Gender-bending Discourse: Self-Representation of Drag Queens on TikTok

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ABSTRAKT

Bakalářská práce zkoumá prezentaci Drag Queens na sociální síti TikTok. Práce se skládá z teoretické a analytické části. Teoretická část poskytuje základní informace o umění drag, jeho historii a kulturním významu, aby se čtenář seznámil s tématem. Diskutuje o výzvách spojených s touto problematikou, jako jsou právní obtíže, finanční problémy a způsoby, jakými bylo toto umění zobrazováno v médiích. Druhá část teorie se zaměřuje na sebeprezentaci, různé způsoby jejího projevu a její význam. Praktická část dále popisuje vybrané účty drag queens na TikToku a analyzuje obsah, zaměřující se na jejich sebereprezentaci.

Klíčová slova: drag, LGBT, gender-bending, self-representation, TikTok, gender-bending

ABSTRACT

The bachelor thesis explores the presentation of Drag Queens on the social network TikTok. The thesis consists of a theoretical and analytical part. The theoretical section provides basic information about the art of drag, its history, and cultural significance to familiarize the reader with the topic. It discusses challenges associated with this issue, such as legal difficulties, financial problems, and ways in which this art form has been portrayed in the media. The second part of the theory focuses on self-presentation, various ways of its expression, and its significance. The practical part further describes selected accounts of drag queens on TikTok and analyzes their content, focusing on their self-representation.

Keywords: drag, LGBT, gender-bending, self-representation, TikTok, gender-bending

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INTRODUCTION

Over time, individuals have increasingly prioritized the refined personas they project beyond the confines of their homes. The image they cultivate in the online sphere holds equal significance. Unlike the personas they exhibit in physical interactions, the ones crafted in the digital realm, particularly on social media platforms, offer greater flexibility and control. Among the multitude of available apps, TikTok has emerged as the preferred choice, noted for its user-friendly interface and broad global appeal.

Considering that every aspect of our identity, from opinions to appearance, wealth, sexual orientation, and artistic expression, can be shared on the platform, it's no surprise that drag queens have found a niche and audience among the many users presenting themselves on this app. As this art form has increasingly permeated online culture over the years, it serves as the focal point of this thesis.

This bachelor thesis aims to delve into the intricacies of self-representation by drag queens, particularly on the social media platform TikTok. As we will explore in the subsequent sections, drag has a deep-rooted history intertwined with the LGBT community and the inherent challenges it has faced. Given the complex journey of the queer community and its evolution through various struggles, drag, serving as an extravagant form of self-expression, has played a significant role worthy of research. The selection of this topic stems from the growing prominence of LGBT issues and their influence on contemporary perceptions of identity. Furthermore, this study delves deeper into understanding the nuances of self-representation within the realm of social media.

This thesis aims to examine how the selected drag queens maneuver within the confines of this social media platform, exploring the strategies they employ to manage the dissemination of their crafted personas to their audience. The objective of this thesis is to delve into the realm of online persona transformation and its relevance to underrepresented voices. Through this analysis, the goal is to illuminate the intricacies of identities within the increasingly powerful digital sphere.

I. THEORY

1   A DIVE INTO DRAG

With the recent rise in LGBT popularity, the art of drag has also come to the fore. This segment of the LGBT community, or its similar counterparts, is present worldwide, even in societies where due to religious dogmatism this form of expression still encounters social rejection, as observed in countries like Pakistan, Russia, or various parts of Africa (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 3). While it might come as a surprise to some, the phenomenon of gender-bending is not a contemporary trend; rather, it has been a part of our culture for centuries. Given its global prevalence, gaining an understanding of the history of drag is crucial to further understanding how contemporary drag performers present themselves today.

1.1 Drag vocabulary

Drag phenomenon is often referred to as a sub-culture with a distinct social jargon (McCormack and Wignall 2021, 2). A *Drag* usually refers to a homosexual individual who wears women's attire as a form of artistic expression. It's important to note that, despite adopting a feminine appearance, the individual still identifies and feels a connection with their male gender (Bekowitz 2007, 13). The intention of performing in front of an audience sets drag apart from the experiences of transsexual individuals (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 2). The origin and the coinage of the term are uncertain. Nonetheless, one theory exists to provide some insight. The first mention of the word dates to the 19th century, while the first evidence of the use of the word *drag* in connection with gender-bending exists from 1870 (Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. "drag"). It was used as part of an invitation in the Reynolds newspaper, which was then published in Britain. The invitation stated: "We shall come in drag." The prevailing belief is that the term originated within theatrical circles, particularly when men portraying female characters wore petticoats that dragged along the ground. As a result, these costumes began to be colloquially referred to as *drag* (Them 2018, 0:31–1:07). It is claimed that William Dorsey Swann was among the pioneers to use the term *drag* in this context. He would wear long satin robes and host gatherings for black homosexuals at his residence (Andrew 2023). During the 1920s, the term *drag* became a part of Polari, a secret language used by homosexuals, which arose as a protection from the legal repercussions, drawing inspiration from theatrical slang. By 1927, this term had become directly associated with the contemporary meaning of drag. It was mentioned in the *Manual of Psychiatry* by Aaron J. Rosanoff as "an outfit of female dress worn by a homosexual" or it was described as a cross-dressing occasion. Since then, this term began to be commonly

used, for example in the article "Queer sex busy planning drag" from April 1932 (Them 2018, 1:07–2:31). The term *drag queen* essentially refers to the practice of drag, specifically identifying the individual who engages in this form of performance. Typically, a *drag queen* is a man, often gay, while a *drag king* is usually a woman, also predominantly identifying as homosexual. *Molly houses* were residences or locations where men participating in homosexual activities and cross-dressing would gather. Members of this "molly" would often refer to each other using female names (Bloomfield 2023, 8). These locations were often raided by law enforcement in the past. A *drag family* generally consists of drag queens led by more experienced drag queens who mentor and support younger members. Typically, the drag family also assumes responsibility for their financial matters (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 3). *Drag balls* are gatherings where predominantly drag queens showcase their talents and engage in competitions across diverse categories, including dance— particularly vogueing—fashion, and catwalk presentations (Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "drag ball"). An illustration of drag balls can be found in the Netflix series *Pose*, which explores gay and transgender themes in the 1980s, addressing not only the impact of AIDS but also delving into various aspects of the community. *Vogue* is a dance style highly embraced within queer culture and involves the imitation of model poses in a campy and expressive manner (Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "vogue"). *Camp* is typically associated with the behavior of gay men. While difficult to precisely define, it can be described as theatrical, feminine, and slightly vulgar in its demeanor (Cambridge Dictionary, s.v. "camp").

1.2 What is drag?

Drag is often connected to the LGBT. This may imply that people participating in drag almost always identify themselves as homosexuals, which is not always true. Examining the history of drag culture in Britain reveals that individuals of any social status could engage in drag, extending beyond just homosexuals or other members of the queer community. Drag symbolized a society in which people could openly engage in conversations about subjects like sexuality (Bloomfield 2023, 5). Nevertheless, it is accurate to assert that the majority of individuals involved in drag are predominantly homosexuals, primarily men spanning from their teens to their forties (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 2). Drag has forged and continues to carve out a space for individuals within the LGBT community to come together, revel in shared experiences, and express themselves artistically (Bloomfield 2023, 6). Nevertheless, a specific group within LGBT often faces marginalization: the drag community tends to exclude transgender individuals who use hormones or undergo gender-affirming surgery,

perceiving it as an unfair advantage (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 2). With saying that, is important to define who exactly falls under the drag umbrella.

1.2.1   Being a drag queen

As mentioned above, drag queens are mostly men in their late 20s. Usually in gay bars, these drag queens take the stage, adorned in extravagant women's attire, while purposefully amplifying female stereotypes in the most eccentric manner. They enhance these performances with dance routines, lip-syncing, or other entertaining segments. It is suggested that men who participate as drag queens are often considered less attractive within the gay community. Hence, this could be one of the various motives prompting these men to engage in drag — aiming to elevate their standing and popularity within the queer community (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 2–3).

Unfortunately, pursuing a drag career may not be the most optimal choice, even though engaging in this field usually yields joy and a profound sense of belonging. Drag enthusiasts frequently encounter social exclusion, even within the gay community, and grapple with challenges in their romantic lives. These difficulties stem not only from time constraints imposed by their performances but also from the distinctive image associated with being a drag queen. The financial burden is also significant, encompassing expenses for makeup, wigs, sets, earrings, and jewellery. Additionally, drag queens invest considerable effort in self-promotion and show creation. Beyond addressing the social and financial aspects, which can be mitigated by becoming part of a drag family, another hurdle lies in the high level of competition. Beginners often face mockery due to their initial level of skill and professionalism. Nevertheless, numerous young gay men still view this as a valuable opportunity to elevate their otherwise low standing within the gay community and some even manage to attain such popularity that this pursuit becomes their sole source of income (Moncrieff1 and Lienard 2017, 2–3). This underscores the significance they place on self-representation.

1.3 The history of drag

The topic of drag has indeed become widely known to the public only in recent years, primarily owing to the influence of social networks (Feldman and Hakim 2020, 386). Nonetheless, cross-dressing has been recognized since ancient times. However, its primary usage was for practical purposes such as enhancing political standing for women or strategic involvement in warfare. As time progressed, the practice became a prominent aspect of

theatre. During the English Renaissance theatre era, when societal norms forbade women from performing, feminine men often took on their roles. (Šlahařová 2022, 8). The first mentions of drag akin to the version we know today, which are supported by physical records, come from the beginning of the 18th century in England. Another reference to drag performers depicted in literary works mentions the 20th-century New York masquerade balls, which also served as a safe cover for homosexual interactions. Unfortunately, there is not enough information about this part of history (Moncrieff and Lienard 2017, 3).

1.3.1 The Coverage of drag

We draw most of our knowledge about drag sub-culture from court proceedings since historically period these activities, as well as everything else related to homosexuality, were illegal and the participants were punished by the court. Therefore, these drag activities took place secretly, mostly in molly houses (Moncrieff and Lienard 2017, 3).

Another reason for the insufficient attention drag has received in the past was partly due to media efforts to downplay it by framing individuals within this community as mere theatrical cross-dressers, suggesting that their commitment was solely to their artistic pursuits (Heller 2016, 445). A great example is the case of Annie Hindle from the 19th century, where her same-sex marriage was explained by the media as an example of great theatrical gender-bending (Heller 2016, 445). Another example is the court case of Ernest Boulton and Frederick William from 1870–1871 when their arrest and possible conviction were forgiven due to the court recognizing them as great and dedicated artists and praising them for their entertaining act in the courtroom (Bloomfield 2023, 10–11).

1.3.2 Legal ambiguities and public perception

Although it was mentioned earlier that people performing in drag were arrested and prosecuted in the past, there was no direct law prohibiting cross-dressing, at least not in Britain. These cases happened mainly because people in the past associated cross-dressing with sodomy and other homosexual acts that were illegal and frowned upon (Bloomfield 2023, 7–8). However, it is important to understand that the majority of the public was not against cross-dressing as such. They saw it as a form of art and entertainment, especially if it involved women impersonating men (Bloomfield 2023, 7). This viewpoint regarding drag as an artistic expression holds significant relevance as it mirrors the concept of self-representation. Just like other artists convey their inner selves through various mediums, drag performers shape their appearance and demeanor to personify their art, thus representing themselves.

2 SELF-REPRESENTATION

Myers and Twenge (2019, 51) describe self-representation as a form of performance. Individuals consistently monitor their image, driven by a strong desire for social acceptance, sometimes going to great lengths to achieve it. Self-representation doesn't always reflect our true selves; rather, it often communicates how we wish to be perceived by others. It is very difficult to maintain, especially in an environment that is not familiar to us, and we try to put on our best face. Frequently, our external image doesn't align with our true selves but rather reflects the social circles we navigate in. For instance, if those in our vicinity engage in smoking, we might adopt the habit, even if it is not something we would typically do. People often mimic the behavior of others to be liked (Myers and Twenge 2019, 51–52). When entering a new environment, individuals often experience anxiety due to the desire to make a good impression (Myers and Twenge 2019, 436). Regardless, notwithstanding the downsides, self-representation also holds positive aspects.

Presenting your best self significantly contributes to fostering optimistic emotions. Evidence of this phenomenon is seen in the facial and body feedback effect. When we consciously try to smile and sustain a happy expression, it can influence our genuine emotions, leading us to feel happier. This principle extends to various emotions. As a result, there's a suggestion that individuals who have undergone Botox treatment in the muscles associated with frowning may experience enhanced mental well-being due to the slowed signals sent to the brain from this region. Additionally, people often report a difference in their self-confidence levels when they maintain an upright posture compared to when they slouch and avert their gaze downward (Myers and Twenge 2019, 105). Similar dynamics apply to other body manifestations. All of this can potentially impact our emotional state internally. The effect is mutually conveyed between us and others (Myers and Twenge 2019, 106).

In summary, self-representation can be viewed as a type of performance driven by a dual desire to satisfy both external expectations and personal aspirations. Therefore, it is crucial to recognize that self-representation is intricately linked to our gender identity, reflecting how we convey and embody our understanding of ourselves concerning societal gender norms.

2.1.1 Gender

Daily observations within social contexts often reveal distinctions in how men and women navigate their physical presence. Notably, men tend to occupy more physical space, adopting

expansive stances when standing and utilizing broad postures, such as spreading their legs when seated. In contrast, women often adopt a more reserved approach, frequently crossing their legs or maintaining less expansive postures.

In the realm of verbal communication, these differences also manifest. Women commonly employ rich facial expressions and intricate language, engaging in more elaborate verbal interactions. Their communication style often accentuates emotional cues, fostering connections through nuanced language patterns. Conversely, men typically exhibit a more assertive and direct communication style, prioritizing brevity and clarity in conveying their thoughts.

This falls under *gender*. Frequently, individuals mistakenly interchange the terms *sex* and gender or treat them as synonymous (Myers and Twenge 2019, 114). Yet, *sex* is intricately linked to our biological aspects, encompassing physical differentiators such as pelvic width, reproductive system, muscle mass, and facial features (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 2). In essence, *gender* is a set of social practices embedded within society, shaping individuals into distinct categories with socially significant differences. Put plainly, it encompasses our behaviors and the roles we assume in society (Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999, 192). Or, as described by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013, 2), it is "a social elaboration of biological sex." It manifests in our sense of humour, and beliefs, and permeates every aspect of our lives from the moment we are born (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 1). It even extends to choices such as our attire—whether it's a dress or a suit, the length of our hair, the use of makeup, and even our activities, be it engaging in hobbies like manicures or welding. Additionally, it encompasses significant family roles, such as whether our primary focus is on childcare or being the breadwinner (Myers and Twenge 2019, 114).

The confusion between the terms *sex* and *gender* stems from a historical tendency wherein individuals were expected to naturally adopt the gender characteristics aligned with their assigned biological sex. This conventional approach prevailed even in cases involving intersex individuals—those born with a combination of male and female reproductive organs. In such instances, corrective surgical procedures were often employed to align the child with a single-sex, along with the corresponding societal gender expectations (Myers and Twenge 2019, 114; Davis 2015, 2). However, in recent years, a paradigm shift has unfolded. Some individuals have realized that their assigned biological sex does not necessarily align with the gender characteristics they wish to embody and present. This evolving awareness challenges the traditional conflation of sex and gender, marking a transformative period where people increasingly recognize the distinction between their innate biological attributes

and the gender expression, they choose for themselves. Some individuals identify as non-binary or gender-fluid, signifying that their identity exists somewhere in between or entirely outside the conventional binary classifications of male and female (Myers and Twenge 2019, 114).

Then there are transgender individuals, who typically identify with a gender that differs from the one assigned to them at birth. For instance, some men may identify as women, and vice versa, feeling that their innate gender does not align with their assigned sex. Many individuals in the transgender community may opt for gender-affirming surgery to align their physical appearance and functionality with the gender they identify with. This transformative process helps them achieve the desired expression of their gender identity (Myers and Twenge 2019, 114–115).

The disproportion between sex and gender can also be linked to hormones, as they impact not only physical attributes but also behavior, playing a pivotal role in upholding gender distinctions (Myers and Twenge 2019, 116). Testosterone, for instance, is correlated with traits of aggression and dominance. Elevated levels of testosterone are associated with heightened expressions of these characteristics (Giammanco et al. 2005, 136). Testosterone additionally influences speech patterns, eye contact, and emotional maturity, often manifesting differently than in women (Myers and Twenge 2019, 117).

When a fetus is exposed to elevated levels of testosterone or estrogen during prenatal development, it may display characteristics associated with these hormones later in life. For instance, if a female fetus encounters an excess of testosterone in utero, the child may exhibit tomboyish tendencies– behaviors and preferences commonly linked to men.
Similarly, in the reverse scenario, if a male fetus is exposed to lingering estrogen, the child may exhibit signs of heightened femininity (Myers and Twenge 2019, 117).

In specific instances where a child is born intersex, with physical characteristics and reproductive systems not aligning with their assigned sex based on genetic code, attempts to assign a gender role in line with their appearance may not fully determine their identity. These children often exhibit traits consistent with the sex they were biologically born with, underscoring the significant role hormones play in shaping our identity (Myers and Twenge 2019, 117).

While the formation of identity, including sexual orientation, is a complex process influenced by various factors, hormones can play a potentially significant role. In the context of drag queens, it is plausible that their feminine performance and self-representation may

have connections to their early development and hormone levels (Myers and Twenge 2019, 117).

In conclusion, gender and sex are distinct concepts. However, as our society revolves around the traditional concept of gender, any deviation from the established norms is frequently met with rejection (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 5).

2.1.1.1 Prejudice

LGBTQ+ individuals frequently encounter stigma and may find it necessary to conceal their identities. While prejudice is diminishing in Western societies, many other countries still harbor prevalent and hostile views, with some going to the extreme of criminalizing homosexuality (Myers and Twenge 2019, 247).

In instances of discrimination against LGBT members, such biases are notably evident in the workplace. Disclosing one's sexual orientation or affiliation with the LGBT community on a resume significantly decreases the likelihood of securing employment. Transgender individuals, in particular, face heightened challenges, enduring workplace harassment that can escalate to the extent of termination. Unfortunately, queer people experience rejection in other parts of their lives as well (Myers and Twenge 2019, 247).

In addition to the challenges of openly embracing a gay identity within their neighborhood, many individuals also grapple with difficulties within their own families. A significant number find themselves homeless due to their sexual orientation, either forcibly expelled by their family members or compelled to leave due to unsupportive environments. Hatred is also evident in the school environment, with up to 54% of transgender individuals reporting instances of harassment. Because of these factors, queer individuals are disproportionately affected by mental health disorders (Myers and Twenge 2019, 247).

Both individuals identifying as gay and lesbian frequently experience mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide, alongside an increased vulnerability to cardiovascular diseases. This is particularly evident in regions characterized by high levels of discrimination, stemming either from the general populace or enforced by the state through prohibitive measures. In numerous instances, such discriminatory environments contribute to elevated rates of alcoholism and, tragically, instances of completed suicide (Myers and Twenge 2019, 248).

In general, societal prejudices are often more pronounced against men engaging in activities traditionally associated with femininity. In contemporary times, societal boundaries have significantly narrowed. It is increasingly common to encounter women dressed in

men's attire or engaging in professions traditionally associated with men, like firefighting or truck driving. This can be attributed to the societal perception that activities traditionally associated with men are more highly valued. Additionally, certain internal traits, such as stoicism, are often appreciated even when present in women. In contrast, when men express their feminine side, it is frequently met with negative reactions. Occupations like being a nanny are not commonly associated with men, reinforcing gender stereotypes. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 12). Naturally, societal biases are heightened in the context of drag queens, given their combination of feminine attire, performances, and speech.

2.2 Representation through language

Understanding discourse is best achieved through the analysis of language, as it serves as the primary conduit for conveying meaning (Dunn and Neumann 2016, 43). As is commonly known, style is another means through which we express and present ourselves to the world (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 248). Styles do not emerge spontaneously; they are rooted in pre-existing elements. This concept is known as *iterability*, signifying the ability to be repeated. This principle extends to linguistic styles as well. Consequently, when we communicate in a manner associated with a particular gender, it does not explicitly reveal our gender but indirectly implies it. This indirect indication relies on our understanding and connections between discourse patterns and gender associations (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 251). Our speech patterns serve as indicators of our gender, reflecting our self-representation through aspects such as intonation, vocabulary choice, and sentence structure (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 63). The manner of speech within the gay community is quite distinctive. The history of gay speech differs from that of traditional male and female speech, often being characterized more as a stylistic choice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 60).

In men's communication, the focus tends to be on establishing and navigating hierarchy, often through the exchange of short stories where individuals contribute various anecdotes to amuse others. Conversely, women's speech leans towards fostering intimate connections, involving lengthy conversations that continually shift direction, creating a sense of connection between them (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 116).

Women tend to engage in more extensive conversations with each other compared to men. The typical subject matter often revolves around personal concerns such as relationships, fears, and intimacy, in contrast to men who predominantly engage in discussions about broader topics like sports. This inclination can be linked to the societal emphasis on

valuing men for their physical accomplishments, leading them to prioritize physical activities over extensive verbal communication. In contrast, women receive recognition for internal values, prompting them to prioritize internal development, including speech and communication (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 117).

2.2.1 Connection to feminine

Historically, flamboyance has been marginalized or ostracized within the male population; however, as societal attitudes evolve and acceptance of diverse sexualities grows, the traditional boundaries that once separated male and female speech styles are becoming less distinct, challenging, and reconsidering the historical marginalization of flamboyance in men. The influence of consumerism and a rising interest in emerging fashion trends has led to a shift, making it increasingly common for men, mainly those in the middle class, to engage in discussions about fashion and related topics. Consequently, within the gay community, there has been a noticeable shift towards embracing styles that are less conventionally masculine. This suggests that there has always been a historical inclination for gay men to gravitate toward the feminine side, whether it is in fashion or speech. As people immerse themselves more in certain styles, they gradually become an integral and natural part of their persona (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 261–263).

When it comes to speech, various factors within its patterns can evoke inclinations toward either masculinity or femininity, essentially reflecting one's stance or identity. These linguistic characteristics encompass elements such as grammar, vocabulary choices, intonation, and the pace of speech. The way gay individuals express themselves in speech entails distinctive features that contribute to their feminine self-representation. For instance, employing a high and soft voice may convey a sense of gentleness, aligning with societal associations with femininity. Another distinctive feature of gay men involves the pronunciation of the frontal /s/, commonly known as lisp (Fasoli et al. 2019, 657). They also employ descriptive adjectives (Gaudio 1994, 32). Opting for more refined language or substituting profanity with milder expressions is often associated with femininity. However, when it comes to gay men, there is a tendency to be more open and expressive without necessarily filtering their language. In essence, the nuances within gay speech serve as a form of self-expression and their gay identity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 62–63).

Another differentiating factor is observed in the use of pronoun substitutions. While English conventionally employs gendered pronouns in the third person singular, the LGBT

community introduces a distinction in this practice. In the speech of gay individuals, the utilization of the pronoun *they* is particularly noticeable. While in grammar, this pronoun is traditionally linked to a plural reference, in everyday speech, it serves as a gender-neutral identifier. This is evident in the following example: "Alex is working on their presentation because they are giving their speech at the winter festival." Additional examples of neo-pronouns include *ze/zir/zir/zirself*, which serve as alternatives to the conventional pronouns *he/him/his/himself*. These pronouns are also referred to as Spivak pronouns, named after the mathematician Michael Spivak, who introduced these terms. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 216–217).

Further examples involve transforming previously derogatory labels into positive self-affirming terms. These words, such as *queer*, *faggot*, or *bitch*, have undergone significant historical transformations. *Queer*, once a derogatory term for the LGBT community, has evolved to carry neutral or even positive connotations in contemporary usage. Similarly, *fagot* and *bitch* are now employed within the queer community as positive terms to refer to friends (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013, 224).

2.3 Non-verbal self-representation

Beyond verbal expression, self-representation extends to tone of voice, as well as other elements such as body language, or attire. When it comes to the tone of voice, individuals can identify someone as gay solely based on their voice, although this categorization relies on stereotypical characteristics associated with gay people. Surprisingly, this estimation often proves accurate. Scholars have explored whether this phenomenon is not solely based on the message of the text, not the voice. They tested the narration of a dramatic text, and the experiment yielded no impact, as the 'gay text' did not influence the audience's judgment of the narrator's gender. However, success was found with scientific texts, suggesting that we may perceive gay men as more educated and sophisticated based on their speech. This implies that their initial assessment had some validity. However, some researchers revealed that listeners could categorize the narrator even when they spoke in a different language. Listeners frequently link a gay voice to feminine qualities such as a higher pitch, enabling categorization even without a full understanding of the underlying meaning. However, it is crucial to emphasize that these associations are rooted in stereotypical characteristics and may not accurately reflect the diversity of speech patterns within the gay community (Fasoli et al. 2019, 657–658).

Another facet of self-representation is the visual component. A significant aspect that reflects one's gay identity is their behavior, encompassing their entire demeanor. This includes not only their walking style but also the way they conduct themselves overall, embodying their authentic self. Gay men distinguish themselves through meticulous grooming habits, careful attention to appearance, hairstyling, and skincare routines, paired with a preference for stylish attire. This extends to an embrace of fashion trends, the incorporation of makeup, and the inclusion of accessories like rings or bags. Notably, gay men display a readiness to wear more provocative or colourful clothing, with certain stereotypical markers such as the adoption of bleached blonde hair standing out as recognizable elements of their style. However, this emphasis on physical presentation is influenced by significant societal pressure within the queer community, where high value is placed on aesthetic standards. Consequently, individuals may face criticism if their appearance does not align with these expectations. The prevailing norm for gay men involves a polished and more feminine aesthetic, characterized by tight-fitting clothes and stylish ensembles, rather than a traditionally masculine look. Similar expectations exist for lesbians, where a preference for men's clothing and short hair is often anticipated. However, as discussed earlier, the evolution of fashion trends has seen a shift toward a more style-conscious approach among men in general, not exclusively within the gay community. Therefore, relying solely on clothing as the sole factor for self-presentation has become an unreliable indicator in contemporary times (Clarke and Turner 2007, 269–270).

Visual communication, in this context, pertains not to attire, but rather to the interaction we establish with the viewer through factors such as distance, relation, and interaction. These elements are applicable in both real-life scenarios and visual representations, such as the videos examined in this study. Regarding distance, it serves a crucial function in describing the level of intimacy between subjects. Greater distance suggests unfamiliarity, distinction, or even hostility toward the subject. Conversely, closer proximity implies a sense of familiarity, friendliness, and inclusion (Leeuwen 2008, 138). Likewise, social relation has a comparable impact. Here, we consider the angle from which the subject is viewed. When we look down at someone, it symbolizes our perceived superiority over them. Conversely, when individuals look up at us, it may denote admiration or a sense of inferiority. A horizontal angle typically signifies equality between parties (Leeuwen 2008, 139). Finally, social interaction is another crucial aspect. This aspect assesses whether the subject is making direct eye contact with the viewer or not. Averted gazes or simply not looking at the viewer indicate a lack of interaction, allowing the subject to be observed

without interruption. Conversely, if the subject looks directly at the viewer, it suggests a desire for something, which can be inferred through additional contextual clues (Leeuwen 2008, 140–141).

2.3.1 Drag queens online

Thanks to advanced technology, people can control how they portray themselves, enabling them to eliminate unfavorable representations and enhance aspects that may not align with their desired image for a more polished presentation (Rettberg 2014, 12). Given this fact and the significant role the Internet plays in our daily lives, a considerable number of drag queens have moved on from traditional drag balls and turned to social media to further express themselves. While the Internet can be a space where homosexual individuals, therefore also drag queens may encounter homophobia, or other forms of hate, many of them also leverage social networks as platforms to foster connections and fortify the community (Feldman and Hakim 2020, 388–389). The pursuit of online content-making is closely connected to the concept of self-representation and according to Papacharissi (2013), social media platforms facilitate this active persona shaping, making it more enticing (Bhandari and Bimo 2022, 3). Social media serves as a tool for these individuals to meticulously construct their image, carefully selecting content, including the best photos and posts. Analyzing their interactions on social media provides insights into how a person feels about themselves and perceives their value (Myers and Twenge 2019, 52). As per Forbes (2023), the leading social platforms currently in use include Facebook at the forefront, followed by YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, WeChat, and TikTok (Forbes 2023). Particularly noteworthy is TikTok, which has enjoyed immense popularity since its introduction, even holding the title of the world's most downloaded app at one point (Omar and Dequan 2020, 121–122). This app features queens such as RuPaul (@rupaulofficial), Latrice Royale (@latriceroyaleinc), Alyssa Edwards (@thealyssaedwards), and numerous others. Hence, it could be argued that the soaring popularity of TikTok mirrors its crucial role in contemporary self-representation across digital platforms.

II. ANALYSIS

3   METHODS

This analysis employs TikTok as a primary source for analyzing brief videos as a means of self-representation. This entails the examination of digital recordings, supplementary elements such as text accompanying the video, descriptions, audience interaction, and the general stylistic approach of the accounts. The selected sample for analysis comprises three accounts, Dylan Mulvaney, Bob the Drag Queen, and Violet Chachki, chosen based on the researcher's familiarity with these creators, and all of them are publicly accessible. The examined content spans from March 3rd, 2020, to February 25th, 2024, and the research was undertaken between January and April 2024.

4 PRIMARY FOCUS

After outlining the technical aspects of our analysis and providing a theoretical framework for understanding self-representation, the next crucial step is to highlight these theoretical points within our selected samples. When delving into the examination of our chosen subjects—Dylan Mulvaney, Bob the Drag Queen, and Violet Chachki—the analysis will center around specific key elements, such as content dynamics, visual representation, body language, and verbal and non-verbal communication. Secondly, drawing from the information collected from all the examined accounts, "she/her" pronouns are consistently utilized. As a result, these pronouns will be consistently employed throughout the text.

The primary focus of these accounts revolves naturally around fashion and makeup. Audiences gain insights into the creators' work processes, often through travel vlogs and snippets showcasing their artistic engagements with the public, such as interviews, shows, events, competitions, and podcasts. Additionally, brief daily summaries provide glimpses into their day-to-day activities (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3).
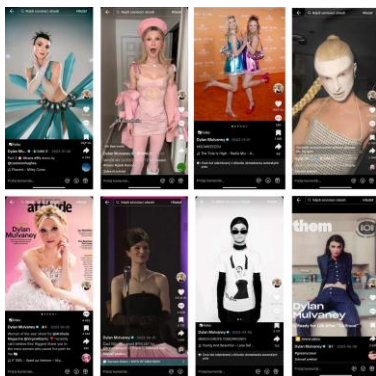
Figure 1: Content of Dylan Mulvaney
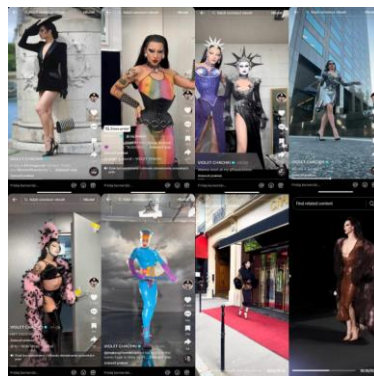
Figure 2: Content of Violet Chachki

Figure 3: Content of Monét X Change

4.1 Dylan Mulvaney

These content creators also use their platforms not only as business outlets but as personal diaries. This is particularly evident in the case of Dylan Mulvaney, who delves beyond her drag journey to explore the intricacies of girlhood—originally the focal point of her account—and embarks on a personal exploration of her life. Commencing her TikTok journey, Mulvaney initiated her TikTok fame by posting a video, titled *Day 1 of being a girl*, on March 13th, 2022 (Mulvaney 2022). This video was part of an ongoing series, *Days of Girlhood,* documenting her transition from a man to a woman (Forbes 2023,0:45). In an interview with Forbes, Mulvaney expressed her objective of maintaining content that remains accessible, relatable, and inspiring to a diverse audience (Forbes 2023, 2:15). Her

content extends to encompass relatable aspects for both LGBT and non-LGBT individuals, such as music, self-love, health, or lately even her connection to religion. Hence, her account attains the highest popularity, as she delves into a diverse range of subjects, thereby expanding her reach to a broader audience.

4.1.1 Content dynamics

Dylan's character emanates a sense of sincerity and authenticity. Typically adopting a vlog style, where she shares insights into her daily plans and showcases her outfit of the day, the videos exude a remarkably personal and relaxed atmosphere. The evidence is drawn from two videos: *Day 705 - Valentines Day* from February 15th, 2024, and *Thinking about faith a lot lately #god #trans #religion* from February 20th, 2024. At the beginning of her videos, she consistently extends a warm greeting to her audience. Moreover, in numerous instances, she initiates with control questions, such as asking if viewers are not occupied or expressing her concern for the comfort of those who may find specific content discomforting. Additionally, she often begins by conveying her appreciation for the audience, establishing a connection built on mutual respect and acknowledgment (Mulvaney 2024a; 2024b).

In addressing controversial topics like religion, she establishes a secure and inviting atmosphere for challenging discussions. Her monologues incorporate humor while maintaining a serious tone about the topic. In her video *Thinking about faith a lot lately #god #trans #religion*, she discusses her simple relationship with God. She underscores the significance of recognizing that even "[an] *unnatural person*" such as herself or any queer person, deserves the right to establish a connection with faith. There is a certain innocence in her worldview, acknowledging harsh truths yet steadfastly believing in the goodness around her. She doesn't project weakness but rather reveals vulnerability when it is essential, captivating her audience and instilling a sense of shared struggle and community (Mulvaney 2024).

4.1.2 Body language

When observing Mulvaney's body language, she is highly expressive. Similar to the previously mentioned video titled *Day 705 - Valentine's Day*, the majority of her videos are filmed in close proximity. The audience gains an up-close view, enabling a clearer perception of facial expressions and fostering a more intimate environment. She consistently maintains direct eye contact, typically at a horizontal level, often leaning in to address the camera directly. This intentional closeness, akin to a whispered conversation, enhances the significance of her messages directed specifically to the audience. Through expressive facial

movements and emotive gestures, she conveys a welcoming vibe, making viewers feel not only included but also valued in this interactive experience (Mulvaney 2024). The amalgamation of these elements creates the sensation of engaging in a one-on-one conversation with the vlogger.

There's a notable consistency in her positivity and the way she engages with her audience, contributing to her authenticity. In comparison between the video dated March 14th, 2022, named *Day 2 of being a girl*, and *Come with me to eras tour !* from August 10th, 2023 (Mulvaney 2022; 2023), her demeanor remains unchanged. This indicates a certain stability in the tone of her content. Regardless of its authenticity, she consistently presents herself in a favorable light, appearing invincible and successful. Contrasting her recent video *Will stan @chappell roan forever and always* from February 25th, 2024, with her earlier video *Hire me for your next excursion!! #sailing #gay #boat #lgbt* from December 3rd, 2020, we mostly observe her body language remaining consistent. Her arms are open, her movements are both well-defined yet comfortable, and her posture remains strong. Thus, she has consistently exuded a greater sense of assurance about herself and her identity from the outset (Mulvaney 2020b; 2024a).

Figure 4: Close proximity

4.1.3 Visual self-representation

It's noteworthy to observe her external appearance as well. When comparing her pre-transition video *ostrich king* from May 22nd, 2020, characterized by a generally masculine style with jeans and a t-shirt in basic colors (Figure 5), to the video *She/they ootd: SUNDANCE DAY 1* from January 19th, 2024, featuring a colorful and quirky outfit and bleached hair (Figure 6), her fashion choices have undergone a notable shift (Mulvaney

2020; 2024). The transition from a casual style to a more bold and expressive one can be interpreted in various ways. It may signify acceptance and coming to terms with oneself, gaining confidence in both body and soul, and embracing a sense of rebellion by not conforming to societal norms and expectations. Her external transformation aligns seamlessly with her inner journey, evident not only in her playful outfits but also in her choices of hairstyle, makeup, and other forms of body decoration.

Figure 5: Clothing
style from 2020

Figure 6: Clothing
style 2023

4.1.4 Self-representation through speech

As previously observed, Mulvaney engages in lengthy and profoundly personal conversations, leaning heavily toward the feminine spectrum. She maintains a soft yet energetic demeanor, accompanied by expressive facial gestures. Despite the anticipated characteristics outlined in the theoretical framework, Mulvaney does not demonstrate a lisp nor does she frequently employ profanity. However, she occasionally incorporates slang like *y'all* and *ya*, as demonstrated in a TikTok video *#stitch with @Dylan Mulvaney i pulled it together !!!* dated January 4th, 2024 (Mulvaney 2024). Relating to the pitch element discussed in the theory of non-verbal communication, Mulvaney's vocal tone could be described as distinctly feminine. It possesses a lively quality, often resonating in higher registers, and evoking a sense of enthusiasm. Conversely, it also conveys warmth and reassurance. This presentation creates a highly refined and courteous impression, or in other terms, aligns with a very genteel image befitting her persona, yet, incorporating slang adds an appealing element for a younger audience.

4.2 Monét X Change

Monét X Change launched her TikTok account on March 3rd, 2020, debuting with a video titled *Iss Poppin'*, showcasing her strutting down the hallway in drag (Monét X Change 2020). In contrast to Dylan Mulvaney's account, Monét—her nickname among colleagues—primarily centers around a substantial amount of comedic content.

4.2.1   Content dynamics

In addition to her professional life, Monét X Change shares glimpses of her daily adventures in her videos. For instance, on November 20th, 2020, she posted a video titled *Tickle Fish @bobthedragqueen,* in which she is getting a pedicure alongside another drag queen known as Bob the Drag Queen (Monét X Change 2020). This highlights her broad network, as she consistently makes appearances in the TikToks of other queens and content creators, and shares numerous similar videos on her own account. Even when not directly featured, many often leave comments on her videos (Aquaria 2021; Laganja Estranja 22; Plastique Tiara 2022). This, coupled with other factors to be discussed later, suggests an extroverted personality—a characteristic not uncommon in drag queens, given that their profession revolves around dancing, singing, acting, and overall stage presence.

On her account, one can find numerous videos of Monét X Change striking poses in drag or sharing brief clips from her performances, exemplified in her video *Tis' the Season!* from December 23rd, 2020 (Monét X Change 2020). However, as previously noted, the content on these queens' accounts extends beyond their professional lives and includes glimpses into their daily activities. In many instances, Monét X Change shares videos featuring her pet cat. For example, there is a video from January 21st, 2021, titled *POV: You're officially on Cat Tok*, another from January 24th, 2021, named *I can't wait to live by myself*, and one from October 7th, 2021, titled *Maybe? Ionno* (Monét X Change 2021a; 2021b; 2021c). Concerning viewer interaction, Monét differs from Dylan Mulvaney as she is less engaged with her audience. When she does engage, it usually involves responding to comments and engaging with content from other TikTok creators, as illustrated in the screenshot from the video *Reply to @coreynlee how very dare you!* dated September 11th, 2021 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Audience

engagement

Monét could easily be categorized as an artist through her involvement in drag; however, this classification becomes even more apparent when examining her content approach. Throughout her account, the quality of her videos varies, contingent on whether they pertain to work or are simply daily vlogs documenting her life. In instances where the content is related to drag, events, or shows, her videos showcase higher quality with meticulous editing, a more distant perspective, enhanced backgrounds, and improved music As demonstrated in the video "Skimmy Minnie" from November 7th, 2023 (Monét X Change 2023). The heightened production quality and visual refinement evident in her drag videos strongly showcase her artistic flair.

Conversely, vlogs featuring her out of drag, without makeup, wearing basic attire, and usually at home, are filmed with lower quality and feature rudimentary editing. Her vlogs, characterized by a more straightforward production and editing style, convey a heightened sense of intimacy and authenticity, appealing directly to her audience's desire for a relatable and genuine connection. While her drag videos probably occur in a controlled and meticulously arranged setting, her vlogs, filmed with a more straightforward production style, convey a spontaneous and unfiltered viewpoint, as exemplified in a previous video titled *I Can't Wait to Live by Myself* (Monét X Change 2021). There's a possibility that these vlogs capture moments in real time, perhaps even while Monét casually browses TikTok, given that her vlog content often involves reactions and commentary on other people's videos. This approach enhances her authenticity, presenting her as relatable and akin to an everyday social media user.

4.2.2 Body language

Monét's body language has remained consistent throughout her account. Referring back to her aforementioned debut video, *Tis' the Season!*, she has radiated a strong sense of confidence since the beginning. When comparing it to the video *I Just Wanna Be a Stallion* from November 12th, 2022, which is two years later, and also to the already mentioned *Skimmy Minnie*, there has been no alteration in how she presents herself outwardly. Her walk is commanding, her shoulders relaxed, her gestures natural yet deliberate, and she maintains direct eye contact, all indicative of her confidence (Monét X Change 2020; 2022; 2023).

Similar to Mulvaney's videos, Monét's content is frequently filmed in close proximity. She maintains steady eye contact with the camera, and the angle is either slightly looking upwards or horizontally aligned with Monét's gaze, as seen in the video *Sibling Tokery* from August 9th, 2021 (Monét X Change 2021). This further corresponds with her appearance, reflecting confidence, assertiveness, and a dominant personality.

4.2.1 Visual self-representation

In terms of her appearance, Monét is incredibly attention-grabbing. From her clothing to her hairstyle, she often embraces vibrant colors, as seen in the video *I Felt So KUHNT!* from November 11th, 2022 (Monét X Change 2022). Unlike other queens, her style tends to be more experimental. She's not afraid to incorporate unconventional pieces, such as in the video *For 2 Years* from April 17th, 2023, where she covers her entire head in stones, as seen in Figure 8. Going back to her very first video, *Iss Poppin'*, she even wears a mask made of dish sponges, showcasing her bold and creative approach to fashion (Monét X Change 2020). Another example is her lion one-piece suit in *Scar Gettin' a Lil Thicc* from August 27th, 2022 (Monét X Change 2022). These instances demonstrate her strong confidence in herself and how others perceive her. She exudes a glamorous yet slightly funky vibe. Furthermore, the fact that she appears bare-faced in most of her videos, often from unflattering angles, indicates that she knows she looks great regardless of what she wears and doesn't pay much heed to other's opinions.

Figure 8: Blue stone
       look

4.2.2   Self-representation through speech

Unlike Dylan Mulvaney, although her outward appearance suggests otherwise, Monét does not entirely conform to traditional feminine norms but rather embodies characteristics more aligned with the mannerisms often associated with the gay community's way of speaking. However, similar to Mulvaney, she does not exhibit a lisp. Monét communicates with a lot of energy, expressing herself loudly and with vibrant tones, often talking at a fast pace. This dynamic approach reflects her enthusiasm and assertiveness, characteristics that align with her inner personality, as discussed earlier. She exudes self-assurance, happiness, openness, and friendliness. Analyzing the video titled *Actual tears* from January 5th, 2023, Monét X Change's speech is enriched with slang expressions such as *y'all*, and *lil*, along with informal grammar, such as *that don't work* (Monét X Change 2023). Furthermore, she incorporates occasional profanity such as *damn*, which was mentioned in the previous video, *bitch,* and *fuckin*, to underscore her points, contributing to the comedic essence of her content, as illustrated in the video titled *#greenscreen rating my S10 looks* from May 10th, 2022 (Monét X Change 2022).

4.3 Violet Chachki

Violet Chachki began her online journey on January 29th, 2022, by posting a brief lip-sync video without a title (Violet Chachki 2022). Similar to her peers, the majority of her videos adhere to a vlog format, as demonstrated in the video *The Real Mommie Dearest* from July 29th, 2023 (Violet Chachki 2022). However, sporadically, she shares glimpses of her

professional life, including interviews or recordings of her drag performances, which are professionally produced by a crew, as seen on February 24ᵗʰ, 2024, titled *If I could clone myself, I'd never leave the house* (Violet Chachki 2024).

4.3.1 Content dynamics

At present, her content predominantly focuses on fashion, as evidenced by the screenshot from *Don't say I never taught you anything! My 2024 Calendar featuring my iconic costumes is available now on VioletChachki.com* from November 9ᵗʰ, 2023 (Figure 9). However, she occasionally includes the types of videos that she initially introduced her account with, such as close-up lip-syncs or other playful content, as shown in the screenshot of *bye we moved to bikini bottom #spongebob* from June 16ᵗʰ, 2023 (Chachki 2023a; 2023b) (Figure 10). Most of her videos where she's not in drag depict relaxed environments, giving off the vibe of intimate chats, much like the video *Working it smoochie* from July 7ᵗʰ, 2023 (Chachki 2023). On the other hand, her videos where she's in drag tend to emphasize her visual presentation without much speaking, similar to the screenshot provided (Figure 9). Much like Mulvaney and Monét X Change, these out-of-drag videos exude a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere. However, when viewed alongside her other content, they convey a dual message: she's relatable like us, yet she also embodies a celebrity status.

Figure 9: Violet Chachki's fashion content

Figure 10: Violet Chachki's playful content

Violet Chachki projects an image of supreme confidence, bordering on arrogance, yet this persona is integral to her performance. Renowned for her bold and glamorous stage presence, she embodies an unapologetic and empowered character. The external appearance

aligns with the internal persona as well. When in drag, Chachki exudes a captivating blend of elegance and intimidation, yet outside of drag, she also reveals a surprisingly playful side. Highlighting this subtle change, we can compare *Gemini season let's go* from September 9th, 2023, to the previously mentioned *bye we moved to bikini bottom #spongebob* video (Chachki 2023c; 2023b). It's plausible to interpret her drag persona as a means of amplifying and exploring traits she may hesitate to express in her natural state. Nevertheless, while her drag persona may be more theatrical, it remains an exaggerated reflection of her authentic self. This is evident in her interview video *Michelin star restaurants are OUT. I don't care about your artistry I just want a good meal!* from December 29th, 2023, (Chachki 2023), where she appears out of drag yet unmistakably mirrors her drag persona. Essentially, it serves as a form of escapism, enabling her to freely explore and live out her fantasies without inhibition or societal constraints.

Her account doesn't boast as much content as the other two accounts, and she isn't as consistent with updates. While her uploading frequency increased over two years, it still lacks regularity. Violet Chachki tends to share multiple videos from a single day or event and then takes breaks from uploading for extended periods. For instance, there's a 17-day gap between her video *We did it we did it* posted on January 11th, 2024, and *Tries to be a tick tocker once* on January 29th, 2024 (Chachki 2024). Typically, this irregularity in her social media activity might suggest a lack of interest but given the confident and extravagant persona she exudes in her videos, this assumption doesn't hold. Her inconsistency in posting could be a deliberate strategy to heighten the desirability of her content. By maintaining an aura of exclusivity, she generates anticipation among her followers, who eagerly await her next upload, uncertain of when it will arrive. However, verifying this theory is challenging, as it's not yet reflected in the view counts on her videos, which tend to be lower than those of the other two creators.

4.3.1 Body language

Similar to her peers, Chachki's body language exudes confidence, yet she presents it with a different energy. Her movements blend femininity with a subtle hint of sexual allure, as observed in the video *you could never* from August 13th, 2023 (Chachki 2023). In contrast to the more open vibe of Monét X Change and Dylan Mulvaney, who display expressive gestures and powerful walks, Chachki's movements appear more calculated and elegant, reminiscent of seduction. Even outside of drag, she maintains a relaxed demeanor, with her femininity still evident in her gestures. For instance, in the interview titled *Michelin star*

restaurants are OUT. I don't care about your artistry I just want a good meal! she sits with crossed legs and employs sensual hand movements, further highlighting her distinctive style of body language. Her posture is notably upright, conveying a strong sense of self-assurance and an air of authority (Figure 11) (Chachki 2023). Similarly, her gaze reinforces this notion, as unlike the others, many videos are filmed from a perspective where the viewer looks up at her, indicating dominance. Often positioned slightly farther away than the others, yet still engaging with the audience.
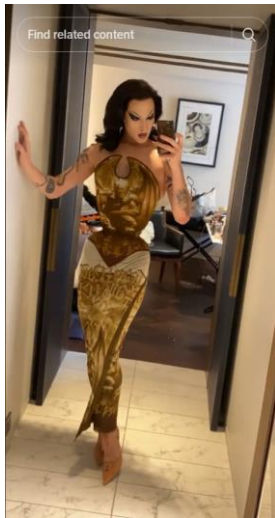
Figure 11:

Body language

4.3.2 Self-representation through speech

Violet Chachki's style diverges from the flamboyant norm of drag queen attire, yet it impeccably reflects her persona: poised, refined, and exuding an air of luxury. When it comes to her attire in drag, her style typically straddles the line between avant-garde and vintage, maintaining a balance of timeless classic beauty while also embracing elements of sensuality and allure, as seen in her outfit featured in the screenshot from *Ur dead 2 me* on July 7th, 2023 (Figure 12) (Chachki 2023). However, her wardrobe also includes numerous contemporary pieces, as seen in the video *you could never* (Figure 13) (Violet Chachki 2023). Her attire tends to be somewhat provocative and tight-fitting, complemented by large and intriguing accessories. While her elaborate ensembles often steal the spotlight, her makeup plays an equally crucial role in completing the overall look. Characterized by daring eye makeup, particularly emphasizing uplifted eye corners to make a bold statement, she exudes an aura of intimidation and drama. Her hair, although a wig, is usually kept elegantly simple with soft curls, typically in black or another natural hue, eschewing the elaborate wigs favored by other queens in favor of a more subdued aesthetic (Figure 10).

Figure 12:   **Figure 13:**

Classic look   Contemporary look

4.3.3   Verbal and non-verbal self-representation

Violet Chachki's manner of speaking stands out, especially when compared to the others. She tends to adopt a casual communication style, yet her delivery is infused with a confidence that demands attention. Her tone, while not particularly high-pitched, maintains a soft quality, and she tends to speak at a slower pace. Regarding her facial expressions, she often emphasizes her communication through her eyes. She also lacks a lisp, like the rest, however, is distinguished by the most identifiable accent, commonly known as *the Valley girl* speech. This style is marked by a relaxed tone, vocal fry, and coarticulation, with frequent use of filler words such as *like*, or *totally* in sentences (Pratt and D'Onofrio 2017, 287-288). Returning to the *Michelin star restaurants are OUT. I don't care about your artistry I just want a good meal!* interview, the accent is clearly discernible, accompanied by the frequent use of filler word *like* (Chachki 2023).

CONCLUSION

In addition to contextualizing the drag, the theoretical framework provides a thorough examination of self-representation, delving into its various dimensions, including verbal and non-verbal cues such as body language and speech patterns, particularly within gay communities. However, at its core, self-representation is intricately linked to gender. The text emphasizes the essential distinction between sex and gender, emphasizing how gender is molded by the environment and significantly impacts how we portray ourselves. By exploring these aspects, the thesis sheds light on the nuanced dynamics of self-representation in today's society.

By examining the content of Dylan Mulvaney, Monét X Change, and Violet Chachki, we have navigated the intricacies of self-representation in the digital realm. Through TikTok as our main platform of analysis, we've honed in on aspects like content dynamics, body self-presentation, visual self-representation, as well as self-Representation through Speech, to understand how they collectively shape our online persona.

Dylan Mulvaney's account, initially emerging as a documentation of her journey, underwent significant change. The result of her self-representation is closely tied to her process of individual development. Her account thrives on relatable content, fostering a sense of community and facilitating personal exploration. Transitioning from appearing somewhat timid on the outside, she evolved into a multifaceted character thriving in her femininity.

Monét X Change and Violet Chachki, in contrast, have not experienced the same level of transformation as Dylan Mulvaney did. As seasoned queens, they have undergone personal growth outside of the TikTok audience's purview. However, their self-representation remains notable. Monét X Change's account vividly portrays her dynamic character, reflecting the fusion of her artistic flair with her outgoing nature. Her evolution is evident in the quality and diversity of her account.

Violet Chachki's TikTok account embodies her as an empowered individual both in and out of drag. With visually captivating content and an enigmatic personality, she epitomizes the image of a celebrity. Her evolution is evident in how she discovered herself and embraced her role as a TikTok influencer.

In conclusion, the examination of these three TikTok content creators underscores the diversity of approaches to online personas. These differences are manifested through a combination of verbal and non-verbal factors, interpersonal skills, and the impressions they

leave in the digital realm. However, above all, they all demonstrate the profound impact of gender transitions on both internal and external behaviors.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LGBT   First abbreviation – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender

LIST OF FIGURES