's horrible word, there are a lot of women that, it's a non-sexual, non-threatening show. So, they can be

other shows of gay men, but one is presented as sexualized, strong [???] way, still gives you that different sense of comfortable, you know. I think it's because non-sexualized, non-threatening, because no man, they like, they are all gay, you know. And I think male, straight male men, like cisgender men, like, like to see pretty women, they're attracted to them, but realize they have a penis. You know what I mean? Like, the moment they're attracted to them, they already like got disgusted and turning off the show. They are not going to be attracted because they like pretty women.

Int : So, that's why there is a big different.

Amy: Yeah, for example, my brother. And none of them have anything, get used to see people, something to do with drag queens.

Int : What do you think people could learn from Drag Race?

Amy: I think what people draw from Drag Race is a lot of, it seems see gay people as humans. Ah, media does not normally, even though it's getting better, but it's not normally presenting gay people as full fresh and blood and feelings, and horrible families, and no healthcare, type of humans, you know, like everyday human. Ah, they present gay people as gay-sexualized human and they, at least males, males on TV, when they are gays or either the non-sexual men, like will [???] this caricature of this extremely feminine people who just make jokes. Or this very sex-driven powerful men, like there's no middle point in rich, this is a complex human, like to have a sex but also make jokes but also being rejected by males and also it is campy. Present entire persona, that is the most interesting part of it.

Int : That was the last question, but is there anything that you want to add?

Amy: I don't think so.

Int : This is the end of the interview. I would like to thank you for your participation and your insight.