

“AS WE'VE SEEN THIS SEASON, ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN,
SO DON'T FUCK IT UP” –

IMPOLITENESS IN RUPAUL’S DRAG RACE SEASON 9

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract			
<p>Manifestations of impoliteness in the reality television program RuPaul’s Drag Race season 9 were examined in this thesis. The research was underlaid with theoretical introductions to gender and language studies, drag queens and their use of language, politeness theories, impoliteness theories and impoliteness in reality television. Culpeper’s (1996) impoliteness strategy model and Bousfield’s (2008) augmentations to it were accentuated as the essential framework of this study. The model was employed when assigning strategies to the impolite instances that emerged from the data consisting of videos and transcripts of episodes 1, 6, and 12 of RuPaul’s Drag Race season 9.</p> <p>This study set out to answer the following research questions: (1) which impoliteness strategies defined originally by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) are used in RuPaul’s Drag Race season 9 episodes 1, 6, and 12? (2) Are the strategies created by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) comprehensive enough for any and all instances of impoliteness that will emerge from the data? (3) Which of the categories that manifest in the data are most recurrent in the studied episodes? (4) How do the addressees of impoliteness react to impolite utterances in the series?</p> <p>Of all the possible 21 strategies, 15 emerged from the data. However, it turned out that Culpeper’s (1996) model with Bousfield’s (2008) additions to is not exhaustive enough to explicate any and all instances of impoliteness in the data. Therefore, Culpeper’s (1996) original strategy of sarcasm or mock impoliteness was replaced with the strategy of banter or mock impoliteness as no surface level politeness manifested in the form of sarcasm was found in the data. Moreover, 6 new strategies were coined to accommodate instances of impoliteness that did not correspond with the strategies of Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008). The strategies of condescend, scorn or ridicule, bald on record impoliteness, criticize, and banter or mock impoliteness emerged as the most frequently used strategies. As was hypothesized, the queens did not respond with a threat to a face attack that was made by RuPaul or one of the judges. Notwithstanding, the response patterns used by the contestants when attacked by another contestant varied too much to draw any conclusions from.</p> <p>Future research could focus on studying the development of impoliteness throughout the 10 seasons of RuPaul’s Drag Race. Moreover, as RuPaul’s Drag Race is a prominent progeny of American drag queen culture, the linguistic elements that manifest in it might affect how language use evolves in American drag queen culture at large. Consequently, future studies could also examine the effect RuPaul’s Drag Race has had on the language use of local communities of drag queens in America.</p>			
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<p>Tämä tutkimus tarkasteli RuPaul’s Drag Race tositelevisiosarjan yhdeksännessä kaudessa ilmeneviä epäkohteliaisuuden muotoja. Teoriaosio perehdytti lukijan sukupuolen tutkimukseen, drag tutkimukseen sekä epäkohteliaisuus tutkimukseen, joiden teoreettiset viitekehykset auttavat ymmärtämään sarjan luonnetta sekä pohjustavat sarjassa ilmenevien epäkohteliaisuus muotojen tulkintaa.</p> <p>Erityisesti Culpeperin (1996) epäkohteliaisuusmalli sekä Bousfieldin (2008) siihen tekemät lisäykset nostettiin tutkimuksen kannalta keskeiseksi teoreettiseksi viitekehykseksi, jonka avulla sarjan jaksoista 1, 6 ja 12 sekä vastaavista litteroinneista esiinnoisueille epäkohteliaisuuden ilmentymille kyettiin nimeämään ilmentymän luonnetta kuvaava strategia. Tutkimus pyrki vastaamaan neljään tutkimuskysymykseen: (1) Mitkä Culpeperin (1996) ja Bousfieldin (2008) epäkohteliaisuus strategiat esiintyvät RuPaul’s Drag Race tositelevisiosarjan yhdeksännen kauden jaksoissa 1, 6 ja 12? (2) Ovatko Culpeperin (1996) ja Bousfieldin (2008) strategiat tarpeeksi kattavia kuvataksaan jokaista mahdollista tutkimusmateriaalista esiin nousevaa epäkohteliaisuuden ilmentymää? (3) Mitkä strategiat esiintyvät tutkimusmateriaalissa useimmin? (4) Kuinka epäkohteliaisiin lausahduksiin reagoidaan sarjassa?</p> <p>Culpeperin (1996) ja Bousfieldin (2008) määrittelemistä 21 strategiasta 15 ilmeni tutkimusmateriaalissa. Tutkimuksessa kävi kuitenkin ilmi, etteivät Culpeperin (1996) ja Bousfieldin (2008) strategiat ole tarpeeksi tyhjentäviä tai sopivia selittääkseen kaikkia mahdollisia epäkohteliaisuuden ilmentymiä tutkimusmateriaalissa. Culpeperin (1996) alkuperäinen sarkasmi tai valheellinen epäkohteliaisuus strategia korvattiin uudella kiusoittelu tai valheellinen epäkohteliaisuus strategialla, koska tutkimusmateriaalissa ei ilmentynyt sarkasmille olennaista pinnallista kohteliaisuutta, mutta pinnallinen epäkohteliaisuus ilmeni selkeästi kiusoittelussa. Tutkimuksessa ilmeni myös tapauksia, jotka eivät vastanneet yhtäkään Culpeperin (1996) tai Bousfieldin (2008) strategiaa. Näiden tapauksien luonnetta kuvamaan keksittiin kuusi täysin uutta strategiaa.</p> <p>Kaikista yleisimmät tutkimusmateriaalissa esiintyneet strategiat olivat halveksunta, ylenkatsominen sekä pilkkaaminen, suorasukainen epäkohteliaisuus, kritisointi sekä kiusoittelu tai valheellinen epäkohteliaisuus. Kuten oletettiin, drag kisaajat eivät vastanneet tuomareiden tai sarjan juontajan Rupaulin epäkohteliaisuuteen hyökkäämällä verbaalisesti heitä vastaan. Myös drag queenien keskinäisiä reaktioita tarkasteltiin, mutta ne vaihtelivat tilannekohtaisesti niin paljon, ettei niistä pystynyt tekemään selkeitä johtopäätöksiä.</p> <p>Jatkotutkimukset voisivat keskittyä tutkimaan epäkohteliaisuuden kehitystä kautta kausien RuPaul’s Drag Race-sarjassa. Koska sarja on näkyvä ja tunnettu amerikkalaisen drag queen kulttuurin kulttuurituote, voisi jatkotutkimus myös selvittää, onko sarja vaikuttanut amerikkalaisten drag yhteisöjen kielelliseen ilmaisuun.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on examining the occurrences of impoliteness in the context of the reality television program RuPaul's Drag Race. Drag is a form of self-expression practiced typically on the stage by cis¹ gay men whose performances caricature femininity. To create an impression of fantastic yet to an extent plausible womanhood the queens use shared symbols such as words, actions and objects to construct an identity that mixes aspects of both femininity and masculinity. While drag queens strive to efface masculine traits from their appearance by using flamboyant make up, excessive wigs and padding to give themselves a curvy figure, the amplitude of the drag identity manifests in speech used by the queens.

Most linguistic inquiries into drag have concentrated on drag queens' negotiation of gender and group identity through language use (cf. Barrett 1999; Mann 2011; Moore 2013; Simmons 2014). Mann (2011: 805) provides an example of the way Suzanne, a Southern Belle drag queen, uses language when interacting with members of the audience during her performance.

(1)

“1. You're nineteen? Oh, good, I won't feel bad about drinking a cocktail.

Huh? Get you a

2. cocktail? I got, I got cock and tail. That's all you need, honey. That's all you fucking

¹ Cis (or cisgender) refers to people whose gender identity and gender expression align with the gender that was assigned to them at birth

3. need, baby.”

(from Mann 2011: 805)

As can be seen, Suzanne combines elements traditionally associated both with women’s language (the term of endearment honey used by southern women) and men’s language (the expletive fucking) to create a stark juxtaposition of her sassy speech style and the traditional stereotypes of femininity associated with the Southern Belle look. This manner of gender expression is in line with Eckert and McConnell-Ginet’s (1992: 462) proposition according to which gender and ways of using language should be viewed as interacting in the everyday social practices of local communities and seen as jointly constructed in those practices rather than as universal fixed features predetermined and attributed to individuals by faceless abstractions such as society.

Research on impoliteness within the context of drag is scarce by contrast, with McKinnon (2017) being one of the few linguists to study impoliteness in the backstage talk of drag queens. While there is no comprehensive consensus as to what exactly constitutes impoliteness, Bousfield and Locher (2008:3) note that impolite utterances are agreed to “have an impact on the ties between social actors”. It can be described as behavior that intentionally aims to aggravate the addressee, although such a definition is a mere simplification of this complex social phenomenon. The aim of this paper is to expand the knowledge on drag queens’ use of impolite language by analyzing episodes 1, 6, and 12 from season 9 of the American reality television series RuPaul’s Drag Race by means of impoliteness strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) and augmented by Bousfield’s (2008). The strategies present a taxonomy of ways in which impolite intent can manifest in a written or spoken utterance and help construe the elusive nature of impoliteness.

Episodes 1, 6, and 12 of RuPaul’s Drag Race (henceforth referred to as RPDR) season 9 will be analyzed with the intention of answering the following research questions:

1. Which impoliteness strategies defined originally by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) are used in RuPaul’s Drag Race season 9 episodes 1, 6, and 12?

2. Are the strategies created by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) comprehensive enough for any and all instances of impoliteness that will emerge from the data?
3. Which of the categories that manifest in the data are most recurrent in the studied episodes?
4. How do the addressees of impoliteness react to impolite utterances in the series?

This study hypothesizes that the strategies of *use of taboo words*, *call the other names*, and *condescend, scorn and ridicule* will emerge among the most frequently used strategies in the data because they sustain the (stereotypical) notion of a sassy drag queen.

However, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003:1560) point out that impoliteness strategies tend to be combined in extended discourse and across a participant's turn. Thus, it is likely that any one utterance consists of a combination of strategies. Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003: 1560) report that the *use of taboo words* strategy emerged as the most likely to be combined with other strategies in their data consisting of filmed real-life interactions between traffic wardens and car owners.

(2)

“[-] S1: the car is going he has a

S2: *what the fuck you doing . excuse me what are you fucking doing*

S3:

<S2 hits S1 in mouth- S1 starts speed dialing on the phone>

S1: court order police please yeah <indistinct>

S2: really . *you want some fucking money right*

S3: *all you have*

S1: you can't

S2: all you have to do is ask for the money *you don't have to fucking take the car*

S3: *to do is ask for the fucking money right*

S1: get in the car madam

S2: piss off <indistinct>

S3:

Jackie come here”

(from Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003: 1557)

The above example provided by Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003: 1557) depicts a conversation between a man, a woman and a court bailiff. The car owner combines two of Culpeper’s (1996) impoliteness strategies, the strategy of *challenge* with the strategy of *use of taboo words*, to form the impolite utterance *what the fuck you doing?* with which he addresses the court bailiff whose assistant is loading his car onto a truck. Culpeper’s (1996) impoliteness strategy model will be introduced in detail in section 3.4. As the drag queens on RPDR are prone to swearing, it is fair to hypothesize that the *use of taboo words* strategy is the most likely to be combined with other strategies in the data of this thesis as well, particularly because relationships are routinely forged in ways that favor (non)verbal conflict and aggression across genres of reality television (Lorenzodus and Blitvich 2013: 2).

The present thesis is structured around six chapters. The first three introduce the theoretical background of the thesis. The subject and the research questions of this paper have been introduced in chapter one. Then chapter two will proceed to introduce gender and language studies whereas chapter three explicates the elusive nature of impoliteness. Chapter four will introduce the materials and the methods of the thesis whereas chapter five present the empirical part of the study. The thesis ends in chapter six where the findings will be discussed.

2 GENDER AND LANGUAGE

Gender and language studies have traditionally investigated how women and men use language, how language is used to speak of the two genders, or how social norms shape and enforce gendered speech. While traditional approaches to gender and language studies tend to disregard the diversity of gender, the field has later come to acknowledge, they nevertheless address the dichotomous stereotypes ascribed to women and men. As drag queens are typically cis gay men who impersonate womanhood through their drag personas by means of adopting mannerisms, symbols and signifiers that are coded as stereotypically feminine, it is beneficial to get first acquainted with the rules the queens break in constructing their unique form of gender expression before moving on to the subject of drag itself. This chapter will first introduce the backdrop of gender and language studies after which the chapter moves on to discuss the context of drag. Finally, the chapter ends in a section about the language used by drag queens.

Lakoff (1973a) was among the first researchers to address the linguistic disparity of women and men in her seminal article *Language and woman's place*, which at the time impelled many people even outside of academic circles to reflect on language use as an indicator of power relations (Mills 2002: 165). Lakoff (1973a: 45) believes that women's powerlessness and marginality are reflected both in the ways women are socialized to use language and the ways language is used to speak of women. She views women as generally more polite and more subservient language users than men. Lakoff (1973a: 45) argues that socially appropriate women's speech favors expression of uncertainty over strong expression of feeling, for women are stereotypically expected to be considerate of their interlocutors' face wants and to avoid imposition of their own opinions.

However, as meaningful as Lakoff's (1973) hypothesis has been for the progression of both politeness studies as well as gender and language studies, it has been criticized for its stereotyping and introspective approach that lacks empirical basis. Lakoff's (1973a) analysis seems to uphold the stereotype of submissive women without presenting any

alternative options for consideration, and focuses only on a very narrow and small group of women consisting of middle-class, white, Anglo-Americans she knew personally (Mills 2002:166; cf. Cameron et al. 1988; Mizokami 2001). Mills (2003 :203) points out that feminist research has contested these kinds of gendered stereotypes for many years now and remarks that the stereotypes have transmuted due to women's increasing participation in the public sphere.

Mills (2002: 166) also observes that in the 1980s and the 1990s the focus of feminist linguistics shifted from the analysis of imbalanced power dynamics of men and women as such to the analysis of socially constructed differences between women's and men's language (cf. Tannen 1991; Coates 1988, 1996). Tannen (1991:111) claims that men and women talk differently because their speech aims for different objectives: women are supposedly concerned with maintaining interpersonal relationships, hence wanting to ensure that conversations go smoothly, whilst men use speech to negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order. However, Tannen's (1991) difference approach has been criticized for its inability to recognize the inequality that persists in many relations between women and men, and for its reactionary political stance (Mills 2002:166; c.f. Troemel-Ploetz 1998; Cameron et al. 1998).

Research on gender and language has been overall contradictory, as generalizations about men and women as exclusive homogenous groups have often been discovered to be untenable. Consequently, in recent years gender has begun to be conceptualized and theorized outside of the restrictive and rigid binary opposition of women and men (Mills 2002: 169). Bing and Bergvall (1996:1) draw attention to the societal habit of dividing people into the categories of female and male, which are imbedded with knowledge about both the biological and cultural differences of the two. These binary categorizations may initially seem natural as they are supported by seemingly obvious differences, yet much of humans' experiences do not fit neatly into the dichotomous categories.

Mills (2002:170) states that today many feminists actually view gender as performative, and thus as a potential site of struggle over perceived restrictions in roles, rather than as a

dogmatic set of behaviors which is imposed upon the individual by society. Yet, Bing and Bergvall (1996:1) note that because language is biased towards dichotomy and clear boundaries for the sake of clarity and efficient data processing in the human brain, the scalar values and unclear boundaries of reality are sometimes hard to accept. Thus, it is necessary that people keep in mind that language and reality can conflict.

Moreover, essentialist notions of identity are incontrovertibly problematic in relation to individuals whose gender expression does not align with either female or male. Rather than trying to attribute supposedly innate and universally applicable characteristics to any gender, it is more fruitful to consider gender in terms of the effects of certain kind of socialization, social norms of the observed community and the contexts of the gendered interaction. Even though the queens build their drag upon gendered stereotypes, the femininity they perform differs from the traditional stereotype of a woman in speech styles and sets of behaviors.

2.1 The context of drag

Drag queens are an iconic form of entertainment, especially within the larger LGBT+ community. Consequently, the nature of drag seems to be treated as a cultural given by a number of scholars of drag, transvestism, and cross-dressing which results in elusive definitions of what it actually means to be “in drag” (Moore 2013: 18). The most common, and perhaps overly simplified and rigidly gendered definition of drag relates drag typically to cis gay men who dress in feminine clothes (c.f. Newton 1979; Grigg 1998). However, Moore (2013: 19) criticizes definitions of drag that focus rigidly on the relation of the body and gender coded clothing for excluding a number of drag practices, particularly those that are performed by people other than cis men. As drag is a play on gender, the gender identity of the performer is not as relevant to the success of the performance as one might believe. Consequently, it is more inclusive to characterize drag queens as individuals, regardless of gender, who imitate and reproduce stereotypical aspects of womanhood through their drag personas. As most of the contestants in RuPaul’s Drag Race are cis gay

men is, this study will approach the subject of drag particularly from the point of view of male drag queens, though.

Albeit drag is a cheeky and flashy form of entertainment, Schacht and Underwood (2008) report that drag performances have played significant roles in the history by raising the morale of the troops during World War I and World War II. Simmons (2013:631) reminds that drag queens have also influenced pivotal social justice actions as they have been credited with the start of Stonewall riot leading to the gay liberation movement in the United States. Yet, Simmons (2013:631) notes that drag queens often experience marginalization even throughout the queer community despite their historical role. Namaste (2002: 12) explains that the queens are often considered appropriate only on the stage which reduces them to entertainers whose only purpose is to excite the male viewer. Relegating drag to the venue of the stage effaces the manifold gendered experience of the queens while institutionalizing only certain kinds of gender expressions appropriate for gay men.

Notwithstanding, Schacht and Underwood (2008: 4) remark that drag queens and their fellow kings demonstrate that gender does not need to be an either/or proposition and that there are actually numerous ways in which gender can be performed and experienced. That being said, Taylor and Rupp (2008: 115) point out it is debatable whether drag queens are more gender-conservatives than gender revolutionaries, as drag challenges the gender binary while relying on established stereotypes. As drag queens appropriate gender displays associated with traditional femininity and institutionalized heterosexuality, some scholars think of drag as primarily reinforcing dominant assumptions about the dichotomous gender binary. Others, on the other hand, view drag in the context of gay community as more a transgressive action that destabilizes gender and sexual categories by making visible the social basis of femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, and presenting hybrid and minority genders and sexualities. (Taylor and Rupp 2008: 115).

However, Barret (1999:315) argues that drag queens do not intend to chaff women for their appearances but rather reject the notion of disparaging women. Barret (1999:315) goes on to propose that the misconception of drag being derogatory of women stems from the misinformed notion that gay drag queens produce similar kind of performances to white wealthy cis straight men who put on transvestite shows as a sort of male bonding experience. The performances of the gay men and straight men are quite different both in content and intention, though. Nevertheless, appropriating feminine coded clothes on masculine appearing bodies mainly for entertainment is adverse to trans women who are put at a disadvantage by being associated with groups of cis men who wear women's clothing for fun. By erroneous affiliation they, too, might be seen as men who only try to imitate women instead the women they really are.

As a matter of fact, transphobia within the drag industry has been under discussion recently due to the transphobic statements of the host of the RPDR, RuPaul, and the transphobic elements within the show itself. Controversy regarding the transphobia on the show emerged in 2014. According to Molloy (2014) one of the season 6 mini challenges challenged the contestants to a game called *Female or Shemale* where they had to determine whether they were shown a picture of a cis woman or a drag queen. GLAAD's (Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) (2017) transgender media reference guide provides an informative list of examples of defamatory language that advises to avoid slurs such as *tranny* and *shemale* as they dehumanize transgender people. *Shemale* is a derogatory term which originates from porn industry and fetishizes people with both breasts and a penis. Up until the commotion caused by the mini challenge the contestants also used to receive she-mail (a pun of the derogatory term) in a segment that gave them instructions regarding their next challenge.

While the show may have been groomed because of the uproar that was caused by the offensive game, Rupaul's transphobic attitudes are not as easy to change. The transphobic slur *tranny* appears both in the title and the lyrics of RuPaul's song *Tranny Chaser* released in 2009. According to Signorile (2012) RuPaul has commented on another celebrity's public apology for using the slur by declaring that he considered the apology unnecessary because people who get offended by the slur are too sensitive. Some of the seasons of

RPDR have even starred pre-operation trans women, but it has not changed RuPaul's views. In fact, in 2018 RuPaul told the Guardian that he probably would not let transitioned trans women compete in RPDR because, in his opinion, the changes that happen to the body during the transition change the whole concept of drag (Aitkenhead 2018). It is this kind of controversy that is associated with the program and the people who work for it that sets RPDR up as possessing an inherent impolite quality unlike any other similar competitive reality television series. Yet, despite his own attitude towards slurs, RuPaul admits he is sometimes taken aback by the crude language used by younger generation of queens (Aitkenhead 2018). The next section proceeds to talk about the ways the queens use language.

2.1.1 Speaking like a queen

“Well, one of the things that the kids do now is they’ll say, referring to another drag queen, ‘Oh that bitch is cunt, she is pure cunt’, which means she is serving realness,” -- “They say it knowing it’s shocking, knowing it’s taboo, and it’s the same way that black people use the N-word.” (Rupaul 2018)

As drag is founded on the stereotype of feminine behavior the queens adopt mannerisms stereotypically associated with women to help them construct their drag identities and to make them recognizably feminine in the eyes of the audience. As language use contributes to habitus² and assigns a locatable identity, male drag queens can create and sustain the illusion of womanhood through their speech, albeit it can be simultaneously used to disclose the fact that there is more to the woman on stage than meets the eye. Mann's (2011) research on language used by Suzanne, a European-American drag queen who works with a predominantly African-American cast, reveals that Suzanne uses

² Habitus refers to durable and transposable dispositions inculcated through explicit and implicit socialization which structure and regulate an individual's behavior and representations. These dispositions are linked to social dimensions such as gender and social class and manifest in the fashion with which the person speaks, walks, eats, and so on (Bourdieu 1977).

linguistic elements of Southern U.S English, gay men's English, stereotyped white woman's English, stereotyped masculine language and African-American Vernacular English throughout her performance to construct an identity that blurs the traditional lines of gender and allows her to accommodate a diverse set of interlocutors. Mann (2011:808) reports that Suzanne's use of linguistic features such as the person deixis *honey* (commonly used by southern women) and expletives (commonly associated with masculine speech styles) allow her to construct her drag identity in ways that utilize creative combinations of linguistic form, linguistic content and physical appearance.

Indeed, in navigating a complex multilayered identity the queens not only utilize features associated with women's language but also use features associated with men's speech such as swearing and assertiveness. For example:

(3)

“1 Bunny: Oh, I'm *so* glad you think *so* highly of yourself Hugh.

2 Hugh. You ok? It's alright?

3 *Oh my god*. We're gonna start off with track number ten, Tim.

4 We're gonna do a little toast.

5 For you guys who have never heard my toast before—look out
cause it's *kinda cute*.

6 If you've heard it before and you, and you, you're tired of it?

7 Me too, so too *fuckin'* bad.”

(from Labotka 2009: 21)

Italics have been added to emphasize the relevant linguistic features in the example. In the example Bunny, the middle-class, white, gay male drag show hostess whose speech Labotka (2009) has studied uses the intensifier *so*, the lexical item *oh my god* and an empty adjective *kinda cute* associated with women's speech while also using the profane intensifier *fucking* associated stereotypically with masculine speech styles.

Barret (1999) attributes the combination of women's language with features from men's speech to the inherent motivation within drag to give away the "false" nature of the performance. However, Labotka's (2009) research on drag hostess Bunny's front and backstage use of women's language reveals that women's language is not necessarily tied only to the performance of womanhood; on front stage Bunny used women's language to perform a diva persona while on backstage she used features of women's language as part of her regular gay register, thus confirming that women's language can be used to negotiate complex multidimensional social identities that share the association of lack of power.

According to Simmons (2013:631) numerous studies made of drag queens indicate that the queens have a culturally unique way of speaking (cf. Barrett 1994, 1995a, b, 1997, 1998; Mann 2011). For instance, Johnsen (2008:153) points out the queens seem to frequently use linguistic gender inversion by referring to both female and male referents with feminine coded words such as *slut* or *bitch*. Moore (2013), too, observes similar kind of language phenomenon in RuPaul's Drag Race. The intro of the show ends in a phrase "*gentlemen start your engines...and may the best woman win!*". Moore (2013:21) defines such an infraction between signifier and signified as linguistic drag and offers the following explanation:

"Linguistic drag, as illustrated by the juxtaposition of gentlemen/women, is the use of language to perform the central sleight-of-hand of the drag performer, enfolding transformation and transgression in the gendered restrictive confines of grammar (see Butler 2008). This grammatical cross-dressing uses the

performative moment, a place where inflection shifts meanings and calls to question the easy relationship between signifier and signified.”

Much like how the queens implement contradictory linguistic features associated both with women and men in their speech, they also use linguistic artifices such as infraction between signifier and signified to indicate the multidimensional nature of drag performances. According to Moore (2013:21) the juxtaposition of *gentlemen* and *women* in RPDR makes visible the performer’s biological reality while also calling attention to the transformation into a woman. As Moore (2013:21) puts it, “linguistic drag calls into question fixed identities by playing with the presence, or absence, of the signified. The putting on and taking off of clothes is mimicked by the language used.”

Simmons (2013), too, has studied particular ways of speaking in RuPaul’s Drag Race: Season Four. Simmons (2013:645) observes that aspects of drag queen speech code that stood out the most to him in the series relate to the code “of sisterhood” that obliges the queens to speak and behave in a manner that helps maintain the collective and upholds values important within the American drag queen community. However, as an incidental effect of sisterhood in RuPaul’s Drag Race season 4 comes what Simmons labels as “sibling rivalry”. Simmons (2013:643) illustrates that sibling rivalry reveals culturally appropriate ways of engaging in communicative conflict such as ‘barking’ or stating one’s annoyance and moving on, and that one must not throw the other “under the bus” to improve one’s own name and reputation. This approach to accepted forms of conflict needs to be considered when assessing impoliteness in the way American drag queens speak in RuPaul’s Drag Race Season 9 as well. Context, in addition to other reconstructive elements such as power, rights and obligations of the interactants play a crucial role in reaching a plausible interpretation of the intention of an utterance (Bousfield 2008:74).

2.1.2 Banter and throwing shade

Banter is a linguistic activity that is an essential part of drag queens use of language. It is closely related to and sometimes equated with mock impoliteness, a form of impoliteness that is typically considered to arise between two or more people who share an intimate relationship. Haugh and Culpeper (2014:226) regard mock impoliteness as the opposite of genuine impoliteness, as it consists of impolite forms whose effects are, at least theoretically for the most parts, cancelled by the context and the intimacy of the relationship of the interlocutors. Leech (1983: 144) delineates the workings of banter by explicating that when speaker says something that is obviously untrue and obviously impolite the hearer should be able to reach the intended interpretation that the impolite utterance is meant to be taken as polite.

Culpeper (1996: 352) elaborates that banter also exists as specific type of language activity that has taken ritualized form in certain communities. “Sounding” or “playing the dozens”, as some forms of banter are known in America, occur particularly among black adolescents (Culpeper 2011: 210). Similar kind of practices based on mock impoliteness and banter exist among drag queens as well known as “reading” and “throwing shade”. Corey (1990), a veteran drag queen, explains that throwing shade originated from reading, the practice of imaginative insulting between members of the gay community. The insulter “reads” their target by commenting on their flaws, such as badly done make up, in an exaggerating, witting and mocking fashion. Throwing shade, however, is a more refined form of insulting, or as Corey (1990) puts it, “shade is, ‘I don’t tell you you’re ugly, but I don’t have to tell you because you know you’re ugly’”. Moore (2013:25) illustrates that throwing shade is “a highly developed form of insult that is both personalized and used between drag queens as a form of social performance that confers social prestige based on accuracy and competency in performance.”

While throwing shade establishes social prestige, McKinnon (2017) suggests that impoliteness that occurs in reading is typically positively evaluated by in-group members as the practice helps build resistance to the hostility members of the LGBT+ community

face from homophobic people. Reading is incorporated into RuPaul's Drag Race, too, in the form of a mini challenge known as *Reading is Fundamental*, which is featured in seasons two to 10. During the challenge the contestants read each other's faults in aims of making everybody laugh. The queen who performs the best reading wins the challenge and will be granted a small advantage in the main challenge of the episode.

Notwithstanding, ambiguous humor such as banter and reading can be used "in the service of power to minimally disguise the oppressive intent, i.e. as a repressive discourse strategy" (Holmes 2000: 176). For instance, for low-status individuals who insult high-status individuals "jocular abuse often functions as a covert strategy for a face attack, a means of registering a veiled protest" (Holmes 2000: 174). Holmes (2000: 176) remarks that humor can be used to hedge face threats such as criticism, but also points out that a superior who criticizes a subordinate always demonstrates power and authority to some extent, regardless of the potential diluting properties of humor. Culpeper (2011: 215) also observes that jocular impoliteness can be perceived in different ways by different participants; some participants might understand jocular mockery in terms of mock impoliteness while others may interpret it as genuine impoliteness despite potentially recognizing that the impolite utterance was not necessarily meant to be taken as truly offensive. Bousfield (2012: 1102) states that the multipurpose nature of mock impoliteness provides for a slippage between evaluations of genuine impoliteness and mock impoliteness in interaction.

Consequently, Kothhoff (1996:299) argues that humor should not be straightforwardly equated with positive politeness. Kothhoff (1996:301) justifies her argument by stating that while humor can enhance group convergence and solidarity, it can also exclude people and affirm divergence. Indeed, bullies who jocularly abuse their victims are not unheard of. Grainger (2004) addresses the ambiguous nature of humor in relation to politeness in her study of humor in British hospital wards. Grainger (2004:57) reports that

"Even playful banter which is inclusive of both participants can have a controlling edge to it, while at the same time promoting a feeling of intimacy.

And exclusive teasing (which in this analysis is defined by a subtle combination of contextual knowledge, and the dynamics and content of the interaction) can be seen to operate at multiple relational levels, partly creating intimacy, but also carrying aggressive undertones and re-constructing the asymmetrical power relationship between patient and nurse.”

Boxer and Cortés-Conde's (1997:279) remark that teasing is a continuum from bonding to biting, a sentiment which Grainger (2004:57) supports as she states that “this type of verbal play tends to have “unstable frames” and therefore creates tension and is a risky strategy in terms of relational and identity work.” The next chapter will further introduce impoliteness and the theoretical framework of its scientific study.

3 DEFINING IMPOLITENESS

Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines impoliteness simply as “*not polite*”. Definitions that regard impoliteness as the reverse of politeness are not comprehensive enough to represent the scope of the social behavior that can be labeled as impolite, though. In fact, impoliteness research has originated from the theoretical framework of politeness studies as a reaction to the neglect and simplification of the concept of impoliteness within it. While there is no comprehensive consensus as to what precisely constitutes impoliteness, Bousfield and Locher (2008:3) outline the lowest common denominator of impoliteness as “behavior that is face-aggravating in a particular context”.

In trying to encompass the complex and elusive nature of impoliteness Culpeper (2011: 254) offers the following definition:

“Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person’s or a group’s identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively—considered “impolite”—when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant, that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence.”

Locher and Watts (2008) support the notion of impoliteness as defined by judgements made by social actors regarding the (assumedly) shared norms of appropriateness and inappropriateness of the social behavior of co-participants in an interaction. For instance, if an employee asks their colleague to instruct them with the use of a program their colleague is more familiar with but the colleague refuses to because they believe the asker

will not take responsibility for learning if they are always shown how things are done the interaction may be considered impolite by the asker's standards.

However, the asker must be able to recognize the face-aggravating behavior in their colleague's response in order reach the interpretation that what was said was impolite in the first place. As a matter of fact, recognition of speaker intention plays an important role in interpreting an utterance as impolite. Bousfield (2008:72) notes that the hearer must understand the intention of the speaker to threaten or damage the face of the hearer for impoliteness to be successful. Mooney (2004:9001) concurs and postulates that intention is reconstructed rather than retrieved by the hearer based on their experiential norms which Culpeper (2008:29) defines as acquired personal knowledge structures grounded on each individual's accumulative total life experience. Sometimes knowledge and experience gathered from past social incidents and the surrounding culture may not still be enough for the recipients to be able to reconstruct the impolite intention, though.

Lötjönen (2014:21) remarks that trying to interpret speaker intention is a problematic task, as much of it is probabilistic in nature. Nevertheless, Culpeper et al. (2003:1552) believe that even though it may be impossible to decipher the exact intentions of the speaker, it is still possible to reconstruct "plausible" intentions if adequate evidence is provided. Such evidence can present itself in the actions and words of the speaker. Bousfield (2008: 74) lists "the discursal roles of the participants, context, the activity type one is engaged in, previous events, affects between interactants and, of course, the power, rights and obligations of the interactants" as features that may provide adequate evidence of the speaker's intention for a plausible inference. Yet, impoliteness is not only implied by what is said and done but also by how. Prosody (that is to say, pitch, intonation, volume, speed and voice quality) can be deemed a central element in deciphering speaker intention and impoliteness (Culpeper et al. 2003:1552).

As face, the social public image of a person, is a central concept in the field of both politeness and impoliteness studies alike, the chapter will first explicate the concept of

face. Moving on, the chapter will then introduce the scientific framework of politeness studies to present the premises of impoliteness theories, after which the chapter will focus on establishing early impoliteness models. After this the reader will be familiarized with Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework which will be utilized in analyzing the data of this study while acknowledging Bousfield's (2008) augmentations to it. Finally, as the data of the study is garnered from a reality television program, the chapter will end in the introduction of impoliteness in reality television.

3.1 The concept of face

Goffman (1967:5) notes that humans are communal beings who are bound to have social encounters with other humans. In each of these encounters each interactant expresses their view of the situation and their evaluation of the participants involved in the interaction, including and especially of themselves, through a pattern of verbal and non-verbal acts. The assumption others form of the interactant based on the line of action they assume they have purposefully taken becomes a social value a person can effectively claim for themselves during a particular contact, which Goffman (1967:5) relates to the notion of face. Face is a concept that refers to the positive public self-image each individual aims to maintain when interacting with others. Goffman (1967:5) describes it as "an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image others may share".

Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988:61) derive their notion of face, which is a central concept to their theory of politeness, from that of Goffman's (1976) and define face as the public self-image that people invest emotional energy in, that must constantly be attended to in interaction and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced in social contact situations. However, Culpeper (2011:21) notes that Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) notion of face has been criticized for being biased towards an individualistic perspective, and for being unable to adequately account for the group dynamics of at least some "non-western" cultures (cf. Matsumoto 1988; Gu 1990; Nwoye 1992; Mao 1994). Bousfield (2008:37) provides a counterargument to this criticism by proposing that the researchers who contest

the role and strength of Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) concept of face outside of a western setting are confused about the function and purpose of negative face.

Bousfield (2008:40) believes that every individual enters into a social contact situation with expectations as to how they would prefer their faces to be constituted based on their own feeling of self-worth and their understanding of the context of previous, similar encounters. Goffman (1967:6) reports that the face interaction with others allows the interactant to claim tends to be followed by an immediate emotional response as a person cathects their face, meaning that their feelings become attached to it. If the encounter sustains an established image of the interactant they have long taken for granted, the contact situation is not likely to stir a particularly strong emotional response in the interactant. However, the encounter is likely to engender a positive response if it sustains an image of the interactant that is better than they might have originally expected. In a similar fashion, the encounter will engender a negative response if the interactant's ordinary expectations are not met.

Consequently, face is an intricate and delicate part of each individual's social identity that can be easily damaged. Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988:61) note that the vulnerability of face is shared by all the interactants involved in a social situation. People typically cooperate and assume co-operation from others in maintaining face in interaction because a person whose face is threatened is likely to threaten the face of someone else in defense. This can create an unbeneficial rat race, as proven by Harris et al.'s study (1986), which revealed that it is commonly assumed that the best way to save face in the light of verbal attack is to counter-attack. Hence it is generally in every participant's best interest to help maintain each other's face in polite interaction in ways that assure other participants that the agent is heedful of assumptions concerning face.

According to Thomas (1995:169) an individual's face has two facets; positive and negative. Brown (1998:84) notes that these two characteristics of face are interlaced with two aspects of people's feelings: desires to belong, to be liked and to be appreciated by

others (positive face), and desires to be independent and free from imposition (negative face). Yule (2006:120) annotates that a negative face does not, however, have negative or “bad” characteristics as such, as it is merely the opposite of a positive face. Thomas (1995:169) observes that

“[A]n illocutionary act has the potential to damage the hearer’s positive face (by, for example, insulting H or expressing disapproval of something which H holds dear), or H’s negative face (an order, for example, will impinge upon H’s freedom of action); or the illocutionary action may potentially damage the speaker’s own positive face (if S has to admit to having botched a job, for example) or S’s negative face (if S is cornered into making an offer of help)”

The fashion in which a speaker performs an illocutionary act, also known more commonly as speech act, affects how the hearer interprets the utterance of the speaker and responds to it.

According to Yule (2006:119) utterances that represent a threat to another person’s face are called face-threatening acts. For instance, such an act can occur when a speaker uses a direct speech act to get another person to do something for them (*Hand me that cup!*). Reciprocally, whenever the speaker says something that lessens the possible threat to another’s face they’re performing a face-saving act. For example, an indirect speech act, in the form associated with a question (*could you give me that cup?*) makes the speaker’s request less threatening to the other person’s face. As can be seen, the speaker can adopt certain strategies in order to reduce the possibility of damage both to the hearer’s and their own face. However, the speaker can also wittingly formulate their utterance in a way that aims to threaten the face of the hearer by using communicative strategies with the opposite orientation.

Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003:1563) observe that the recipient has two possible options when they are targeted with a face attack: they can either respond or stay silent. Should the recipient decide to respond they can either accept the attack or counter it. In countering the attack, the recipient can choose to either defend themselves or to offend the utterer. Often these two strategies conflate into one, though. Offensive strategies usually have the secondary goal of defending the face of the responder while defensive strategies may have, to some degree, the ulterior motive of offending the utterer of the original impoliteness act.

3.2 Politeness studies as a gateway to impoliteness research

Watts (2003:53) describes Austin's (1962) speech act theory that assigns performative functions to utterances as the groundbreaking theoretical basis that provided western linguists the needful point of departure for research into linguistic politeness in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. According to Culpeper and Haugh (2014:156), Austin's (1962) seminal achievement is the observation that not all utterances are statements used to describe or report something that is either exclusively true or exclusively false, as some utterances are not a matter of just "saying something" but also of "doing an action". Austin (1962:2) notes that

“[I]t has come to be commonly held that many utterances which look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straightforward information about facts: for instance, 'ethical propositions' are perhaps intended, solely or partly, to evince emotion or to prescribe conduct or to influence it in special ways. Here too [KANT] was among the pioneers. We very often also use utterances beyond the scope of at least traditional grammar. It has come to be seen that many specially perplexing words embedded in apparently descriptive statements do not serve to indicate some specially odd additional feature in the reality reported, but to indicate (not to report) the circumstances in which the statement is made or

reservation to which it is subject or the way in which it is to be taken and the like.”

Bublitz and Norrick (2011:373) remark that speech act theory (cf. Austin 1975 [1962]; Searle 1969) compels us to see communication not simply as the passing of information between a speaker and a hearer, but rather as the consequential and mutual acting of participants upon each other. Indirect speech acts such as requests presented in an indirect way (“*could you open that door for me?*”) are generally considered politer in our western society than direct speech acts (“*open that door for me!*”) (Yule 2006:119). At the time the realization that utterances can connote actions such as requesting, praising, and informing, was an innovative observation, one which enabled and gave rise to politeness studies within the field of linguistic pragmatics.

Terkourafi (2004) supports the view that traditional politeness theories originated from speech-act theoretic perspectives, but she also recognizes the importance of Grice’s contribution for the development of politeness theories. Söjlönen (2014:6) agrees that Grice’s co-operative principle is “considered to be one of the founding elements of many of the original politeness theories, such as that of Brown and Levinson (1988) and of Leech (1983).” Grice (1975:45) contributed to the emergence of linguistic politeness studies by observing, among other things, that verbal communication does not typically consist of a succession of disconnected marks, but should rather be viewed as a characteristically co-operative effort. According to Grice (1975:45), each participant in a conversation recognizes the common purpose or mutually accepted direction of the conversation and is supposed to follow a general co-operative principle that underlies every verbal interaction. Grice (1975:45) outlines the principle as follows: “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”

The co-operative principle is divided into four categories known as maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Yule (2006:130) sets out the Gricean maxims as follows:

“The [quantity] maxim: [M]ake your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required.

[T]he [quality] maxim: [D]o not say that which you believe to be false or for which you lack adequate evidence.

[T]he [relation] maxim: [B]e relevant

[T]he [manner] maxim: [B]e clear, brief and orderly.”

Grice (1975: 48) points out that an interlocutor may break the expected quasi-contractual nature of conversation by failing to fulfill a maxim in various ways. Moreover, interactants might not always follow the co-operative principle as expected if they are, for instance, quarreling.

Eelen (2011: 2) upholds that the co-operative principle and its maxims are almost never strictly followed in everyday informal conversation. Consequently, Lakoff (1973b: 298) has introduced a politeness rule which emphasizes three conversational virtues to complement the corresponding Gricean manner maxim: don't impose, give options and be friendly. Eelen (2001: 3) proposes that Lakoff's (1973b) politeness rule tends to social issues whereas the communicative principle is designed to account for the “information content” of communication. Eelen (2001: 3) believes that when speakers do not seem to be following the Gricean maxims to the fullest, hearers refer to the politeness rule in search for a plausible explanation, as speakers might not be maximally clear in order to try to avoid giving offence.

Albeit Lakoff (1973a; 1973b) was one of the first researcher to study linguistic politeness from a decidedly pragmatic perspective, Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) politeness theory has become the most influential within the field of politeness studies (Eelen 2001 :2-3). The theory introduces ways to maintain social harmony by lessening and rectifying affronts to a person's face, the social self-image each individual has. Eelen (2001: 4) mentions that the assumption that most speech acts inherently threaten either the hearer's or the speaker's face-wants, and that politeness is involved in redressing those face-threats,

is the baseline of Brown and Levinson's theory. Indeed, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988: 1) believe that politeness presupposes potential aggression and seeks to disarm it, making communication possible even between potentially aggressive parties.

Eelen (2011: 4) reports that Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) theory puts forth three main strategies for performing speech acts: positive politeness (which attends to the hearer's positive face-wants and expresses solidarity), negative politeness (which attends to the hearer's negative face-wants and expresses restraint), and off-record politeness (the avoidance of ambiguous impositions such as hinting instead of a direct request). Whereas Lakoff's (1973b) politeness rule corresponds with Gricean maxims, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988: 5) argue that politeness principles should not be set up as coordinate in nature to Grice's co-operative principle, as the two are quite different in status. Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988: 5) justify their view by stating that the co-operative principle is a socially neutral presumptive framework for communication, which essentially assumes that no deviation from rational efficiency occurs without a reason, while politeness strategies are just such principled reasons for deviation. Furthermore, the co-operative principle is assumed to passively underlie all communication at all times, but politeness has to be explicitly communicated, as the absence of communicated politeness may be taken as absence of the polite attitude altogether.

Culpeper (2008: 18) observes that impoliteness can, on the face of it, appear to be the clear-cut opposite of politeness, albeit a univocal antonymy of the two is contested. Bousfield and Locher (2008: 03) postulate that the reason why a number of academics agree that politeness and impoliteness issues can, and perhaps should, be discussed together is that both of the phenomenon can be regarded to pertain to relational work. Locher and Watts (2008: 78) describe relational work as the "work people invest in negotiating their relationships in interaction". Consequently, politeness and impoliteness can be regarded as different manifestations or byproducts of relational work on a continuum of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Nevertheless, Culpeper (2008: 18) remarks that the conceptual apparatus used to describe politeness may not be suitable for describing impoliteness as such, for impoliteness is often regarded by classic politeness theories as the absence of redressive actions or communicative work that abides by politeness maxims. Such an approach to impoliteness gives the impression that impoliteness occurs as a result of not taking action, which fails to take into consideration purposeful communication that assumes conscious intention aimed to achieve impoliteness. Moreover, even though Culpeper's (1996) own impoliteness framework is derived from Brown and Levinson's model, Culpeper (2011: 7) notes that impoliteness theories based on Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) politeness theory at least partially assimilate its weaknesses.

3.3 Early models of impoliteness

Lachenicht's (1980) and Austin's (1990) inventive approaches to impolite and aggravating linguistic behavior were among the first attempts to account for the workings of impoliteness. Like most early impoliteness models, Lachenicht's (1980) and Austin's (1980) models are also built on the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988), and thus the two are somewhat similar in nature despite their apparent differences.

According to Culpeper et al. (2003: 1553) Lachenicht (1980) expands on Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) model by proposing four adjoining "aggravation" super-strategies that rationally and intentionally attempt to "hurt" or damage the addressee. The four super-strategies are listed in order of face threat:

“(i) Off record: ambiguous insults, insinuations, hints, and irony. This strategy is of much the same kind as the politeness strategy, and is designed to enable the insulter to meet an aggrieved challenge from the injured person with an assertion of innocence.

(ii) Bald on Record: directly produced FTAs and impositions ('Shut that door', 'Do your work', 'Don't talk', etc.) of the same kind as in the politeness strategy.

(iii) Positive aggravation: an aggravation strategy that is designed to show the addressee that [he] is not approved of, is not esteemed, does not belong, and will not receive cooperation.

(iv) Negative aggravation: An aggravation strategy that is designed to impose on the addressee, to interfere with [his] freedom of action, and to attack [his] social position and the basis of [his] social action."

(Lachenicht 1980: 619)

Lachenicht (1980: 607) postulates that hurt, as can be seen from his proposed strategies, can be achieved by conveying that the addressee is a disliked outsider and by limiting the addressee's freedom of action. Bousfield (2003: 84) points out that the first two strategies are not novel, but taken from Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) politeness framework. However, positive aggravation and negative aggravation seem to be distinguished in terms of their orientation to positive and negative face wants (Bousfield 2003: 84). Nevertheless, while Lachenicht's (1980) model provides an extensive review of linguistic strategies that may be used to aggravate face, it is merely speculative in nature and based on anecdotal, constructed examples and written material from a number of dictionaries of insult rather than real life conversational data (Culpeper et al. 2003:1553-1554).

On the other hand, according to Austin (1990: 279) impoliteness is characterized by speech acts which he identifies as face attack acts. Face attack acts aim to injure the hearer's positive or negative face and are typically introduced in situations where face attack could have been avoided which can make the attack appear deliberately intentional. This may or may not be true, as the speaker may just be thoughtless, but the perception of intentionality is readily accessible (Austin 1990: 279). Austin (1990: 281-288) proposes a list of types of face attack act as follows:

- Bald on record: the speaker recognizes the hearer's positive face needs but does not attend to them.
- Bald on record threats to positive face: the speaker attacks the hearer's face by being disrespectful and talking about taboo topics. Characterized by derogatory sexual language and belittlement of the hearer's values and beliefs.
- On-record without redress to negative face: the speaker recognized the hearer's negative face needs but does not attend to them. Characterized by impinging and impositions without redress.
- On-record with inappropriate redress: the speaker half-heartedly tries to use redressive strategies to save the hearer's face. Occurs in situations where the relationship of the hearer and the speaker ought to preclude the need for redress.
- On-record with inappropriate redress to positive face: the speaker is mindful of the hearer's positive face in situations where such orientation is inappropriate.
- On-record with inappropriate redress to negative face: the speaker distances themselves from the hearer, orienting to the negative face of the hearer where familiarity and intimacy would be appropriate.
- Off-record: off-record face attacks rely heavily on the hearer's ability to recover implicatures from what is said. The actual face attack is not recoverable from just the utterance itself, but relies heavily on the context, and the participants mutual experience.

In selecting any of the strategies described above, the speaker begins with an estimation of risk. In a model of face attack, the speaker will be concerned with personal risk, rather than the risk of threatening the hearer's face. The more the speaker feels at risk from challenge or retribution, the more likely it is that the strategy chosen will in some way mask the face attack intention, or push it underground (Austin 1990:288).

Culpeper et al. (2003:1554) criticize Austin's model for accounting for predominantly hearer-based recognition and interpretation of offensive utterances while decisively overlooking the role of the speaker. Culpeper et al. (2003:1554) further note that one of the greatest weaknesses of Austin's (1990) model is scientifically untested interpretations of offense. Nevertheless, Culpeper et al. (2003:1554) also acknowledge that Austin's (1990) paper serves as a useful reminder that Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988) underestimate the role of the speaker and the significance of the context.

3.4 Culpeper's impoliteness framework

Bousfield (2008:83) observes that Culpeper's (1996) taxonomy of impoliteness strategies shares a great number of unintentional similarities with that of Lachenicht's (1980), albeit the differences of their models emerge when the respective architectures the models assume are considered. Culpeper's (1996) and Austin's (1990) models also appear to be superficially similar for both consider "face attack" an essential part of impoliteness (Bousfield 2008:82). However, Culpeper et al. (2003:1554) point out that there is a fundamental difference between the two models: the significance given to the hearer's interpretation as opposed to the significance given to the speaker's intention. Moreover, Bousfield (2008:90) reports that Culpeper's (1996) model is the most widely modified and tested with real life data, making it consequently most adequate instrument of the three models for analyzing both verbal and written data from real life situations. Thus, Culpeper's (1996) model will be utilized in the present thesis as well.

Table 1. Impoliteness super-strategies outlined by Culpeper (1996)

Bald on record impoliteness	Positive impoliteness	Negative impoliteness	Sarcasm or mock impoliteness	Withhold politeness
A face threatening act that is performed with the clear intention of damaging the addressee's face.	Impoliteness that attacks the addressee's positive face wants, that is, their desire to be accepted and appreciated by others.	Impoliteness that attacks the addressee's negative face wants, that is, their individualistic rights and freedom of action.	Insincere politeness used to either stir social disharmony (sarcasm) or promote intimacy (mock impoliteness).	Lack of politeness in contexts where it is expected.

Table 1 summarizes Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness super-strategies that correspond with Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) super-strategies for performing a face threatening act. Culpeper (1996) also proposes open-ended context dependent output strategies to positive and negative impoliteness to correspond with Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) output strategies, which are meant to satisfy the strategic ends of the super-strategies of positive impoliteness and negative impoliteness, respectively.

Culpeper (1996: 357) illustrates positive impoliteness output strategies as follows:

- Ignore, snub the other: fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- Exclude the other from an activity
- Disassociate from the other: for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

- Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic
 - Use inappropriate identity markers: for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.
 - Use obscure or secret language: for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use code known to others in the group, but not the target.
 - Seek disagreement: select a sensitive topic.
 - Make the other feel uncomfortable: for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.
 - Use taboo words: swear, or use abusive or profane language
 - Call the other names: use derogatory nominations.
- etc.

Negative impoliteness output strategies as defined by Culpeper (1996:358) on the other hand follow as such:

- Frighten: instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
 - Condescend, scorn or ridicule: emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).
 - Invade the other's space: literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).
 - Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect: personalize, use the pronouns "I" and "you".
 - Put the other's indebtedness on record
- etc.

According to Culpeper et al. (2003: 1547), Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework has been criticized for being unnecessary, as a number of academics regard Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) politeness framework to accommodate impolite phenomena in the *bald on record* category. Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1988:69) explain that bald on record utterances do not follow the Gricean maxims and do not attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. However, Culpeper et al. (2003:1547) argue that Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) *bald on record* classification is inadequate for explicating impolite language; Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1988) definition of the category is not watertight and it is associated with context where the possibility of face threat is very small to begin with and so minimal politeness work is required such as an emergency where someone is told rather than asked to move.

Bousfield (2008:91), on the other hand, criticizes (2008:91) Culpeper's (1996) model for being too open-ended, as his lists of super-strategies are essentially unrestricted and allow for new spontaneous additions. Bousfield (2008:91) acknowledges that open-endedness can make the model adaptable to changes in linguistic usage over time, though, but because of this feature there is also no clear or distinct way to restrict the number of strategies within the model. Bousfield (2008:91) argues that if a new strategy would be invented for every new language regularity then the model could soon become impervious to counterexamples.

Yet, despite his criticism towards the open-endedness of Culpeper's model, Bousfield (2008:125) has suggested two annexes to Culpeper's output strategies, namely *avoid agreement* to Culpeper's *seek disagreement* and *threaten* to Culpeper's *frighten*. Bousfield (2008:126) also proposes new additions to Culpeper's super strategies to accommodate larger scale of impoliteness that follow as:

- Criticize; dispraise action, inaction or some entity in which the hearer has invested face

- Hinder/block, either physically (block passage) or communicatively (deny turn, interrupt)
- Enforce role shift; force the recipient out of one social or discoursal role into another
- Challenge; ask the hearer challenging questions and question the hearer's beliefs, status, ethics etc.

Notwithstanding, Culpeper et al. (2003:1555) accentuate that all impoliteness, like all politeness phenomena, is highly dependent on context and does not simply arise from any one particular strategy. Moreover, Culpeper (1996:357) emphasizes that in assessing the weightiness of a face threatening act it must be kept in mind that the more powerful and distant the other is, the greater the imposition and, consequently, the more face damaging the act is likely to be. As RuPaul and the other judges hold more power in RPDR than the contestants, it is fair to assume that the queens will yield and not react to the face threats the judges or RuPaul make with an offence of their own.

3.5 Impoliteness in reality television

Murray and Ouellette (2009:3) argue that while characteristics such as minimal scripting and the use of ordinary people with no professional acting experience are recurrent in many reality programs, the convergence of popular entertainment with a self-conscious claim to the discourse of the real is what defines the unabashedly commercial genre of reality television of today. However, pre-recorded film and media productions are dictated by a number of production decisions and constructed through editing that strives to make the final product entertaining, engaging and, consequently, profitable. Within the field of reality television this means catering to the voyeurism of the viewers who seem to delight in dramatic uncertainty presented to them as real even though the drama that unfolds in

reality television programs is always at least partially constructed through means of editing.

Friedman (2002: 8) notes that the appeal of modern reality television does not in fact lie in the supposed allegiance to reality per se but rather the combination on reality conventions with dramatic structures. Seeing as how RPDR is a reality television program whose fundamental purpose is to entertain the audience, it is likely that the episodes have been constructed in a fashion that favors more confrontational scenes or scenes that have been edited to make small disputes appear more dramatic than is in fact the case.

According to Lorenzo-dus and Blitvich (2013:2) aggression is a commonly studied theme in non-linguistic scholarship about reality television. Approaching the theme from a discourse analytic perspective supplements knowledge about the subject as discourse analysis provides new insight into how relationships are routinely forged in ways that favor (non)verbal conflict and aggression across genres of reality television. Impoliteness is built-in in all verbal aggression and it is typically found in exploitative TV, a term Culpeper (2005) reserves for exploitative chat, quiz, or talent show genres that are specifically structured to maximize impoliteness. While Hill (2007:197) reminds us that not all genres of reality television are about humiliation for there are a variety of categories that make up popular factual television which present a positive message to the viewers, some of the most dominant types of reality television have been formats that concentrate putting people in difficult, often emotionally challenging, situations. The viewers of reality television seem to be somewhat hooked on the humiliation of the contestants and the skirmishes that break out between them.

Reality television relies on tightly edited footage to represent phenomena that people can identify as existing in the real world. Culpeper and Holmes (2013:169) remark that the used language can enhance the sense of real: unscripted, unstandardized and personal speech styles not only come across more authentic but are also entertaining and make for exciting television. Culpeper and Holmes (2013:169) also point out that as impoliteness is

generally associated with such casual speech styles, it is not, consequently, surprising that the rise of reality television has seen a rise in impoliteness on TV as well. In order to depict impoliteness that the audience is supposed to recognize as real, the conveyed impoliteness must represent impoliteness that occurs in unmediated, unsupervised interaction, though.

The appeal of drama seems to be an acknowledged asset in reality television industry. Friedman (2002:8) notes that it is well documented that the contestants of *Survivor* were self-consciously chosen by the producers based on their assessment of who would maximize drama and conflict on the program. Moreover, in case of the contestants not creating enough suspense on their own, the entirety of the show was filmed a month before it was aired so that hours and hours upon material could be edited into hour long episodes that built suspense, provided viewers with necessary clues and insights and dramatically presented the winning and losing contestants about whom the editing crew knew up-front since the program was prerecorded. RPDR is no exception but has underwent similar production decisions regarding the selection of the contestants; some of the contestants knew each other already and had established rivalries based on their earlier encounters, so by casting them the production team maximized the potential for conflict in RPDR as well.

It can be argued that the instances of impoliteness that occur in RPDR are not, in a sense, as authentic as impoliteness that occurs in face to face unmediated interaction or through instantaneous live broadcasts. The production decisions RPDR is subjected to do not render the impoliteness that arises in the show vacuous, though. An interlocutor's face, a social construct that is vulnerable to impoliteness, is always involved in any interaction they engage in, whether the interaction takes place in a mundane setting or at the set of a reality television series. Culpeper and Holmes (2013:175) point out that "face is sensitive to public exposure, and talent show contestants have face invested in their performances". RPDR differs from other popular American talent shows such as *American Top Model*, *Project Runway* and *American Idols* in that the queens are performing their drag personas whenever they're dressed in drag. In other words, the queens invest their face in the looks they create for themselves both outside of the runway as well as for it. Moreover, while it

is justified to be concerned about how authentic the impoliteness can be when the show is edited and the queens are performing as their drag personas, Culpeper and Holmes (2013:175) note that even if the judges or the contestants of a game or talent show were playing a role, thus being unauthentic, the contextual mitigating factor of the program format may not be adequately brought into play which has the potential to engender authentic offence and reactions to it.

4 MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

The data of this study composes of transcripts and videos of episodes 1, 6, and 12 of RPDR season 9. RPDR is an American competitive reality television series that started airing on Logo TV in 2009 but has since switched over to VH1. It has spanned for 10 seasons at the time of writing. RuPaul, a famous veteran drag queen, hosts his namesake series where an assortment of contestants from around America compete for a cash prize and the title of America's next drag super star. RuPaul also judges the competition along with Michelle Visage, Ross Mathews, and Carson Kressley. Additionally, each episode introduces a new guest judge who will appear only in that one episode. RPDR differs from other American competitive reality series such as America's next Top Model and Project Runway in that all the contestants are typically members of the LGBT community. All of the contestants in season 9 are cis gay men with the exception of only one trans woman.

Season 9 consists of 14 episodes. It is the latest season of the program available on Finnish Netflix. Thus, it has been selected as the source of material to ensure that the data provides as current examples of impoliteness in RPDR as possible within the limits of legal accessibility. Closer analysis will be confined to videos of episodes 1, 6, and 12 as they are evenly distributed across the season and, consequently, present a cross-section of a sort of the season 9. Raw subtitle transcripts provided by the website Springfield! Springfield! are also used to supplement the scrutiny of the video material of the episodes. The raw transcript of episode 1 consists of 6365 words, whereas episode 6 consists of 5940 words, and the episode 12 of 6407 words. However, I have modified the transcripts slightly to include additional information relevant to the interpretation of the depicted interaction when necessary as the transcripts did not originally provide descriptions of additional non-verbal information outside of laughter, gasps or excited exclamations.

Each of the three episodes is 40 minutes long. Episodes 1 and 6 follow an identical format that consists of a mini challenge, a main challenge, runway walk, judging panel and the elimination of a contestant. However, episode 12 deviates from the typical episode structure in that each of the contestants are interviewed for a podcast as part of the episode

as well. Moreover, the queens were also asked to write lyrics to a song they sang and danced to in episode 12. The performance of the song was excluded from the analysis because impoliteness in song lyrics is not parallel in nature to impoliteness that manifests in interaction. All three episodes include several short “talking head” inserts that cut into a scene as seemingly part of its continuity and last approximately 10 seconds. Even though the inserts are filmed separately, they are still included in the analysis as impolite utterances spoken in them nevertheless utilize impoliteness strategies. Additionally, the inserts typically contribute to the overall impression of the scene because they usually display one of the queens commenting on the events that were just presented to the viewer only seconds ago. Thus, their omission would disrupt the intended flow of the depicted interaction.

The data will be analyzed qualitatively in reference to each impoliteness strategy defined by Culpeper (1996) and augmented by Bousfield (2008).

Table 2. Recapitulation of Culpeper’s (1996) and Bousfield’s (2008) impoliteness strategies

Impoliteness strategies defined by Culpeper (1996)	Augmentations by Bousfield (2008)
Bald on record impoliteness	
Positive impoliteness:	
Ignore, snub the other	
Exclude the other from an activity	
Disassociate from the other	
Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic	
Use inappropriate identity markers	
Use obscure or secret language	
Seek disagreement	Avoid agreement
Make the other feel uncomfortable	
Use taboo words	
Call the other names	
Negative impoliteness:	
Frighten	Threaten
Condescend, scorn, ridicule	
Invade other's space, literally or metaphorically	
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	
Put the other's indebtedness on record	
Sarcasm or mock impoliteness	
Withhold politeness	
	Criticize
	Hinder/block, either physically communicatively
	Enforce role shift
	Challenge

Once all instances of impoliteness have been marked per the author's interpretation based on contextual clues and prosodic elements that convey impoliteness, the relative frequency of each strategy will be calculated in proportion to the total number of impolite instances in the data to determine the sequence of the strategies and to see which of the strategies occur most frequently.

Based on the assumption that RPDR aims to maintain the stereotypical image of drag queens as boisterous personalities it is just to hypothesize that positive impoliteness and its output strategies *use of taboo words*, *call the other names* and *condescend, scorn and ridicule* will emerge as the most common strategies used in RPDR. The hypothesis is supported by the fact that the linguistic crudity of the program has not been censored on Netflix. Moreover, RuPaul's and the other judges' superior status gives rise to the hypothesis that the contestants are unlikely to respond to any face threats they make with an offensive strategy.

5 RESULTS

The fifth chapter introduces the empirical part of the research. First the distribution of the impoliteness strategies that emerged in the data will be presented. After this the strategies will be reviewed one by one, starting from the least frequently used and continuing all the way to the most frequently used strategy. An example of each strategy will be provided from the data. Utterances that indicate impoliteness in the examples have been underscored for emphasis.

Overall 362 instances of impoliteness emerged from the data. However, during the close examination of the material it became apparent that Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008) strategies did not describe all the impolite instances that were discovered in the data well. For instance, Culpeper's super-strategy of *sarcasm and mock impoliteness* was replaced by a new strategy of *banter and mock impoliteness* to better accommodate instances of impoliteness that despite of being jocular in nature did not necessarily utilize superficial politeness strategies like the strategy of *sarcasm* requires (cf. Culpeper 1996: 356).

As a matter of fact, 31 instances out of the 362 utterances did not fit into any of the strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008). The following new strategies were coined to accommodate utterances that did not correspond with the existing strategies: *point out a flaw, treat a self-referential joke like a true statement, put impoliteness on record, sexual innuendo, taunt, insult by association and sexualization*.

5.1 Distribution of impoliteness strategies in the data

17 strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008). emerged in the data, with the addition of the newly coined strategy of *banter* and the strategies of *point out a flaw*, *treat a self-referential joke like a true statement*, *put impoliteness on record*, *sexual innuendo*, *taunt*, and *insult by association* that were grouped under the umbrella category *miscellaneous*. To conclude, all in all 25 impoliteness strategies emerged from the data.

Table 3. Distribution of data and the relative frequency of the strategies in proportion to the total number of 362 impolite utterances in the overall data consisting of 18712 words

Strategies found in the data	Count in all three episodes	Relative frequency
Ignore, snub the other	1	0.28
Enforce a role shift	2	0.55
Withheld impoliteness	3	0.83
Disassociate from the other	3	0.83
Challenge	4	1.10
Make the other feel uncomfortable	6	1.66
Seek disagreement/ avoid agreement	9	2.49
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	11	3.04
Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic	15	4.14
Hinder communicatively	17	4.70
Threaten	18	4.97
Use of taboo words	27	7.46
Call the other names	31	8.56
Miscellaneous	31	8.56
Condescend, scorn or ridicule	37	10.22
Bald on record impoliteness	41	11.33
Criticize	42	11.60
Banter and mock impoliteness	64	17.68
	362	100.00

Table 4. Distribution of individual strategies within the category of miscellaneous

Miscellaneous	Number of occurrences
Point out a flaw	1
Threat a self-referential joke like a true statement	2
Put impoliteness on record	1
Sexual innuendo	21
Taunt	5
Insult by associaton	1

Table three illustrates the number of instances each strategy occurred throughout the three episodes. The table also provides information about the relative distribution of each strategy in the data. Table four, on the other hand, illustrates how the seven newly coined strategies are distributed within the umbrella category of miscellaneous as well as show cases their overall occurrence throughout the three episodes.

As can be seen in tables three and four, the rate of occurrence of the strategies fluctuates considerably. The strategy of *banter and mock impoliteness* occurs the most frequently in the data, amounting to 17,68 % of all instances of impoliteness. The strategies of *criticize*, *bald on record impoliteness*, and *condescend, scorn and ridicule* also had the relative frequency of over 10% in the data whereas the strategy of *ignore, snub the other* was used the least, amounting only to 0,28% of all instances. Each strategy will be discussed individually below in the following sections.

5.1.1 Ignore, snub the other

The strategy of *ignore, snub the other* occurred only once in episode one. It is an output strategy that attacks the positive face wants of the recipient by denying them the attention, help and approval of a peer. After RuPaul has told the queens about the runway challenges

of the first episode, the queens dash to claim a workstation of their own for themselves. Farrah Moan, a 22-year-old drag queen, doesn't seem to find a workstation for herself as quickly as the other queens.

(4)

Farrah: Is this already a claimed work station?

Farrah, as no one reacts to her questions: Hello?

Farrah: Am I missing something?

Farrah: Can someone tell me if there's another station somewhere that I'm not seeing? Ughh.

Shea in an insert: Farrah is awkwardly endearing with the way that she whines.

Farrah, looking around waiting for someone to help her: So am I, like, Matilda or something?

Shea in an insert: I call her Blonde Benet Glamsey 'cause she whines like a 6-year-old, so, huh.

Farrah: *whines* I really want a station of my own *camera shows Shea watching Farrah and smiling amusedly from her own station*

The other queens seem to purposely ignore Farrah's questions, thus failing to acknowledge her presence in accordance to Culpeper's *ignore, snub the other* strategy. No one besides Shea is shown to react to her plight, possibly because everyone is busy setting up their own workstations. She, on the other hand, clearly acknowledges Farrah's problem but does nothing to help. Impoliteness of the scene is amplified by the inserts where Shea talks about Farrah's behavior in a belittling manner. The reason why the strategy occurred so rarely in the data might lie in the format of the program as is not profitable entertainment to show interactions that do not excite the viewer.

5.1.2 Enforce a role shift

Enforce a role shift is a super strategy defined by Bousfield. It is used when the recipient is forced out of one social or discursal role into another. The strategy of *enforce a role shift* occurred only twice in the data, once in episode 1 and once in episode 12.

(5)

Sasha, singing her lyrics: A thinking queen speaks to the heart She's stranger than fiction, better than art I'm-- *chuckles* I'm more true than real I'm a magical bitch, darling That's how I feel

Todrick: Okay. I am just gonna be real with you. I'm not all the way sold on this. For somebody who's coming up for the finale of RuPaul's Drag Race, it just doesn't seem powerful. You're a drag queen. You know what I mean? I feel like it needs to be-- -

Sasha: But I'm this kind of drag queen, Todrick.

Todrick: I'm not saying you need to be, like, popping your tongue and giving us Alyssa Edwards, but right now, it just sounds like you're saying lines into a voicemail.

Sasha, in an insert: *sighs* Oh, God. It's important to show Todrick I can be a star and still be myself.

Todrick: Play the track.

Sasha: *pronounces with more valor* Bright-eyed and bushy-browed Be the strange you wish to see in the world Sasha Velour relies on brains Beauty be damned, let monsters reign I'm a magical bitch, darling That's how I feel

Todrick: Awesome. How'd you feel about that?

Sasha: Better. You were right.

The example is from episode 12 where the queens were asked to write their own lyrics to RuPaul's "Category is..." song. The queens also recorded the song and learned a choreography to it under the supervision of Todrick, a multitalented singer, song writer and choreographer who has worked with RuPaul before, too. In example two, Sasha enforces a role shift by reacting defiantly to Todrick's criticism. In defending herself she uses a positive output strategy of *use an inappropriate identity marker*, paralleling a manner with

which a mother might address her child when she is scolding them. While it is not uncommon to call someone by their first name even if a distant relationship remains in American culture, Sasha is the only queen who addresses him by his first name vis-à-vis. Sasha forces Todrick out of his superior position as the producer, putting him on the spot where he must defend his view.

5.1.3 Withheld politeness

Withheld politeness is a super strategy that occurred once in all three episodes respectively. It is similar in nature to the *ignore, snub the other* positive output strategy in that the recipient is met with silence or the other participants fail to act where politeness work is expected.

(6)

RuPaul: Hi, Sasha.

Sasha: Hi, RuPaul.

RuPaul: I see a top hat.

Sasha: Mm-hmm.

RuPaul: A men's jacket.

Sasha: Mm-hmm.

RuPaul: I'm gonna go with Marlene Dietrich?

Sasha: You got it on the nose.

RuPaul: Oh, really? Now, Germans aren't really known for being funny. How are you gonna make Marlene Dietrich funny?

Sasha: Honestly, I don't think I'm known for being very funny.

RuPaul: What were your other choices?

Sasha: I had considered Judith Butler, the third wave feminist philosopher.

RuPaul: Can you do a little bit of Judith Butler right now for me?

Sasha: Sure, let's do it.

Example 6 is from episode 6. The contestants are preparing for the maxi challenge of the episode where they compete in a facetious game show hosted by RuPaul as the celebrity impersonations of their own choosing. In the example above RuPaul is checking up on the progress of the creation of the impersonations. Sasha has chosen to impersonate Marlene Dietrich, a German actress who lived in the 19th century. RuPaul criticizes her for choosing a celebrity that is not intuitively very funny. Sasha vindicates her decision by stating that she is not exactly funny herself, either. RuPaul responds by inquiring about her other options, ignoring Sasha's negative claim about herself and thus withholding politeness. He does not try to convince her that she can probably be funny in her own unique way, too, as could be expected of an interlocutor in a communicative situation where the other party makes a negative statement about themselves. However, even though RuPaul uses the strategy of *withhold impoliteness* it appears that impoliteness is not actualized as Sasha continues the conversation normally and does not show signs of being offended. As I hypothesized, RuPaul gets away with impoliteness because of his status as a veteran queen host and judge of the program. As Culpeper (2003:1555) emphasizes, impoliteness is not simply realized by the use of impoliteness strategies but is highly dependent on the context.

5.1.4 Disassociate from the other

Disassociate from the other is a positive output strategy that attacks against the recipient's desire to be an accepted member of the group. The strategy was used thrice in the data, once in episode 1 and twice in episode 12.

(7)

Alexis, upon recognizing Peppermint: Holy shiit! Hello! *scutters to hug Peppermint*

Peppermint: Girl.

Alexis: Come on, New York.

Charlie: So the East Coast's well represented.

Valentina: I will say (.3 second pause) L.A., West Coast (.1 second pause) it's the center of the universe. (says this immediately after in same breath) Sorry New York.

Camera shows the other queens who are unimpressed. Camera focuses on Sasha who rolls her eyes at Valentina's remark

Alexis: She says forget what you heard, apparently.

Sasha: uh-huh.

Alexis: Memo taken.

The example is from episode 1. The queens who have already introduced themselves to the viewers have gathered around a work station. Alexis, who has just made her entrance recognizes one of the queens and hurries excitedly to her to hug her. Charlie notes that there are quite a few queens from New York in the competition. Valentina retorts that while New York may be well represented in the competition, it is actually L.A. West Coast that is the center of the universe and that by extension, she is also better than the New Yorkers since she is from L.A. Valentino uses the strategy of *disassociate from the other* to deny common ground in order to try and establish herself as better than the other queens. Sasha reacts to the face attack non-verbally, rolling her eyes at Valentina's statement. Alexis, on the other hand, reacts verbally. She counters by putting Valentina's impoliteness on record, thus attacking her negative face and freedom of action.

5.1.5 Challenge

Challenge is a super strategy defined by Bousfield (2008). It was used once in episode 1, twice in episode 6 and once in episode 12. By using the strategy of *challenge*, the speaker puts the hearer on the spot by asking them a difficult question or by questioning their beliefs, status ethics etc.

(8)

Shea: Watching Eureka go just reminds us that none of us are safe.

One of the other queens: Uh-huh.

Aja: That's so true.

Nina: My ankle was hurting, but it magically feels better.

all laugh

Farrah: Nina, do you really want to be here?

Valentina: Ooh!

Farrah: Because it feels like you don't.

Nina: How?

Farrah: Every week, when you're getting ready in the mirror, when we're at rehearsals, you're just like, I'm over it and I don't want to do this.

Another queen: Whoo.

Nina: First of all, I'm getting ready over there. You're over there, so you're not watching me in the mirror.

Example 8 is from episode 6. Farrah is heartbroken over the recent elimination. Eureka, her closest friend in the competition, had to be eliminated because she had injured her knee while doing a death drop in a cheerleading choreography maxi challenge. Nina makes a joke at the expense of what just happened. When everyone else laughs, the camera focuses on Farrah who makes an incredulous face. She's clearly offended by Nina's joke and

decides to slash out at her. Nina has issues with her self-esteem. She is known to think that everyone is out to get her and that no one believes in her because of her underdog status in the drag scene of her home city. Her attitude has been obstinate at times because of this which could be construed as her being dissatisfied with being in the show. Farrah uses the strategy of *challenge* to question Nina's desire to stay in the competition, putting Nina on the spot. Nina reacts to the face threat of Farrah's challenge, accepting it but asking for clarification. However, when Farrah attacks her again with *bald on record impoliteness* she responds and defends herself by drawing attention to the fact that Farrah probably can't even see her in the mirror and thus implying that Farrah does not even know what she is talking about.

5.1.6 Make the other feel uncomfortable

Make the other feel uncomfortable is a positive output strategy designed to attack a person's desire to be appreciated by others. By making the recipient uncomfortable the attacker indicates that they are not interested in maintaining social harmony between them, thus communicating that the recipient is not appreciated. The strategy of make the other feel uncomfortable was used twice in each episode.

(9)

Eureka: That's my favorite shape is round

Valentina: I can see.

Eureka: *remains silent for a few second* I'll eat you

All laugh

This example is from episode 1. Valentina has just made a remark about Peppermint's natural hair that is showing from under the sides of her wig, to which Peppermint responds jokingly by saying that she's just a little natural around the edges. Eureka then joins in on

the joking and says that her favorite shape is round. Valentina reacts to Eureka's joke by noting flatly that she can see why it would be. Valentina uses the strategy of *make the other feel uncomfortable* by reacting in a fashion that turns Eureka's self-referential joke sour. For a few seconds Eureka just smiles tensely with her teeth showing but then she reacts to the face threat by threatening to eat Valentina. Even though Eureka's response is banter as indicated by shared laughter it does carry the connotation that she did not appreciate Valentina turning her joke about her weight that she is comfortable with into something that should be considered a negative thing.

5.1.7 Seek disagreement/ avoid agreement

Seek disagreement is a positive output strategy that occurred thrice in episode 1, four times in episode 6 and twice in episode 12. While Culpeper (1996) defines this strategy as the speaker's intentional aspiration to talk about a sensitive topic to upset the hearer, I have interpreted this strategy in a more prosaic manner and have included instances of disagreement within this category whether or not the topic was sensitive.

(10)

Trinity: Who are the pageant girls?

Trinity: *camera shows Alexis raising her hand* You're a pageant girl *camera shows Trinity gesturing herself* I'm a pageant girl, you're a pageant girl *camera shows Eureka*

Trinity: Just to clear the air, I promise I'm not one of the mean ones.

all laugh

Eureka: That (.2 second pause) is (emphasis on is) a lie

Others ooh

Trinity in his insert: There's always been tension between me and Eureka. Maybe she has an issue with the fact that every pageant that we've been in I beat her.

Example 10 is from episode one. Trinity is introducing herself to the other queens and wants to know who the other pageant queens are. Apparently, it is common that there are mean women in the beauty pageant community because Trinity wants to distinguish herself from them, trying to give a positive first impression of herself. However, Trinity and Eureka have competed against each other in beauty pageant competitions before and they have a rivalry of sorts going on with each other. Eureka does not agree with Trinity's claim so she uses the strategy of *seek disagreement* rather unabashedly to express her opposing view of her pageant sister. There is a pause of two seconds between "that" and "is" and she stresses the verb "is" to give emphasis to her remark. She also makes a rhythmical wave of her hand to give extra weight to it all. Trinity does not respond to the face threat in person but she does attack against Eureka in an insert that is shown right after the interaction with the strategy of condescend, scorn or ridicule.

5.1.8 Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect

The strategy of *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* occurred eight times in episode 1 and three times in episode 6. However, it was not used at all in episode 12. Culpeper defines this strategy as being actualized through personalization. In other words, the speaker attempts to hurt the hearer personally by assigning a negative aspect to the hearer they assume the hearer will not appreciate.

(11)

Eureka to Nina: What inspired your look?

Nina: Well, you know, my drag is like universal, honey. You never know what you're gonna get.

Eureka: So your drag's like STDS. You never know what you're gonna get.

Nina: *smiles* Exactly!

all laugh

Example 11 is from episode 1. Eureka is talking to Nina who has just made her entrance and joined the other queens. She wants to know the inspiration behind the unique mouse look she is wearing. Nina does not exactly tell what inspired her to make herself giant mouse ears out of cardboard but she tells Eureka that her drag is all-embracing and surprising. Eureka, however, turns Nina's self-satisfied and cheeky praise into an insulting joke as she juxtaposes STDS with Nina's drag. She combines the strategy of *explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect* and *banter* to achieve the jocular effect. Although Eureka assimilates quite harmful and unpleasant diseases with Nina's style of drag, thus using the strategy of explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect, the queens seem to primarily respond to the strategy of banter that she combined it with. Nina responds to the face threat but accepts it and joins in on the joke, consequently affirming that Eureka's comment should be interpreted as banter rather than an actual impolite utterance.

5.1.9 Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic

This strategy occurred six times in episode 1, eight times in episode 2 and once in episode 12. It is a strategy that attacks the hearer's positive face wants as signs of disinterest reject the hearer's desire to be appreciated and accepted by others.

(12)

RuPaul: Up next, we've got Atlanta's juiciest peach, NeNe Leakes is here.

Peppermint as Nene: Hi, Ru.

RuPaul: How are you and Kenya doing?

Nene: Ru, mm, that bitch.

RuPaul: Uh-oh.

Nene: If her weave was on any tighter –

RuPaul: What would happen? Would her head pop off?

Nene: Her head would explode, bitch.

RuPaul: Oh, bloop.

Nene: Bloop!

Rupaul: Okay.

Example 12 is from episode 6. The queens are impersonating celebrities in a jocular game show Snatch Game arranged by RuPaul and Peppermint has dressed up as Nene Leakes, an American television personality. Peppermint seems to struggle with a clever response to RuPaul's opening, even though Nene Leakes known to serve witty one liners. She does not come across as very funny and ends up repeating the catch phrase Nene Leakes uses that RuPaul introduces into the conversation first. He is not very impressed by Peppermint's performance and uses the strategy of *be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic* to express this. He moves on from Peppermint by noting the end of her speech turn by a flat and simple *okay* which indicates his disinterest and dismissal of Peppermints weak attempt at a joke.

5.1.10 Hinder communicatively/block physically

Hinder communicatively/block physically is a super strategy suggested by Bousfield (2008), albeit Culpeper (1996:368) also remarks that impoliteness can be transmitted by means that violate the sensitive structure of conversation itself, too, such as turn-taking violations like interruptions. Bousfield defines this strategy as action a person uses to

exercise power over another person. Hinder communicatively is actualized through interruptions, speaking over another speaker and holding the floor even though another person is signaling their desire to speak. Block physically, on the other hand, is actualized by the obstruction of another person's freedom of movement. This strategy was used eight times in episode 1, five times in episode 6, and four times in episode 12.

(13)

Farrah: Every week, when you're getting ready in the mirror, when we're at rehearsals, you're just like, I'm over it and I don't want to do this.

Another queen: Whoo.

Nina: First of all, I'm getting ready over there. You're over there, so you're not watching me in the mirror.

Farrah makes a face and licks the back of her teeth

Farrah, in an insert: I'm not convinced that Nina wants to be here. seek disagreement. She has this big conspiracy that everyone wants to see her fail, and I'm _so_ _tired_ of it.

Farrah: You didn't even - -

Nina, interrupts Farrah and proceeds to talk over her (Farrah continues speaking for two seconds more, but it is incomprehensible because Nina is talking over her): - - Hold on, hold on. La, la, la, la. You don't know.

Farrah: I'm not trying to come for you - -

Nina:-- It feels like it,

Nina, in an insert: Wait, bitch. name calling. If I'm down, I'm down on myself.

Shea: I know that though Nina struggles sometimes with her confidence, she does want to be here.

Farrah: I just want you to believe in yourself--

Nina: --Right, and put it on the line. Right.

Farah: -- as much as RuPaul believes in you.

Farah: Because when I was looking at her looking into your eyes, I wish that she had looked at me in my eyes the way that she had looked at you in yours, you know.

Nina: I apologize, 'cause I know right now you're kind of just down on what happened. So I got black real quick.

all laugh

Farah and Nina are having a heated conversation in example 13 after Farrah's good friend Eureka was eliminated in the previous episode. Nina is the first to use the strategy of *hinder communicatively* as she reacts to Farrah's face threat. She interrupts Farrah in a manner that emphasizes her attack against Farrah. Farrah tries to defend herself but she does not counter attack. However, Nina is on the defense and interrupts her again, stating that it feels like to her that Farrah is trying to attack her despite her claiming that it is not her intention. Nina still talks over Farrah even as Farrah adopts positive politeness by attending to Nina's positive face wants to soften her earlier attack to make it seem like she was attacking Nina because she was also concerned for her. Then again, Farrah denies Nina her turn by continuing talking even though Nina interposes. As Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) note, defensive strategies may have, to some degree, the ulterior motive of offending the utterer of the original impoliteness act, as is proven by this example.

5.1.11 Threaten/ Frighten

This strategy occurred six times in episode 1, four times in episode 6 and eight times in episode 12. In Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness model this strategy is named as *frighten* and described as a negative output strategy that aims to instill a belief that something detrimental is going to happen to the hearer. However, Bousfield (2008) suggests alternative term *threaten* for this strategy and it is the one that is used in this study as it

seems more suitable in the context of the competitive reality television program where the possibility for actual physical harm is rather minimal.

(14)

Peppermint: What are you ladies thinking of doing? Singing or rapping or, like, spoken word?

Shea: I think I'm gonna rap.

Sasha: Mine is definitely spoken word. I don't know how to rap.

Shea: *laughs*

Trinity: Well, I can't sing, so I don't really know what you're gonna call this.

Sasha: Barnyard noises?

Peppermint: Oh!

Trinity: No, ma'am. Don't try it, bitch.

Shea: Whoo.

Example 14 is from episode 12. The queens are talking about how they are going to sing their parts of the *Category is...* song. Trinity is not a very talented singer and she is upfront about it. She tells the other queens she does not know how her signing could be labeled. Sasha seizes the opportunity to joke and suggests that her singing could perhaps be labeled as barnyard noises. Trinity responds to the face threat by combining the strategy of *threaten*, the strategy of *call the other names*, and the strategy of *banter*, as is evident in the following shot of Sasha snapping her fingers and smiling widely. Yet again the combination allowed Trinity to express her annoyance and tell the other queens that they had better cut their unappreciated joking short without making the atmosphere tense.

5.1.12 Use taboo words

Culpeper (1996) describes the strategy of *use taboo words* to include swears, profane language, and abusive language. Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003:1560) note that the “use of taboo words” strategy emerged as the most likely to be combined with other strategies in their data. The strategy of use taboo words occurred 13 times in episode 1, five times in episode 6, and nine times in episode 12.

(15)

Peppermint: How long have you been doing drag?

Kimora: Oh my god, 10 long years

Someone: Brava

Kimora: 10 long years

Valentina: 10 months

camera shows Charlie looking incredulous and Kimora making a face

Trinity: And you can go to hell.

The example is from episode 1. Kimora has just entered the workroom and made her first appearance. She has joined the other queens at the workstation around which they have all gathered. The queens start talking about how much experience each of them has under their belt. Kimora has been doing drag for 10 years while Valentina is just a novice with 10 months experience. The more experienced queens seem shocked that someone so wet behind their ears made it to the competition. Trinity, in particular, rejects Valentina by attacking against her positive face wants by using the strategy of *use taboo words* in combination with the strategy of *bald on record impoliteness*. However, she also combines the use taboo words strategy with the strategy of *banter* which allows her to express her indignation in a manner that does not seek to start an actual conflict. Valentina recognizes her face attack as banter and only laughs in response.

5.1.13 Call the other names

This strategy occurred 16 times in episode 1, eight times in episode 6, and seven times in episode 8. The strategy of *call the other names* attacks against the positive face wants of the hearer as the speaker refers to them with a derogatory nomination. Groom (2013:4) distinguishes slurring nomination terms such as *bitch* from descriptive and expressive nomination terms. Descriptive terms (such as a *Finn*) refers to objects and people in the existing world in a neutral fashion while expressive terms (such as *fucker*) imply that the speaker is in an emotional state and carry the implication that the speaker deems the addressee to possess a negative trait on the basis of which the speaker tries to derogate the hearer. The slur *bitch* was by far the most commonly used disparaging nomination in the data as it amounts to 25 instances of the total of 31 instances of the strategy *call the other names*.

(16)

Charlie: Where are you from?

Shea: I'm from Chicago.

all laugh

Shea: Chicago drag is the motherfucking bomb-dot-com.

Eureka: Dot-com?

Shea: Yes, bitch. It's got its own domain.

all laugh

Example 16 is from episode one. Shea is boisterously telling the other queens where she is from. Eureka asks for clarification on her joke. Shea answers to her by using the strategy of *call the other names* as she refers to Eureka with the slur *bitch* which she combines with the strategy of banter. Eureka does not take offence at Shea's face attack (or at least she is

not shown to do so) and shared laughter indicates that the use of the slur *bitch* was not interpreted as impolite.

(17)

RuPaul: Trinity Taylor.

Someone: Ooh.

RuPaul: Givenchy better do.

Michelle laughs

Trinity: My Madonna is the only Madonna. I feel like a very strong, powerful bitch right now.

Denis: It's a pantsuit without the pants.

RuPaul: Who needs pants when you have all this ass?

Example 17 is also from episode 6. Trinity is showing off her Madonna outfit on the runway in front of the judges. As can be seen, the queens also use the slur *bitch* self-referentially, too, which supports the interpretation that it may have been stripped off its negative connotations in the American drag queen culture. However, the cis men who dress in drag may actually renew oppressive conventions by using misogynistic terms to refer to both to themselves as well as other queens, especially when such terms are used on a program that is popular among young adolescent viewers. Notwithstanding, Johnsen (2008:166) suggests that while gay men's internal registers may accommodate speech conventions that are oppressive for women, gay men do not necessarily subscribe to them; the language used by gay men has its basis on a larger speech community and the patterns that rise in their internal registers depend on conventions of the majority to be able to signify even when the terms undergo a linguistic gender inversion as is the case when men use the slurs such as *bitch* to refer to themselves.

5.1.14 Miscellaneous

There were 31 instances of impoliteness that did not match with any one the strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) nor the expansions suggested by Bousfield (2008). The miscellaneous category consists of seven strategies that were named in this study as *point out a flaw*, *treat a self-referential joke as a true statement*, *put the other's impoliteness on record*, *sexual innuendo*, *taunt*, *insult by association*, and *sexualization*. Together these strategies composed 8,56% of all the impolite instances that occurred in the data. Out of the seven strategies *sexual innuendo* was used 20 times, while the second most used strategy, *taunt*, was used five times, and the third most used category, *treat a self-referential joke as a true statement*, was used twice. As the rest of the strategies were used only once, only the three most used strategies will be discussed and exemplified so as keep the length of this thesis within a reason.

(18) Sexual innuendo

Carson, commenting on Peppermint: Check out those big apples.

Lady Gaga: That's a mint I'd like to bite into.

The example is taken from episode 1. The queens were asked to dress up in an outfit inspired by their home town. Peppermint has built her look around the Lady Liberty statue as she is from New York. As she is walking on the runway Carson comments on her breasts, combining the strategy of *sexual innuendo* and the *strategy of banter*. Lady Gaga also comments on Peppermint's appearance in a similar vein, combining the same strategies.

The strategy of sexual innuendo was used mostly during the runway walks and was always combined with the strategy of banter. The strategy is used in a context where the queens

cannot respond to it as they cannot stay on the runway for too long lest they want to keep the others waiting. The context in which this strategy is used accentuates the power dynamics of the judges and the contestants and objectifies the queens as they are put in a submissive position from which they cannot respond should they want to. Interestingly the judges refrained from using this strategy when the queens walked on the runway wearing their Lady Gaga outfits in episode 1 because she was one of the judges and the sexual banter would have targeted her by extension as well.

(19) Taunt

Michelle, commenting on Nina's peach outfit: It looks like she's got a touch of the Zika.

RuPaul laughs

Lady Gaga, doesn't seem amused: Oh, my, Michelle *raises a hand to her face*

Camera shows Nina just fluttering her eyelashes. She doesn't respond but seems a little tense based on her body language

Lady Gaga: The last thing I thought would be brought up today would be Zika.

Example 19 from episode 1 as well. Nina is wearing a dress and peach made from paper around her head. She also wears make up that blends her face into the peach which makes her look quite unique and fantastic. However, Michelle comments on Nina's Georgia inspired outfit with the strategy of *taunt* which in this thesis is separated from the strategy of *condescend, scorn and ridicule*. While Michelle mocks Nina's outfit she does not per se feel contempt towards Nina nor does she have the need to assert her superiority over Nina. Consequently, the utterance was classified as *taunt* rather than *condescend, scorn and ridicule*. In this example the strategy of *taunt* is combined with the strategy of *banter*. The insult is apparent enough to earn Lady Gaga's disapproval. Nina cannot react to the face attack as it occurs while she is walking on the stage.

(20) Treat a self-referential joke as a true statement

Charlie to Eureka (who's already wearing huge earrings): Can I ask you, with that dress, why didn't you wear like a big pair of earrings?

Eureka: *licks the back of her teeth looking miffed* I really wanted to give you, like, Walmart...realness.

Charlie: I'm getting that, Eureka.

Eureka: Thank you *said in a flat out monotone voice*

all laugh

Example 20 is also from episode 1. Charlie is commenting on Eureka's appearance and is joking about the earrings Eureka is wearing. Eureka reacts to the face threat by joining in on the joke but Charlie treats her self-referential joke more like a true statement rather than banter. Eureka reacts again to Charlie's attack, countering it with a thank you. Polite thanks makes further insult from Charlie more difficult as it is harder for her to reciprocate when she responded with politeness instead of impoliteness.

5.1.15 Condescend, scorn or ridicule

This strategy occurred 22 times in episode 1, 11 times in episode 6 and four times in episode 12. Culpeper (1996) describes this strategy as one that aims to establish the speaker's relative power. The speaker can accomplish this by being contemptuous, by not taking the hearer seriously and by belittling them.

(21)

Alexis in an insert: Shea's being a really good friend to Nina right now, but Nina absolutely needs an attitude adjustment. In fact, it's time to trim the fat: Nina, Farrah for not being able to stick out from the bunch and Cynthia for not being able to do anything except Cynthia. If you don't deliver, you should go home.

The example is from episode 6. Farrah had just attacked Nina's face in the workroom, questioning Nina's desire to be in the competition in the first place. Shea interposed and defended Nina, acknowledging her occasional insecurity while also heartening her by claiming that she knows she does want to be in the competition regardless. Alexis comments on the interaction in an insert, where she stresses the word *really* and draws out the *good friend to Nina right now* part with a falling intonation and stressing the words *attitude adjustment* at the end of the utterance. Clearly, she does not approve of Nina's finicky attitude. Seeing how he is already on the topic, he lists contestants that he feels should be eliminated soon. He uses the strategy of *condescend, scorn or ridicule* as he talks about Farrah and Cynthia; he condescendingly claims that Farrah is too bland to be allowed to continue in the competition while Cynthia's drag is too one-dimensional for her to succeed in the competition.

5.1.16 Bald on record impoliteness

This strategy was used eight times in episode 1, 23 times in episode 6 and 10 times in episode 12. Whereas Brown and Levinson's (1973) *bald on record strategy* is deployed in specific circumstances such as emergency situations where there is little face at stake and no intention to hurt the hearer, Culpeper's (1996) *bald on record impoliteness* strategy is used with the intention to attack the hearer's face in situations where there is much face at stake.

(22)

Jaymes still speaking as the puppet: These are my summer diamonds. Some are diamonds and some are not.

most laugh, Trinity and Valentina look silently at Jaymes

Eureka to Jaymes: Is this all fake or is it real?

Jaymes: Um, I'd say the foot upward, it's all fake

some of the queens laugh

Eureka: I meant your personality.

all ooh and Jaymes' expression shifts, although she remains smiling

Example 22 is from episode 1. Jaymes has joined the other queens at the workstation around which they have all gathered to. She is still talking as the voice of the puppet, emphasizing her comedy queen identity. Eureka starts chatting with Jaymes and asks her a rather rude question, which, however, could be taken as banter in the context of drag where almost nothing is ever real. That said, it is obvious from Eureka's retort that she was setting Jaymes up with the intention of attacking her face with the strategy of *bald on record impoliteness* as she dismisses Jaymes' jocular answer and bluntly states that she was referring to Jayme's personality and not her drag looks. Jaymes accepts the threat and does not say anything in return.

5.1.17 Criticize

This strategy occurred 18 times in episode 1, 21 times in episode 6 and thrice in episode 12. It is a super strategy proposed by Bousfield (2008) that is used with the intention of dispraising action, inaction or some entity in which the hearer has invested face. Factoring in the format of the show, it is not perhaps surprising that the strategy occurred so often in the data. The contestants are critiqued at the end of every episode based on their performances and the context of the competitive reality television program also impels the contestants to criticize each other. Two examples are provided of this strategy, one that illustrates how the strategy is used by a queen and one that illustrates its usage by a judge.

(23)

Trinity, commenting on Aja in an insert: Aja's make-up is just really rough around the edges, but she comes off as confident. Does she know what she looks like? 'Cause if not, I need to tell her

Example 23 is from episode 1. Trinity is talking about Aja in an insert right after the camera showed her thanking Aja for complimenting how nice it was to meet her. She combines the strategy of *criticize* with the strategy of *condescend* as she comments on Aja's make up. Aja, of course, cannot answer as she is talking about her in an insert.

(24)

RuPaul: Next up, Peppermint.

Ross: This is one of my favorite Madonna looks, and I think you look beautiful.

Michelle: But three weeks in a row we've had pink, so I am looking forward to another color.

Michelle: Okay, so NeNe Leakes. She is larger than life, but I felt like you were just being a regular girl.

Flashback to Peppermint impersonating Nene in the Snatch game

Ross: She serves attitude. She serves one-liners. You could have gone anywhere with her. But it just doesn't cross the finish line.

Example 24 is from episode 6. Peppermint stands before to judges who comment on her performance as Nene Leakes and her Madonna runway look. Michelle uses the strategy of *criticize* combined with the strategy of *belittle* as she comments on how Peppermint did not manage to duplicate Nene's personality. Ross also uses the strategy of *criticize* as he agrees with Michelle.

5.1.18 Banter or mock impoliteness

This strategy occurred the most frequently in the data. It was used 31 times in episode 1, 15 times in episode 6 and 14 times in episode 12. Culpeper (1996) defines banter as mock impoliteness for the sake of social harmony. Instances of *banter* have been included in quite a few previous examples as well as it was often combined with another strategy in the data.

(25)

Peppermint: Ladies, who wants to win the first challenge the most?

Charlie: Me, Me!

Contestant 1 (cannot make out who says this): Come on, girl!

Contestant 2 (cannot make out who says this) Everybody.

Contestant 3 (cannot make out who says this): Get in line, girl!

Peppermint: I'm about to storm all you bitches.

Shea: Right. She gonna be just like the candy. She gonna dissolve.

Eureka: Ha ha!

Example 25 is from episode 1. The queens are preparing for their runway challenge. Peppermint asks the other queens who wants to win the first challenge the most. She uses the strategy of *banter* combined with the strategy of *threaten* as she declares she is going to become more successful as the other queens. Shea responds to the face threat using the strategy of *banter* with the strategy of *condescend, scorn or belittle* as she remarks that Peppermint is just going to dissolve like the candy she is named after. No actual impoliteness is transmitted in the interaction. Consequently, impoliteness remains a surface realization while jocular banter determines the interaction more. The strategy of banter seems to allow the speaker to express negative attitudes and emotions in a covert

fashion that typically eludes open confrontation. Such a quality makes it a suitable tool for abuse as well, though, seeing how it is harder to counter impoliteness that may be cloaked in mock impoliteness such as banter.

6 CONCLUSIONS

Manifestations of impoliteness strategies in the reality television program RPDR were examined by means of Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategy model and Bousfield's (2008) augmentations to it. The thesis set out to answer four research questions, first of which aimed to discover which impoliteness strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) would emerge from RuPaul's Drag Race season 9 episodes 1, 6, and 12.

Table 5. A complete list of Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008) impoliteness strategies in relation to the strategies that manifested in the data

Strategies defined by Culpeper and Bousfield	Strategies found in the data
Bald on record impoliteness	Bald on record impoliteness
Positive impoliteness	
Ignore, snub the other	Ignore, snub the other
Exclude the other from an activity	
Disassociate from the other	Disassociate from the other
Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic	Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic
Use inappropriate identity markers	
Use obscure or secret language	
Seek disagreement/ avoid agreement	Seek disagreement/ avoid agreement
Make the other feel uncomfortable	Make the other feel uncomfortable
Use taboo words	Use taboo words
Call the other names	Call the other names
Negative impoliteness	
Frighten/threaten	Threaten
Condescend, scorn or ridicule	Condescend, scorn or ridicule
Invade the other's space, literally or metaphorically	
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect
Put the other's indebtedness on record	
Sarcasm or mock impoliteness	Banter or mock impoliteness
Criticize	Criticize
Enforce role shift	Enforce role shift
Hinder/block	Hinder/block
Challenge	Challenge
	Miscellaneous:
	Sexual innuendo
	Taunt
	Insult by association
	Put impoliteness on record
	Treat self-referential joke as a true statement
	Point out a flaw

Overall 362 instances of impoliteness were discovered in the data which were divided into 23 impoliteness strategies. As table 5 illustrates, 15 strategies that emerged from the data were Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008). However, Culpeper's (1996) strategy of *sarcasm or mock* impoliteness was replaced by the strategy of *banter or mock impoliteness* because no instances of surface level politeness used as a tool of sarcasm occurred in the data, but mock impoliteness was present in jocular banter.

While Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008) strategies provide a taxonomy of the ways in which impoliteness can be realized in verbal communication, the shortcomings of the strategies became imminent when utterances that were marked as impolite had to be assigned a strategy. It was challenging to deduce which strategy would correspond with the utterance under examination as the boundaries of Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008) strategies are open to interpretation. For instance, the strategy of *condescend, scorn and ridicule* can be interpreted to depict specific kind of impoliteness that aims to make the addressee feel puny in comparison to the speaker who tries to assert their relative power by expressing their disdain of the addressee by making fun of them. However, not all ridicule aims to make the addressee feel bad about themselves nor originates from feelings of contempt. The term *taunt*, as was used in the data, could be considered more descriptive of utterances spoken with the intention of ridiculing the addressee without patronizing attitude that can be associated with condescendence. The ambiguity of Culpeper's (1996) model and Bousfield's (2008) augmentations to it can easily force the researcher to spend a lot of time contemplating the lexical meanings of the words used to describe impoliteness which dulls the endeavor to explicate the workings of impoliteness at large.

Moreover, the strategies created by Culpeper (1996) and expanded upon by Bousfield (2008) were not exhaustive enough to describe all instances of impoliteness that emerged in the data which answers the second research question. Consequently, the strategies of *insult by association, taunt, sexual innuendo, put impoliteness on record, treat a self-referential joke as a true statement*, and *point out a flaw* were coined and grouped into the super category *miscellaneous* to accommodate the 31 instances of impoliteness that did not correspond with any of the strategies defined by Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008).

The newly coined strategy of *sexual innuendo* was particularly common among the strategies in the miscellaneous category. It was always combined with the strategy of *banter* and used by the judges mainly when they were commenting on the contestants who were walking on the runway.

The strategy of *sexual innuendo* seems to emphasize the judge – contestant power dynamic within the show as the queens could not respond under the circumstances where this strategy occurred most often. However, this strategy also contributes to the illusion of womanhood of the queens, as it reflects larger gendered power dynamics where it is common that women are talked to and about in a sexualizing and objectifying fashion. Although the social consequences of a strategy such as *sexual innuendo* are questionable, the illusion of authenticity is enhanced when the men dressed in feminine clothes are subjected to similar kind of language use that women often encounter in their everyday life. It would be interesting to further research whether sexualization is part of the American drag queen culture in general as a means of maintaining an illusion of female agency.

The third research question aimed to discover which of the strategies that manifest in the data are most recurrent in the studied episodes. Out of the 23 strategies that manifested in the data, 4 strategies had the relative frequency of over 10%. Consequently, they can be considered as the most frequently used strategies in episodes 1, 6, and 12 of RPDR season 9. The most frequently used strategies arranged from the least frequent strategy to the most frequent strategy are as follows: *condescend, scorn or ridicule, bald on record impoliteness, criticize, and banter or mock impoliteness.*

As this study hypothesized, the strategy of *condescend, scorn or ridicule* was among the most used strategies whereas the strategies of *use of taboo words* and *call the other names* did not. However, the strategy may have occurred as often as it did because of the format and nature of the program rather than as part of the queen's personal registers per se. The strategy of *condescend, scorn and ridicule* is typically used when the speaker wants to

establish their relative power over the hearer and the competitive setting of RPDR ushers the queens to try and accentuate their own superiority in relation to one another.

The strategy of *bald on record impoliteness*, on the other hand, was used with the direct intention of being impolite. It was used by both the contestants and the judges alike. The contestants typically used it to undermine the drag style of another contestant to unnerve her or to emphasize the other's imposed inferiority whereas the judges used it to accentuate their criticism or to agitate the contestants to get them to try their very best. Again, the occurrence of this strategy in this data tells more about the format of the program than it does about American drag queen register, much in the same way as the strategy of *criticize* does. *Criticize* was used by the judges when commenting on the queens' outfits and performances whereas the contestants used it to bolster themselves and to put down other contestants.

Finally, the most frequent strategy that emerged in the data was the strategy of *banter*. The judges commonly combined it with other strategies when they were talking to the contestants or commenting on the queens as they were walking on the runway. While throwing shade is a common practice in the American drag queen culture, thus partially explaining why the strategy of *banter* was the most frequently used strategy, Holmes (2000:176) points out that the diluting properties of humor does not efface the demonstration of power and authority that occurs when a superior criticizes a subordinate. Moreover, Holmes (2000:176) observes that banter can also be used to covertly attack the face of the hearer, especially when low-status individuals protest against high-status individuals. While the contestants never used the strategy of *banter* against any of the judges, the strategy was used among the queens not only to joke with one another but also to express a negative emotion or opinion in a way that tried to avoid stirring direct confrontation. However, the strategy of *banter* did not seem to commonly transmit actual impoliteness, thus adhering to Culpeper's (1996) definition of it.

The fourth and final research question aimed to answer how the addressees of impoliteness react to impolite utterances in the series. As could perhaps be expected, the response patterns of the contestants varied depending on the circumstances under which the face attack occurred. As was assumed in the aims and methods section of this study, the contestants never used offensive strategies to respond to face threats that came from the judges. However, Sasha attacked the face of Todrick, the singer / choreographer who worked with them on the *Category is...* song, when she defended her own style of drag from Todrick's face attack. However, the response patterns used by the contestants when attacked by another contestant varied too much to draw any conclusions from.

All in all, impoliteness turned out to be a recurrent language phenomenon in the data. However, impoliteness cannot be straightforwardly ascribed as a prominent feature of American drag queen culture based on this study alone as the findings of this thesis indicate that most of the strategies that occurred in the data emerged more likely due to the format of the competitive reality television rather than as a part of the American drag queen register as such. Furthermore, as the American drag queen culture is vast and cultivated by a number of unique individuals, a study that focuses on only one product of the culture cannot be assumed to make discoveries that would necessarily universally apply to the culture at large. Moreover, as Culpeper's (1996) and Bousfield's (2008) model is ambiguous and relies heavily on the subjectivity of the researcher, another researcher might have assigned different strategies to different utterances, rendering the thesis at hand a case study whose findings may be challenging to replicate.

Notwithstanding, as RPDR is, at the moment, a distinguished progeny of American drag, it could be of interest to research whether the forms of impoliteness present in the program has affected the speech styles used in American drag scenes. Although the strategies that emerged in the data of this study were influenced by the format of the program, their presence on the program normalizes their use and could consequently affect the speech styles used by American drag queens. This research subject could be approached by conducting first a cross seasonal analysis of impoliteness in RPDR to examine whether the use of impoliteness strategies has modulated during the 10 seasons. The study could focus

on analyzing the first episode of each season as the first episodes seem to be most impolite when the queens meet for the first time and size each other up. Moreover, should the concept of RPDR be ever sold to other countries such as the Great Britain, it could be interesting to research the cultural rich points of the American and British drag queen cultures.

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Appendix 1.

Table 1. Raw data, number of instances of all the strategies that emerged in episode 1

Episode 1		
Withheld politeness	1	super strategy
Point out a flaw	1	
Make the other feel uncomfortable/	2	positive
Treat a self-referential joke like a true statement	2	
Threaten	6	negative
Banter	34	super strategy
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	8	negative
Call the other names	16	Positive
Dissociate from the other	1	positive
Put impoliteness on record	1	
Use of taboo words	13	positive
Condescend,scorn, ridicule	22	negative
Bald on record impoliteness	8	super strategy
Seek disagreement /avoid agreement	3	positive
Enforce a role shift	1	super strategy
Be disinterested, uncorcedned, unsympathetic	6	positive
Criticize	18	super strategy
Sexual innuendo (banter)	11	
Fail to acknowledge the presence of other	1	positive
Hinder communicatively	8	super strategy
Taunt	4	
Challenge	1	super strategy
Insult by association sexualization		
	168	

Table 2. Raw data, number of instances of all the strategies that emerged in episode 6

	Episode 6	
Withheld politeness	1	super strategy
Point out a flaw		
Make the other feel uncomfortable/	2	positive
Treat a self-referential joke like a true statement		
Threaten	4	negative
Banter	16	super strategy
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect	3	negative
Call the other names	8	Positive
Dissociate from the other		positive
Put impoliteness on record		
Use of taboo words	5	positive
Condescend,scorn, ridicule	11	negative
Bald on record impoliteness	23	super strategy
Seek disagreement /avoid agreement	4	positive
Enforce a role shift		super strategy
Be disinterested, uncorcedned, unsympathetic	8	positive
Criticize	21	super strategy
Sexual innuendo (banter)	7	
Fail to acknowledge the presence of other		positive
Hinder communicatively	5	super strategy
Taunt	1	
Challenge	2	super strategy
Insult by association	1	
sexualization	1	
	123	

Table 3. Raw data, number of instances of all the strategies that emerged in episode 12

	Episode 12	
Withheld politeness		1 super strategy
Point out a flaw		
Make the other feel uncomfortable/		2 positive
Treat a self-referential joke like a true statement		
Threaten		8 negative
Banter		14 super strategy
Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect		negative
Call the other names		7 Positive
Dissociate from the other		2 positive
Put impoliteness on record		
Use of taboo words		9 positive
Condescend,scorn, ridicule		4 negative
Bald on record impoliteness		10 super strategy
Seek disagreement /avoid agreement		2 positive
Enforce a role shift		1 super strategy
Be disinterested, uncorcedned, unsympathetic		1 positive
Criticize		3 super strategy
Sexual innuendo (banter)		2
Fail to acknowledge the presence of other		positive
Hinder communicatively		4 super strategy
Taunt		
Challenge		1 super strategy
Insult by association		
sexualization		
		71

