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Interactions between Female Impersonators and Tipping Audience Members: Heteronormativity and Techniques

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INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FEMALE IMPERSONATORS AND
TIPPING AUDIENCE MEMBERS: HETERONORMATIVITY
AND TECHNIQUES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Sociology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

Leslie Marie Abell

August, 2010

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FEMALE IMPERSONATORS AND
TIPPING AUDIENCE MEMBERS: HETERONORMATIVITY
AND TECHNIQUES

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**INTERACTIONS BETWEEN FEMALE IMPERSONATORS AND
TIPPING AUDIENCE MEMBERS: HETERONORMATIVITY
AND TECHNIQUES**

Leslie Marie Abell August, 2010 Pages 75

Directed By: Drs. Amy Krull, Matt Pruitt, Steve Groce

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Academic interest in drag entertainers began in the late 1970s and has since been slowly growing. The literature has, thus, far largely examined entertainers' life stories as well as whether drag reinforces or transgresses traditional gender roles. Little research has focused on the interactions between drag entertainers and their audiences. Based upon observational data and in-depth interview data, this study examines the tipping interactions that occur between an audience member and a drag entertainer during a drag show, positive and negative aspects of performing in drag, and rational techniques that entertainers use to encourage audience members to tip. In addition, it explores whether gender roles are reinforced or transgressed as well as the maintenance of the illusion of heteronormativity. Entertainers reported using several rational techniques to engage the audience, which included performing popular songs, wearing interesting outfits, and interacting with the crowd. These rational strategies were based upon the entertainer taking the role of the generalized other, the audience. Entertainers in this study discussed

several positive aspects of doing drag that made performing a positive symbolic experience for the performer. Through their stage performances entertainers reinforced traditional gender roles and, as a byproduct, also reinforced heteronormativity.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Gender plays an important part in our everyday lives. Our society imagines gender as a purely dichotomous variable: one is either male or female, and there is nothing in between. People make assumptions about a person based on his or her performed gender – the ways that people dress, act, and speak that indicate gender. These gender-based assumptions give us clues about how to interact with people, the appropriate behaviors and roles we should expect from them, as well as the appropriate behaviors and roles we should perform ourselves. We are socialized to behave within gender normative roles, sanctioned if we step out of these roles, and discarded if we never return to them. Adherence and strict obedience to these cultural scripts has long hindered people from probing gender and conceptualizing it as more of a continuum instead of a mutually exclusive category.

The same rigid cultural scripts also surround sexuality. Through media, traditional family values, and religion homosexuality is stigmatized as wrong, immoral, and unnatural whereas heterosexuality is perceived as right, moral, and natural. The Gay Rights Movement is attempting to break these barriers and overcome the inequality that exists due to a person's sexuality. Due to this civil rights movement a great deal of attention has been focused on those who question sexuality and gender.

Sociologists have always been one of the leading groups of academics to delve into the deviant social pockets of society. Groups that are considered gender or sexual deviants are no exception. The literature focusing on drag queen entertainers began with Esther Newton's book, *Mother Camp*, in 1979, and literature on transsexuals, cross dressers and transvestites began to grow in the mid 1990s but remains fairly limited. The goal of this study is to add to the currently limited literature on drag-queen entertainers.

Drag-queen entertainers offer a significant insight into gender because they are biological males who dress and entertain an audience as females. Their construction of femininity blatantly shows that gender is just that, a construction. Using this construction, drag entertainers have the power to reinforce or transgress typical gender and sexuality assumptions. This study examines the construction of heteronormativity – the illusion and normalization of heterosexuality – between drag-queen entertainers and audience members. It also focuses on the tipping techniques of audience members, an important but overlooked element during drag shows. Tipping techniques are important because they signify whether an audience member objectifies or respects an entertainer and his body. This study also explores several other aspects of performing from an entertainer's perspective: entertainers' rational decisions and techniques for a routine that are designed to encourage audience members to tip; what tips symbolically mean to the entertainers; and the costs and benefits they receive from performing.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Founded upon the theories of behavioral psychology and pragmatism, symbolic interactionism has become one of the leading paradigms in sociological theory. Unlike functionalism and conflict theory, symbolic interaction focuses on the micro level of society, namely individuals instead of large social processes and structures. In its most simplified form symbolic interaction depends upon three basic premises. First, individuals act toward things on the basis of the meanings they attribute to those things. Second, these meanings are developed through our interactions with others in society. Third, through an interpretive process individuals can modify the meanings and symbols used in interaction (Blumer 1969).

Unlike behavioral psychologists, symbolic interactionists believe that humans are distinct from animals because of our capacity to think. This ability allows us to interpret and attach meanings to symbols, objects, and actions. Whereas the stimulus itself is what is most important for behavioral psychologists, the *interpretation* of the stimulus is what is most important for symbolic interactionists. This capacity to think and interpret is a direct stem from pragmatism, which states that there is a dialectical interactive process between individuals and the social world and that this interaction is contingent upon the individual's ability to interpret the social world.

Due to the many subfields of symbolic interactionism, I will narrow the background to understand some of the work focusing on the self in order to frame the

specific context for this research. When conceptualizing the self, one understands that an individual is able to take oneself as an object as well as the subject (Mead 1934).

Because we are unable to experience ourselves first hand, we necessarily have to rely on our interactions with others to form a concept of our selves. This formation relies upon two important processes: learning to take the role of the other and interpreting the looking-glass self.

During childhood development individuals engage in play. Through play children learn to take on the roles of specific others, such as their mother or father, police officer, or teacher. When children take on these roles, they imagine their relationship with these people and how these specific individuals see them. As the child develops from the play stage into the game stage, the child is then able to take the role of many others at the same time (Mead 1934). The most well known example of the game stage is a baseball game. From any position on the field an individual predicts how all others on the field will react to his actions. For example, a batter can predict and imagine the roles of the pitcher, catcher, and outfielders all at the same time and how their actions will change based upon how he hits the ball.

After the game stage children learn to take the role of the generalized other (Mead 1934). The generalized other can be understood as a community or society, small or large, that has values and norms. Individuals take on the roles and values of the community and then examine themselves as parts, as objects, of the society. From this examination they can imagine how others see them and develop a complete sense of self—a self based upon the interpretation of others' actions toward them.

Mead's theory of self development is largely based upon Charles Horton Cooley's

idea of the looking-glass self (1902). For Cooley the development of the self was based upon three components: what we imagine we look like to others; what we imagine their judgment of our appearance to be; and the development of some feeling about the others' judgment. For Cooley it is not whether these interpretations of others' reactions are correct or not; but it is important that we assume them to be correct, develop feelings from these assumptions, and incorporate those feelings into our self-concepts. The feelings that we develop have an impact on our selves and may cause changes in a person's behavior in order to create positive feelings instead of negative ones.

Both of these concepts have largely influenced and laid the basis for symbolic interaction in terms of the self. Cooley's looking-glass self is important because it implies that each interaction has some effect on our selves. Mead's stages of self development are important because they focus on taking the roles of others, both on the interpersonal level with significant, specific others and on larger levels within groups, communities, and society with the generalized other. Erving Goffman integrated and expanded both Mead's and Cooley's theories to establish one of the most widely used theories in sociology, dramaturgy.

Dramaturgy

Goffman's (1959) theory of dramaturgy helped to advance the ideas of the self by comparing our daily interactions with others to an actor's performance on stage for an audience. According to Goffman the self that one portrays is merely a performance for the other individuals involved in any interaction. By performing a similar self in each interaction, the actor creates a stable self image, which he then must protect from question or disbelief. The actor uses particular techniques, such as appearance and

manner, to manage the audience's impression.

Appearance is not only the way the actor looks but also what props or tools as well as the general setting the actor uses to make a believable performance. For example, an actor may be performing his status as a doctor and may use the props of scrubs, a stethoscope, and clipboard; but whether his audience truly accepts and believes his performance largely depends on his setting. If he is in a hospital, he will not be questioned, for his appearance is normative; however, if he is in a bar or pool hall, his appearance will seem odd and call his status and performance into question.

Manner describes the way the actor behaves: the way that one speaks, the language that one uses, and the actions one does. Both appearance and manner are generally consistent in order to portray a stable self. For instance, the doctor example used previously will generally speak with an intelligent vocabulary and portray a sense of confidence instead of using slang and seeming unsure of himself.

The consistency between appearance, manner, and performance indicate that even the most careful portrayal of self does not guarantee that the audience will accept it as truth. Instead, the actor and audience must work together for any given interaction to work. The impression management produced by the actor necessarily depends upon the acceptance of the impression from the audience. All the while both audience and actor hide and dismiss any cues that imply a contradiction to the given performance or that the interaction itself is invaluable.

While this theory suggests that performances are created and actively imposed by the performer, Goffman argues that some performances have become institutionalized and are, thus, accompanied by a "collective representation" that audiences expect from an

actor based upon some social status that the actor possesses. For the purpose of this study, I argue that gender is an institutionalized performance, and in every situation, audiences expect to see a general performance of “male” or “female” from any given actor. While actors may be aware that they are actively constructing and performing other fronts – such as doctor, lawyer, professor – the performance of gender has become so institutionalized that it is often taken for granted and overlooked as “normal.”

Exchange Theory

Like symbolic interactionism, exchange theory also has roots in behaviorism (Molm 2005). Exchange theorists used the learning relationship offered by operant conditioning to explain how an actor’s behavior is rewarded or punished, and, based upon that consequence, whether the behavior is reinforced. However, unlike behaviorists but like symbolic interactionists, exchange theorists believe that actors are fundamentally different from the animals that behaviorists studied because actors have the capacity for rational thoughts.

One of the most prominent exchange theorists is George Homans (1974) who outlined his theory of exchange with a set of six propositions. Homans believed his theory to be psychological because it focused on the individual behavior of a person instead of a group or society as a whole, and an individual’s behavior does not necessarily have to occur with another individual; however, it is important for sociologists because it necessarily depends upon the symbolic meaning and values that actors attach to rewards and punishments whether in interactions with other individuals or not.

Homans’ first proposition is the success proposition, which states that the more

often a person is rewarded for a particular behavior, the more often the person will perform that behavior. For example, if a student receives an A on every exam that he studied for, that student will likely study again for future exams.

His second proposition, the stimulus proposition, states that if a person's behavior was rewarded under a particular circumstance, similar or like circumstances in the future will cause the actor to engage in that behavior again. Most important here is the ability of an actor to generalize from, as well as discriminate among, situations from the past with similar situations in the present to make a decision about behavior. For example, if the student mentioned in the success proposition were to enroll in a different course, he or she could think back to previous courses and remember that studying was beneficial for those exams. Thus, even though the course, material, and exam may be different, the student can generalize that both exams are similar in the fact that the exams will test over material covered in the course. So, generally speaking, the student will study again for the new exam because the circumstances surrounding the behavior are similar.

The value proposition, Homans' third, states that the more valuable the result of a given behavior, the more likely the actor will perform the behavior. Using the student example again, he or she will study only if a good test grade is deemed valuable. If the result, a good test grade, is not considered valuable, the actor fails to see it as a reward and, thus, will not repeat the behavior of studying.

The fourth proposition, the deprivation-satiation proposition, states that the more often an actor receives a reward for a particular behavior, the less valuable the reward becomes. If the student studies and receives an A for every exam throughout his or her college life, the As earned in the senior year will be less valuable than those earned in the

freshman year.

The fifth proposition is a combination of two statements, and it is the aggression-approval proposition. The first statement suggests that if an actor performs some behavior and is not rewarded as expected or punished unexpectedly, he will act out aggressively, and these aggressive acts become the valuable reward. The second statement suggests that if an actor is not punished as expected or rewarded unexpectedly, he will act with approved behavior and these results will become valuable to him. To use the student example again, if the student studies and expects to receive an A on an exam but instead receives a C, he will likely become frustrated and perhaps argue with an instructor. Winning the argument then becomes the valued reward instead of the A. On the other hand, if the student expects a C, but receives an A, he will likely act in approved behaviors – coming to class, studying – in order to maintain that rewarding result.

Homans' last proposition is the rationality proposition. This statement puts forth the idea that an actor will calculate which behavior will increase the probability of getting some valuable reward. The student who has the choice of studying or not studying bases his choice of behavior on the perceived probability of success. If the student believes that studying will yield an A, he will study instead of not doing so. However, if the student believes that studying will not yield an A, he will not study.

For This Study

It is most practical to conceptualize and observe the interactions between drag entertainers and audience members with a synthesis of the theories mentioned above, broadly understood as “exchange as symbolic interaction” (Singelmann 1972). Specifically it can be understood as the symbolic exchanges that occur between those

performing and those watching a drag performance. Within the broad understanding, gender is understood as an institutionalized dramaturgical performance that has a significant impact on how people interpret and interact with one another on a daily basis. Gender is viewed as an institutionalized social construction (Singelmann 1972) – a set of characteristics, qualities, roles, mannerisms, and behaviors that are dictated by the dominant culture – that regulates social interaction and symbolic meaning. “Male” and “female” are both social constructions and are most clearly understood as dichotomous, as different and separate from one another. For us to be men or women we must only consider what we are not supposed to be – the opposite (Schacht 2002b).

In our everyday life biological males and biological females play out these gender roles, and these roles are taken for granted as “natural” and “normal” when they are anything but “natural” and “normal.” Determining one’s gender is important because it dictates and informs our interactions with others. We interact differently with people when they are of one gender or the other, and through these interactions we recognize the importance, rigidity, and limiting effects that gender has upon us as members of society. Through these daily interactions we are constantly reinforcing and reifying gendered performances with rewards and punishments. This reinforcement is accomplished by rewarding us when we “correctly” perform our gender or punish us for transgressing or breaking expected gender portrayals. A reward could be as simple as a compliment on how one looks or simply not being punished for the “correct” portrayal of one’s gender.

Drag entertainers deserve social researchers’ special attention because they are actively creating and performing a gender that is different from their biological sex, and they are consciously breaking the “rules” of dominant gender culture. These

dramaturgical performances are similar to traditional gender portrayals because they are actively created by the actor. Likewise, they are also reinforced and reified through rewards and punishments. The audience shows approval and rewards the female construction by tipping, applauding, and bestowing other rewards such as crowns, sashes, and titles for pageants. The audience may also punish the performer if the performance is not polished or “pretty” enough. They may verbally accost the performer by calling him “booger,” which means ugly or not well put together, or they may punish the performer simply by not tipping.

This dramaturgical analysis explains how people construct and perform gender within the social setting of drag shows; however, it fails to explain why entertainers perform drag and how they rationally construct their routines. Here is where Homans’ value proposition and rationality proposition enter. Drag entertainers must symbolically value certain aspects of performing, as well as their interactions with the audience, in order to enjoy and continue performing. They must also actively work to engage and provide a show for the customers so that the audience will tip, which necessarily depends upon the rational decisions made by the entertainer about the routine. These interactions between audience members and performers reinforce not only the social construction of gender by the entertainer but also the rational decisions about the performance. Through these interactions entertainers can then engage in impression management and modify certain aspects for future performances. Ultimately the entertainer synthesizes all of these interactions into a single symbolic event in which symbolic values of costs (time, money, physical pain) are outweighed by the symbolic values of benefits (social acceptance, tips, attention) reinforcing the behavior or act of entertaining.

While the interaction between the audience and the entertainers is fairly obvious, there is also a more subtle social interaction at play – the interaction between the people and the social setting in which they meet (Smith-Lovin 1979). Social settings and organized events are imbued with their own symbolic meanings, which, in turn, influence people's behaviors and shape what actions are considered appropriate (Smith-Lovin 1979). The symbolic meaning of a setting is very important for an actor because it is part of his appearance (Goffman 1959), and it must be taken into account when discussing drag entertainers. Outside of acceptable settings, gay bars or straight bars that host drag shows, drag entertainers may be met with curiosity, uncertainty, or hostility. Thus rewards and punishments vary depending upon the holistic dramaturgical performance, which relies upon the cohesiveness of appearance, setting, manner, and props (Goffman 1959).

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

When delving into the literature on gender and those who bend it, one finds an array of topics that have been examined. There have been studies that follow gender roles and behaviors between cultures (Mead 1935), the roles of Berdaches across multiple cultures (Renzetti and Curran 2003), cross-dressers (Garber 1992), and transsexuals (Gagné, Tewksbury and McGaughey 1997; Mason-Shrock 1996; Tewksbury 1993). The most important aspect when researching and disseminating findings within gender studies is to clearly state what kind of gender bending, breaking, or reversal is occurring.

Without a clear conceptualization of what a “female impersonator” is, one may assume that he is a transsexual or that he derives some sort of sexual pleasure from dressing and acting like a woman, as do transvestites. However, these misconceptualizations can be avoided with clearly stated definitions.

Female impersonators, or drag entertainers, are biological men who perform as women in front of an audience who knows that they are men (Tewksbury 1993). Although drag entertainers are not exclusively homosexual men, heterosexual drag entertainers are the minority (Newton 1979). Researchers differentiate drag entertainers from transsexuals, cross-dressers, and transvestites (Gagné, Tewksbury, McGaughey 1997). Transsexuals are people who feel that they have been born in the wrong body and feel that a mismatch exists between their sexual organs and their gender. Transsexualism

does not predict sexual orientation and is not sex specific. This means that the person may be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual, and the person may be a biological male who feels he should be a female or a biological female who feels she should be a male. Although some drag entertainers do classify themselves as transsexuals, it is important to note that not all drag entertainers are transsexuals and not all transsexuals are drag entertainers. Transsexual drag entertainers are often compared to, instead of included with, other drag entertainers because of their body manipulations. Some entertainers see body modifications such as breast implants or pumping collagen into lips as “cheating” and somehow bypassing the illusion aspect of drag (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007).

Cross-dressers are biological men who wear women’s clothing as a way to relax and express their feminine sides. They do not derive any sexual pleasure from dressing as a woman; it is merely a means of catharsis. Transvestites, on the other hand, are men who become sexually aroused when wearing feminine attire (Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny 1985). Drag entertainers are unlike cross-dressers because they dress and perform as women for others, not for their own cathartic means. Drag entertainers are also unlike transvestites because they derive no sexual pleasure from dressing as women or performing as females. Instead, they derive a sense of professional pleasure by becoming paid entertainers (Tewksbury 1993).

Types of Drag Entertainers

While researching the Imperial Sovereign Court of Spokane (ISCS), a chapter of the International Imperial Court System (IICS) which is a predominantly homosexual organization devoted to raising awareness about issues affecting the homosexual

community and raising money for charities, Schacht (2002a) developed a typology in which he identified four types of female impersonators: high-brow female impersonators, female illusionists, professional glamour queens, and professional camp queens. High-brow impersonators often view drag as a way to gain power and authority within their drag venue, and they often dislike wearing female clothing and do so only for their appearances in the formal drag court. Female illusionists appear as the most “real” women of all the impersonators. Most of these women take some type of hormone or have some type of surgery in order to appear more womanly (operations include facial hair removal and breast implants). The third type, the professional glamour queen, is what Schacht believes to be the most popular form of female impersonation. The professional glamour queen portrays a hyper-feminine personality, and he often admits to performing for attention and hopes that someday he may make a career out of performing. The last type, the professional camp queen, provides the vocal catharsis that drag represents for many gay men. The camp queens use over-exaggerated femininity and over-the-top make-up as props for a comedic, and often ironic, look at gay life during the show. Other props that camp queens employ are their drag names (for example, Penny Tration) and actions (such as ripping off their wigs). Despite Schacht’s attempt to create a typology of the drag entertainers of the court, he openly admits that these types are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, and entertainers often move through these categories quite fluidly or occupy more than one type at a time.

Spatial Relationships

While several studies have focused on drag entertainers and their experiences within the realm of doing drag and their personal stories (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and

Halberstein 2007; Hopkins 2004; Schacht 2002a, 2002b; Taylor and Rupp 2004; Tewksbury 1993), very few studies have focused on the venue where the show is performed, the audience attending the show, or the audience's participation (for exceptions see Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007; Schacht 2004). In a unique study focusing on the spatial separation of gay men and drag entertainers, Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein (2007) found that the separation between the performers and the audience depended upon the social situation, which hinged upon the context of the venue, whether a dance club or bar, and the seriousness of the event, whether an amateur show or a professional show. Various other factors such as stage location, acceptable dress, and the overall tone of performers and audience members also influenced the interaction and spatial distance between gay men and drag entertainers. Berkowitz observed the interactions of gay males and drag entertainers at five locations in Florida: The Grey Area, Punch, Roxy, Eve's, and Life. Life was the only heterosexual venue observed. The venues were classified as either dance clubs (Punch and Roxy) or bars (The Grey Area, Eve's, and Life), and once that distinction was made, the bars were classified as places for either amateur drag shows (The Grey Area) or professional drag shows (Eve's and Life).

Amateur nights at The Grey Area boasted no separation of gay men and drag entertainers. The interactions between the audience and performers were in no way superficial and, in fact, quite intimate (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007). Performers were free to move about the bar, engage in conversation, as well as sneak to the bathroom to meet for sexual purposes while they were not performing. Overall, amateur nights proved to be very sexually charged atmospheres, which were heavily

influenced by alcohol consumption and drug use.

At the dance clubs, Punch and Roxy, the separation of gay men and drag entertainers was very different from amateur nights at The Grey Area. Drag entertainers in these dance-club venues were designated performers and had little contact with their audience members. Most were elevated on top of large platforms about five feet above the dance floor. Although dancers were flirtatious and danced erotically, the interaction with the audience members went no further than the stage performance. In the one instance that the researcher observed an audience member grab the heel of a performer, the performer smacked him on the head and motioned to the other entertainers to watch out for that particular man. The researchers suggest that this interaction demonstrates that groping is demeaning for the performers (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007).

Somewhat in the middle of these two extremes were the professional drag shows held at Eve's and Life. While there was some interaction by way of tipping and close proximity to the stage, most performers still kept a professional distance between themselves and the audience, and the atmosphere was decidedly one of creativity and theatrical expression rather than sexuality (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007). For Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein the factors that influenced the degree of separation and the types of interactions between the gay-male viewers and the drag entertainers were the venue and the seriousness of the event.

These factors are arguably a part of the social meaning of the setting itself. Places, as well as organized events, have social meanings that influence how and where people choose to interact, the behaviors in which they choose to engage, and the actions

deemed appropriate by others (Smith-Lovin 1979). While we often take for granted that social actors engage in impression management as they interact with others in different social interactions (Goffman 1959), we often do not consider how the physical environment carries its own social expectations, which may influence how an actor responds to other people (Smith-Lovin 1979). Very different people may enter the same social setting and then exhibit very similar social behavior (Smith-Lovin 1979). In such instances it is not enough to say that social actors apply meaning to each social interaction in which they engage, but they also must apply meaning to each social setting in which they find themselves.

Smith-Lovin (1979) defines settings as a definition of a place or event that a person constructs upon entering a social situation. According to this definition, multiple events that are held in the same location are different social settings. One location may have several different social settings, even within a single day. For example, if a classroom were used to teach a course, to hold a reception for a guest speaker, and to hold an awards ceremony, Smith-Lovin would say that the room held three separate social settings because each event carried its own distinct social definition.

Each setting also has its own physical dimensions that may affect social behavior (such as walls or large, open spaces), and a specific pace or tempo that provides a normative value as well as a descriptive feature. When actors do not adhere or blatantly go against this normative pace, they often find themselves sanctioned (Smith-Lovin 1979). Adamopolis (1976) also found that the degree of expressiveness and the variety of behaviors tolerated depended on the tempo of the setting. Perhaps this difference in pace or tempo is the reason Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein (2007) saw more social

interactions on amateur drag nights involving highly sexual overtones than during professional shows.

Tipping

Tipping has been studied within the realms of business and service work especially restaurants (Azar 2007; Brewster 2002), but little to nothing has been written involving tipping in regard to drag shows despite its prevalence and significance. Tipping is incorporated into every show; each venue has at least one path that is cleared of seating and tables that leads from the audience to the stage so that audience members can easily approach the stage and tip entertainers. Tipping and its underlying motivations and meanings are very important but have been highly neglected areas of study in regard to drag entertainers thus far. Although briefly mentioned by Hopkins (2004), only one study (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007) has included an exploration of the ways that audience members tip female impersonators. However, this exploration was peripheral to the main focus of the study. In this study the researchers witnessed audience members tipping in degrading fashions, such as shoving money down the pants or skirts of entertainers and conversely tipping in ways that implied respect and appreciation instead of objectification, such as the hand-to-hand tip. These tipping techniques are similar to those of an exotic dance club where women perform for heterosexual men (Brewster 2003).

Exotic dancers often use “counterfeit intimacy” (Foote 1954) as a technique to make men feel connected to the dancer. This technique provides a mask for the exploitative interaction between the customer and the dancer (Ronai and Ellis 1989) in which she provides a false sense of emotional and/or sexual intimacy for the enjoyment

of the customer in hopes that he will buy the dancer drinks or buy table dances from her (Ronai and Ellis 1989; Sijuwade 1995). Counterfeit intimacy is no more than a personal front that is used to portray a particular self to the customer and convince the customer that the interaction is valuable, worthwhile, and the most important one at the time (Goffman 1959). While studies have been conducted to examine the rational strategies and techniques that exotic dancers use to construct counterfeit intimacy and garner tips from customers (Brewster 2003; Ronai and Ellis 1989; Sijuwade 1995), this has yet to be explored in the realm of female impersonators.

Gender Roles

While some researchers have found that drag takes a transgressive stance toward traditional gender roles and attempts to destabilize gender and sexual categories (Butler 1990, 1993; Garber 1992; Halberstam 1998; Lorber 1994, 1999; Muñoz 1999; Taylor and Rupp 2004), it is more often the case that drag reinforces the dominant dichotomous ideology surrounding gender and sexuality (Dolan 1985; Frye 1983; Gagne and Tewksbury 1996; Schacht 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Tewksbury 1993, 1994). Transgressive acts may include drag entertainers removing their wigs during a performance, constantly reminding the audience that they have penises, or speaking in their masculine baritone voices (Taylor and Rupp 2004). It is much more common, however, to see drag entertainers adopt hyper-feminine behaviors and maintain their female character roles (Schacht 2002b).

Perhaps the most significant example of this gender dichotomy maintenance is in the formal drag setting of the Imperial Sovereign Court of Spokane (ISCS) (Schacht 2002a). The ISCS is a chapter of the larger International Imperial Court System (IICS),

which is a predominantly homosexual organization that raises awareness about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) issues and engages in charity fundraising (<http://www.impcourt.org/icis/about/index.html>). The Spokane chapter (ISCS) is over 25 years old, and it was first created as a way to raise money for charities, such as AIDS-related groups as well as disaster relief and food delivery to low-income families. All chapters of the IICS have a formal hierarchy of elected and appointed positions. These positions are titled “Prince,” “Princess,” “Emperor,” and “Empress” and are based upon the person’s portrayed gender rather than his or her biological sex. Schacht observed that even in a formal drag court members adhered to the heterosexual norm of the dominant culture (2002a) by pairing the prince with the princess and the emperor with the empress. On a less formal level drag entertainers create the illusion of heteronormativity when they use counterfeit intimacy with male audience members because it creates the immediate illusion of a woman trying to attract a heterosexual man.

The Current Study

The goal of the current study was to explore and elaborate on the limited literature related to female impersonators and tipping. I explored whether tips were given in a respectful way, such as a hand-to-hand exchange, or a degrading way, such as putting the tip in the performer’s clothing. The tipping technique is important for several symbolic reasons. One reason is the gendered nature of the interaction and, in consequence, the illusion of heteronormativity. A second reason is the obvious exchange between the performer and the tipper in both material items, such as money and drinks, as well as nonmaterial items, such as time and appreciation. Through structured interviews with entertainers, I was able to probe what tips symbolically mean to the performers and what

the entertainers considered to be the positive and negative aspects of performing. Their responses were used to determine whether doing drag is an overall positive symbolic event for the entertainer.

The interviews also uncovered techniques and strategies that entertainers use to encourage audience members to tip. Performing popular songs, executing athletic tricks, wearing interesting outfits, and interacting with the crowd are all techniques that performers plan to include in their acts in order to engage the audience. This study expands and adds to the literature on female impersonators and fills an important and overlooked gap as well as enhances the field of gender studies.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH METHODS

Due to the nature of the shows themselves and of the performers, qualitative methods were the best approach for studying the shows, the spaces in which they took place, and the people involved. There was no feasible way to gather data on these interactions in a quantitative manner, and if any such attempt had been made, much of the rich and meaningful happenings would have been lost. The qualitative process emphasizes the “distinctive quality of different life experiences, the contextual nature of knowledge, the production of meaning, and the interactive character of human action” (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007). Drag shows are a distinct social experience. Everything that happens at a show must be taken within the context in which it is happening. While these methods were the best for this study, I inevitably ran into several obstacles during my observations as well as interviews with entertainers.

Sampling

My first concern when beginning this project was the availability of shows and entertainers. The local show, held at National Avenue, occurred only once a month, which limited the number of opportunities for observations; it also affected the number of interviews I could potentially obtain. For this reason I expanded the focus to include shows within an hour and a half driving distance. With this distance boundary, I began looking for other show venues and found two more that hosted shows at least bimonthly:

Fun and Rainbows. Fun is advertised as a gay bar and is located in Big City, a southern metropolitan area of about 550,000 people. Big City is a diverse outlet for art and music. National Avenue, in stark comparison, is located in a small city, Collegetown, about an hour north of Fun, boasting a population of about 50,000. Where Big City encourages diversity, Collegetown revels in its traditional heritage. Similar to National Avenue is Rainbows, which is located in Angelville about an hour northwest of Collegetown. With a population of about 50,000, it is quite comparable to Collegetown in both size and traditional values. The main difference between National Avenue and Rainbows is that National Avenue is advertised as a straight bar and Rainbows is advertised as a gay bar. Shows occurred at least three times a week at Fun, twice a month at Rainbows, and once a month at National Avenue.

Over the course of several months I attended these three venues with some regularity and spent a total of twenty hours as a member of the audience. As an active member of the audience, I was able to take the “complete participant” role (Babbie 1986), which allowed me greater freedom to observe the actions of others. I am confident my presence did not affect any audience member’s behavior because the audience did not know that I was conducting research. My unfamiliarity with the drag scene prior to this research also facilitated the research because I could analyze the interactions without bias or predisposed ideas. Unfortunately being unknown hindered my acceptance and involvement in the scene. For a group that is commonly placed at odds with dominant society, the homosexual community must be a little wary of outsiders and unknowns. This strain was highlighted for me when a homosexual male audience member at one venue stated, “Why are there so many girls here tonight? They should just go home

instead of being here and looking at us...unless they are gay.” This statement seemed to represent an understated resentment for the heterosexuals in the bar who, he felt, were just there to stare at the homosexuals, or perhaps he felt that the presence of heterosexual females somehow increased his chances of being “outed” instead of passing (Goffman 1959) in other public spaces. His statement concerned me and made me feel that perhaps I was one of the females to whom he was referring. This implication about my inability to pass due to my obvious heterosexuality worried me. I feared that some entertainers would not talk to me because of my sexuality and the fear that I was like the dominant culture – looking for something pathologically wrong with them.

The fact that I was not a well-known part of the audience and had very few friends that could provide a gatekeeper role hindered me the most when I requested interviews from the entertainers. To garner interviews I attached a small paragraph about the focus of the research to a five dollar bill, which I then handed to the entertainer as a tip. I felt that the tip along with the paragraph would indicate my seriousness for the interview as well as my appreciation of their performance and any consideration. The paragraph read:

Hello, my name is Leslie Abell. I am conducting a project through Western Kentucky University that focuses on drag queens and the techniques they use to get tips from the audience members. I am currently searching for participants who would be willing to hold an interview with me. The interview will focus briefly on your queen persona and overall on tipping. This interview is completely nonjudgmental, and it is also absolutely confidential. If you, or anyone you know, would be willing to talk with me, my information is below. I can also be found on Facebook and MySpace. Although personal interviews are preferred, they can also be held via phone or computer chats – the choice is your preference. Thank you for your consideration.

I hoped that my continued appearance and tipping would at least make my face recognizable so that, if they did search for me on a social network like Facebook or

MySpace, they would feel at ease due to my familiarity. Despite my various attempts to become familiar at these venues and trusted within this social group, I continually met resistance when I requested interviews. During the course of the research, I personally contacted and attempted to solicit interviews from twenty-three entertainers. Only two entertainers responded directly to my request for participation. Two of my personal friends acted as gatekeepers and used their personal friendships with entertainers to vouch for my open and nonjudgmental personality as well as to legitimize my role as a researcher. Their assistance led to four additional interviews; one of these respondents was a useful snowball, who led to three other interviews (all of these interviews were held on the same night before a show in which all interviewed entertainers were performing, which leads me to believe this snowballing was a happenstance of lucky timing).

Two more entertainers expressed some interest in completing an interview upon request, but both opted out once the interview had begun. One desired to do so via phone and the other via email. Once the phone interview was started, the respondent took a break for dinner; he never re-established contact with me and never responded to my follow-up attempts. The entertainer who desired to respond via email due to her time constraints also extinguished communication, and I was unable to re-establish contact with her. At this point I tried to probe my interviewees again – they were already asked at the end of the original interview – for more contacts and wrote each entertainer a personal message via Facebook to try to expand my sample. I also posted public messages on both Facebook and MySpace as an all-call for any drag entertainers who wanted to participate. No one responded to these notes, and only one responded to his

personal message but remained aloof about referring me to anyone. Despite the multiple and varied ways of requesting interviews and encouraging snowballing, my sample stymied at nine respondents.

Seven of these entertainers performed regularly at National Avenue or Rainbows (I define regularly as a cast member or an entertainer that guest spots at least once a month). Two entertainers were not on a cast at the time of the interview; however, one traveled extensively and performed as a special guest at least once a month, but the other reported he rarely performed. While these interviews give insights to entertainers that perform in the smaller cities of Collegetown and Angelville, it limits what can be said about entertainers performing in Big City because, despite several attempts, no one from Fun completed an interview.

Another obstacle that deterred entertainers from National Avenue from participating in interviews was a recent local online newspaper story. This online newspaper prides itself on marketing stories that pique college students' interests. Recent stories focused on local bands, a local porn star, and the local drag cast. When the story on Night Cabaret was published, several of the girls felt that they were portrayed as catty, instead of playful, and felt that the magazine had somewhat tarnished what name they had in the community. I was immediately at odds with the girls who wanted to know what I would be doing with this information and how I would be using it – for or against them. This inaccurate portrayal by the online newspaper no doubt interfered in my attempts to achieve a higher response rate.

Units of Analysis

During observations I studied the ways in which performers received tips,

whether by hand or by some other body part, their reactions to tippers, how they rejected an unsuitable tip if offered in an unflattering way, and any gender-specific patterns among tippers. Notes were taken in the setting during the time of the show through the use of cellular-phone text messages, and these rough notes were elaborated and expanded after the show for analysis. I feel that taking field notes this way was subtle and inconspicuous. It also allowed me to stay in the same room while taking notes so that my attention was readily available for other observations.

I also observed the types of outfits performers wore, the types of music to which they performed, whether the entertainers used any athletic tricks, and their level of involvement with the audience. These observations were used to guide the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix B) and probe the entertainers' rational decision making in regard to the performance and how they create valuable exchanges during performances. The flexible nature of the semistructured interview allowed the respondents to flow into their ideas in a natural progression instead of rigidly following a question sequence. This facilitated each respondent's in-depth thought process and allowed for proper probing into new ideas and variables that emerged during the interview. These interviews were tape-recorded (with the permission of the participant), transcribed, and then analyzed in the computer program Ethnograph for patterns in the participants' responses.

While most respondents chose to complete the interview in person, one participant did so via email, two via phone, and two in person at my home. The other four were interviewed in the dressing room as they prepared for a show. Four performers were from the local cast at National Avenue in Collegetown, three performers were from

Angelville and on cast at Rainbows, and two performers did not belong to any cast. The shortest interview lasted 30 minutes and the longest 3 hours. The individuals ranged in age from 21 to 31 with a mean age of 26.6. Two of the respondents were African American, one Asian American, and the other six were Caucasian. Their career lengths varied from as little as one year to fifteen years with a mean career length of almost eight years. Two of the participants identified themselves as transsexuals.

Below is a brief description of each of the participants. I have attempted to describe each individual accurately but not specifically enough to be able to pinpoint performers. All names and locations are pseudonyms. Although many of the respondents expressed no concern with using their real names, and some even gave their hearty consent to use them (they argued they'd tell anyone their opinions so no need to use a fake name), I did not procure this consent from everyone. So, for the sake of everyone's interest, I will refer to them by their pseudonyms. Also, because these performers were not interviewed while in full drag, I will refer to them using their male names (with the exception of Sally and Mallory).

Toby (Gogh-Go Divine) – is part of the cast Night Cabaret at National Avenue and performs there once a month. He is the acting director of the shows at National Avenue. He is 28 years old and has been performing in drag for nine years.

Sally (Shady Dawn) – is part of the cast at Rainbows. At the time of the interview, she was performing once a month but is now performing twice a month (the bar decided to produce shows bimonthly). She characterizes herself as a transsexual and is undergoing sex reassignment surgery. She is 21 years old and has been performing in some capacity ever since she was seven.

Jackson (Miss Diva) – is part of Night Cabaret at National Avenue and performs there once a month. He is the acting MC for each show. He is 29 years old and has been performing in drag for eight years but only professionally (as part of a cast) for the last five and a half.

Tommy (Wana Mann) – rarely performs. With a background in merchandising and

textiles, he creates his own outfits for each show. He is 23 years old and has been performing for three years.

Christian (Queen of the Night) – is part of the cast Night Cabaret at National Avenue. Not only does he perform with his house cast once a month, but he also books special appearances in venues located out of town. He recently won the beauty pageant at Rainbows and was crowned “Miss Rainbows 2009.” He is 25 years old and has been professionally performing for about one year. (During the research period, he was not invited back to the cast, and he now performs as a special guest at other venues almost every weekend.)

Mallory (Nola Macy) – often performs as a special guest at Rainbows. She is 25 years old and characterizes herself as a transsexual and has just begun hormone therapy. She performs at Rainbows at least once a month, and she also occasionally performs at National Avenue as a guest. She has been performing for about seven years.

Jake (Chloe Macy) – sews all of his own outfits. He works full time in a salon and often sews on the side. Jake is Mallory’s drag mother. He is 31 years old and has been performing for eight years. He regularly performs at Rainbows as a guest.

Tony (Scrumptious) – is a cast member at National Avenue where he performs monthly with Night Cabaret. He also performs as a guest at Rainbows occasionally. Although his drag last name is different from Toby’s, they share the same drag mother and are considered drag sisters. He is 31 and has been performing for nine years.

Jonathan (Ava Diva) – travels often as a special guest entertainer at least once a month. He has cut down on performing so that he can focus on a new job and a romantic relationship. He holds a crown as “Miss Gay Deception 2009.” He is 27 years old and has been performing for 15 years. He sews and creates all of his costumes, and he is Christian’s drag mother.

I have not attempted to categorize or typify the entertainers that have performed during the shows I attended due to the same concerns that Schacht (2002a) previously expressed. The entertainers and their performances are unique every time they enter the stage, and any attempt to classify them would be futile.

There must also be a brief mention of the audience characteristics as well as the entertainers’. When studying patterns in any group, general demographic features must be explored. In this case demographic characteristics of the audience are important for framing the interactions between drag entertainers and the audience because what might

appear as an over- or under-representation of some pattern in the audience may be due to the demographic composition of the audience itself. Due to the size of the venue, Fun was able to hold the highest population of people within the club with an estimated average of about 300 people. On college night the crowd was young, ranging in age from early to late 20s. On the weekend the age range varied considerably from those in their early 20s to those in their mid to late 50s. On every night race was mixed between Caucasian, African American and Latino, although Caucasians were always the predominant group. Styles, personalities, and attire varied as well representing a mix of cultural stereotypes including flamboyant gay males, butch lesbian women, lipstick lesbians, and macho gay men. They wore skinny jeans with scarves, dresses, business suits, or were topless with jeans. The male to female sex ratio was typically about 3:1

National Avenue was the second largest venue and held about 150-200 people. This number drops dramatically when the local college is out of session for the months of May-September. The ages range widely from a young college crowd in their early 20s to the older crowd in their late 50s; however, younger people outnumber older people during the school months. Despite a small proportion of African Americans, the crowd is always predominantly Caucasian. While gay males seem to outnumber lesbians, sexuality is more muted here than at the other two venues; this feature of the crowd is likely due to the fact that the show is held inside of a heterosexual bar, which does not exude the same sense of safe space as do gay bars. Most people wore t-shirts and jeans, but a few wore casual dress outfits or dresses. The sex ratio is typically 1:1.

The audience in Rainbows closely resembles that of National Avenue. The ages range from early 20s to mid-late 50s with younger people outnumbering older people.

The crowd is always predominantly Caucasian with a scattering of African Americans.

There are more open lesbian women in the crowd at Rainbows than at National Avenue.

The typical dress is very casual with t-shirts and jeans. The sex ratio is typically 1:1 but fluctuates quite often so that women occasionally outnumber the men, at least in the show room.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSES

On show nights the focal point for each venue was the stage (for venue layouts, see Appendix C). All of the seating surrounded and faced the stage as much as possible. Most of the tables in each venue were round, which facilitated talking among audience members as well as watching the show. The atmosphere at every show was a mix of joviality, excitement, and a release of inhibitions. Audience members greeted friends with smiles and hugs and invited them to sit at tables from which laughter soon emanated. Right before the show, audience members hurried excitedly to the show rooms and their seats in order to see the costumes and performances. Throughout the night, I frequently saw people dancing, drinking, and laughing.

Each show had a similar progression. First, the emcee would come out and welcome everyone to the show. She would tell some jokes or relay a funny story, but in the end she always asked the crowd if they were ready to have fun or enjoy the show, which always elicited an excited cheer from the audience. The shows officially began with the emcee announcing the first entertainer. She typically announced the entertainer with a personal endearment or catch phrase, such as “My very dear friend, hell on stilettos herself, the Queen of the Night!” The entertainer then performed her first routine during which she accepted tips from audience members. After her song was finished, she gathered any remaining tips, and then she left the stage for the dressing room in order to

prepare for her next performance. This sequence of events occurred for each entertainer.

An entertainer typically performed two songs per show, and each show night typically consisted of two shows. Thus, an entertainer would perform a total of four songs over the course of the night. With the exception of Rainbows, each venue took an hour-long intermission, which allowed audience members a chance to dance and socialize as well as time for the performers to change costumes, touch up make-up, and, perhaps most importantly, socialize with the crowd. Rainbows' shows were usually performed as one long show without an intermission.

After intermission, the emcee would return to the stage and focus the attention of the audience on the imminent beginning of the second show. Again, the emcee would open with a joke or monologue. On one particular evening, the emcee at National Avenue used camp to point out differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals. She stated that she attempted being heterosexual but just could not do it, declaring that vaginas look like "bearded clams" and that she is happy to be homosexual. She then started to use audience members as part of her routine, and she commented that a woman down in front must be a lesbian because "lipstick hasn't seen that face in years!" Next she discussed the discomfort of tucking and wearing hose to appear feminine; and then to wrap up her routine, she introduced several females that she has coached for beauty pageants. After introducing them, she stated that none were as pretty as she, dismissed them from the stage, and introduced the first entertainer of the second show.

In another instance, at Fun, the emcee invited all the first-time female attendees onto the stage. She then asked each one where she was from, her age, and her sexuality. On another night at Fun, the emcee brought a young man onto the stage where she asked

him to take off his shirt, and she felt his muscles on his legs from his calves up to his rear. Both of these gimmicks demonstrated the openness and the focus of sexuality in the venues. One night at Rainbows a group of men sat in the main bar area and played cards; they wore leather shorts and vests and kissed and touched each other seductively. At National Avenue the sexuality was centered on the dance floor during intermission when people would dance seductively with one another. What was most important about the overpowering sense of sexuality in each venue was that it was not specific to homosexuals. It was not uncommon to see heterosexual couples dancing seductively with one another; kissing or fondling; and, even in one case, apparently having sex in the dance room at Fun. These behaviors are no different than those that occur in heterosexual bars. Young adults label bars, whether gay or straight bars, as places to find sexual partners and view sexual behaviors as normative within these settings.

Heteronormativity

Due to the overtly sexual behaviors from both homosexuals and heterosexuals during and between the shows, heteronormativity was not a characteristic of the interactions that occurred among the members of the audience. However, it was an overall characteristic of the interactions that occurred between drag entertainers and audience members. Entertainers reinforced the immediate illusion of heterosexuality during an interaction with a tipper by creating a counterfeit intimacy with men more often than with women. Male audience members were more likely than female audience members to offer tips in a sexually suggestive manner, such as running the dollar bill down the entertainer's chest, shoving the money into her cleavage, or offering tips from their mouths. Female audience members typically tipped hand-to-hand. These gender

differences were present but not constant; some female tippers engaged in the same sexually suggestive and degrading techniques as male tippers, and some male tippers tipped hand-to-hand. These tipping techniques mirrored those discussed in Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein's (2007) study. The acceptance of degrading and sexually suggestive tips from male audience members is exactly like that of an exotic dancer. Both interactions focus on a female performing for a male under the guise of counterfeit intimacy, and in both instances the norm of heterosexuality is reinforced.

Entertainers almost always performed songs by female artists. (Only three performances used a song by a male artist. This transgression will be discussed later in the chapter.) Lip-synching songs by female artists reinforces the illusion of being a woman because the artist and entertainer are both performing from a female's perspective, which makes the overall performance cohesive and more believable. Performing a female artist's song reinforces heterosexuality as well. When female artists write and sing about how much they love men or men breaking their hearts, it legitimizes an entertainer's actions for building counterfeit intimacy with male audience members as well as engaging male audience members in the performance. Entertainers engaged men in the performances by singing directly to them or occasionally inviting them onstage during performances as part of the routines. By performing songs by female artists and taking men as the subjects of the songs, they are reinforcing heteronormativity instead of calling gender and sexuality into question.

Heterosexuality was also reinforced whenever the entertainers performed mixed-sex duets. In the few duet performances that occurred, a drag queen and drag king (a biological woman who performs as a man) would perform together taking the opposite

sex's part; the drag king would perform male-lead vocals, and the drag queen would perform the female-lead vocals. In one instance the entertainers were performing the song "Turnin' Me On" by Keri Hilson, which features Lil' Wayne, and the two entertainers started dancing seductively with one another. In this case the heteronormativity was not demonstrated with an audience member but another entertainer. Drag-king entertainers are beginning to take their place in the spotlight alongside drag-queen entertainers, not only as co-entertainers in duets but also as cast members. National Avenue and Rainbows often incorporated drag kings in the cast line-up, and Fun designated one a night a week specifically for drag-king shows. These entertainers performed individual routines during the shows like their drag-queen counterparts.

In many similar ways drag-king entertainers engage in heteronormativity during their performances as drag-queen entertainers do. King entertainers lip-synch to male artist-songs and make female audience members the subject of their attention. They sing to them and dance with them as if the entertainer were the male artist and the female audience member were the subject of his song. Both drag kings and queens adopt the clothing style of the opposite sex; drag kings wear baggy clothing to hide their curves, and drag queens use padding and tight clothes to mimic and accentuate the curvy nature of a woman's body. These performance tactics make the performance believable and cohesive.

Unlike drag-queen entertainers, drag kings were not tipped in overly degrading fashions. Although they accepted mouth-to-mouth tips occasionally, they almost always took tips hand-to-hand. It was more likely for king entertainers to use the often

misogynistic lyrics to objectify the female tippers' bodies instead of the reverse. Women tippers were more prevalent for drag-king entertainers, and male tippers were more prevalent for drag-queen entertainers. This gender pattern among tippers hints at the true underlying sexuality due to whom they attract as tippers despite their elaborate costumes masking their sex. Despite maintaining the masculine image while being tipped, this occurred also when a king entertainer made the most obvious illusion break. All entertainers, kings and queens alike, would lean over to cheek-bump or to kiss the cheek of the tipper. This action provided a way for the tipper and performer to have some verbal exchange and hear each other over the crowd and music. At this moment there exists a counterfeit intimacy in which the performer and tipper have a private interaction among a crowd of people. In spite of its usefulness, the cheek-bump/kiss is a very feminine way to thank the tipper and calls into question the "masculinity" of the king entertainer while reinforcing the "femininity" of the queen entertainer.

Themes were occasionally used to focus the song selection of the entertainers. Only in one instance, TV theme night at Rainbows, did the theme influence more than just the individual entertainer's choices. The TV theme night was particularly interesting because it included group routines as well as individual routines. The group routines were set to popular TV theme songs, such as Gilligan's Island, The Hendersons, and Family Guy, and involved the entire cast, which included both drag queens and drag kings. This theme offered the perfect opportunity for the performers to transgress from images of traditional heterosexual couples; however, this opportunity was used instead to reinforce those images. When the group routines were performed drag queens coupled with drag kings, which further legitimized heterosexuality and marginalized

homosexuality.

Acts that transgress gender and/or sexuality are few and far between at these shows. The emcee occasionally takes a transgressive stance within the show through her use of camp. Discussing attempts at being heterosexual or common stereotypes or troubles of homosexuals in a comedic way allows the crowd to escape their marginalization by a dominant heterosexual society through laughter. This use of camp provides a collective homosexual identity for the audience. The bar becomes a safe space to discuss homosexuality, and be homosexual, without fear of retribution or disparagement from others. Although some emcees make comments about loving men, sex with men, or male anatomy while speaking in their naturally deeper voices, these comments still do not provide enough of a transgression because the comments are made while the entertainer is in drag. Although this transgressive role was important, it was not always included in the show. Entertainers rotated in and out of the emcee position; and even when the same emcee hosted, she would not provide this transgressive role every time.

Some entertainers occasionally engaged in transgressive acts as well; however, these were typically small gestures during a performance. The most common transgressive act occurred when entertainers removed their wigs, whether accidentally or intentionally. One of the entertainers I observed lost her wig several times because of her erratic dancing as well as her intentional removal. Every time she intentionally removed it, it was near the end of her performance and provided an almost climactic sense to the routine. In two other instances two different performers lost their wigs due to their animated dance moves. Each time the performers accidentally lost their wigs, they

looked embarrassed because their female illusion had been compromised.

The second most common transgressive act occurred when the entertainers reminded the audience that they still have a penis. Clever use of lyrics and an occasional hand motion allowed the performers to remind the audience they were still men without being explicit. For instance, one performer used the song “I’m So Hard” by Rihanna, which describes Rihanna’s toughness but which was generally understood by the audience as an erection due to the performer’s actions during the song. While this type of transgressive act occurred, song lyrics were more often utilized to reinforce gender and create a complete female illusion. In one instance an entertainer performed “Strawberry Wine” by Deana Carter. During this routine the entertainer rubbed her hand on her leg near her pubic area when the lyric “The fields are grown over now, years since they’ve seen the plow” came over the speakers. And directly after that line, she lifted her right breast and then allowed it to fall when the artist sang the lyric, “There’s nothing time hasn’t touched.” Both of these actions called attention to the sexual areas of the entertainer’s body and worked as gentle reminders that she still has a penis under her dress and that her breasts are implants.

The least common transgressive act occurred when entertainers used a male artist’s song during a performance. Three performers used a song by a male artist. Two of these performances were part of mixes in which several songs were combined to provide an interesting and constantly changing routine for the audience. One of the performers who used a mix stayed in a feminine outfit for the male artist’s song; the other performer changed costumes onstage and performed as a male. The third entertainer that used a song by a male artist performed the song completely as a female.

Despite the several instances of transgression, they remain jokes, subtle double entendres, and a ploy to provide an interesting show for the audience. These acts do not call into question gender or what gender means to society, nor do these acts legitimize homosexuality. The overall impression left on audience members is one of traditional gender portrayals and heteronormativity.

Exchanges

The most obvious exchange that occurs during the interactions between entertainers and tippers during a show is the exchange of money. While this exchange may appear to be the basis and driving motivation of entertainers, entertainers were quick to state that doing drag is not about the money. The money is obviously appreciated, but the entertainers declared that they would continue to perform even if they did not make much money because they perform for themselves just as much as for the crowd. For the entertainers, tips take on intangible meanings, which they describe as tokens of appreciation, compliments, and gifts for their routine.

The audience is the utmost important people to me. And it's not really just about tips. Those people are there watching you enjoy yourself, you know, while they are there enjoying theirselves. (Sally, Shady Dawn)

Like, it is helping me do, like buy things and stuff. But, just when it's coming from the consumer, like the person giving it to me, it is a lot more than just a tip. It is a compliment; it is a big compliment to me that they feel that I am that good. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

When people tip me, that means I know they enjoy what I like. And I, and they tend to tell me when they come up, like "Kiss noise. I love it." "Oh you're so pretty." "You're so beautiful."... I've seen queens, like if people don't come up and tip, and they just wanted to shake their hands, I've seen queens just shoo 'em away. First of all, if you don't have a tip, if you just want to come up and shake my hand, that is cool. I take that tip. That's just as fine as not tipping me. I mean, I don't use this as just any person trying to make my rent on anything, I just love what I do. I've seen people do that, they want that money. Not me. (Tony, Scrumptious)

I don't look at it as tips. Is it weird to say I look at it as like a gift from somebody. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

While entertainers appreciate and desire tips for the intangible meaning the tips represent, they also appreciate monetary tips as tangible, and spendable, resources. The entertainers recognize, however, that tips are based on the audience members' whims and economic capability, which can be inconsistent. Due to this inconsistency and the fear it elicits in a world full of bills, most of the entertainers have hourly paid occupations that are separate from their drag careers. Five of the entertainers have part-time jobs, two of the entertainers have full-time jobs, and two of the entertainers, Tommy (Wana Mann) and Sally (Shady Dawn) did not discuss a current job other than their drag careers. Although Tommy and Sally did not discuss having a second job, it is unlikely that Tommy relies on tips because he rarely performs, and Sally had previously worked at a local hospital but is now pursuing a different career. Jonathan stated that he was once able to live on tips, but does not do so now, and Tony stated that he could live on tips if he chose to perform every weekend; but like the other entertainers, he chooses to maintain a steady job.

I used to [make enough tips to live on]. When the economy crashed, so did drag... That's why I had to get another job and find something else. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

If I chose that lifestyle, I would [be able to live off tips], yeah... But I work. I have, I gots to. Cause tips, I mean, the tips don't always come in, so you have to do something. (Tony, Scrumptious)

That's why I keep my job. I don't want to like lose that sense of stability... And worry, "Well, if I'm burnt out this month, and I don't feel like performing, am I still going to have the money to pay my bills?"... You know, or, "am I going be able to go to [Collegetown] and do the show?" (Christian, Queen of the Night)

[Do you make enough money in tips to live on?] No. No, no, no. Not at all... I have a full time job. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

Aside from the money, entertainers described several other reasons why they perform. While each entertainer had his own way of stating the benefits of performing, their collective responses focused on six general, and often overlapping, themes. Five of the entertainers said they enjoyed becoming someone else. Five entertainers said performing satisfied their need to be the center of attention. Four entertainers expressed their joy of entertaining others. Three entertainers stated that performing is a creative outlet. Three entertainers expressed the opportunity for themselves or the audience to escape from everyday troubles. Two entertainers described the way that performing allowed them to make up for deficiencies they believed they had as boys. One entertainer stated that entertaining makes him more secure with who he is and builds his self-esteem. Christian and Toby discussed these benefits at length throughout our interviews and their statements not only represent these themes but also the uplifting and positive emotions they associate with these benefits.

You know, I have to perform because that's what I enjoy doing, and if I'm not performing then I don't feel as happy. It's like a drug in a way.... I guess the interaction with the crowd.... Um, and being to be up there in front of people. It's something that I've always wanted to do. Like in a way I see it as acting, you know, but it's so different.... But it's my form of acting because as a boy I'm so shy... But when I'm in drag, all inhibitions are gone. And that is probably the best part of it. Entertaining the people and seeing the smiles on their faces... But you know it's just being able to be up there and being someone totally different than what I am. It's the, like the highlight of it. And then you have to take it all off, which is the downfall. [laughs].... I guess it still goes back to the insecurity thing. I couldn't get up there and do it as a boy, I don't think. I couldn't get up in front of a stage like doing acting.... Um, it's not, like I said, it's not the money. It makes me secure with who I am, and it builds my confidence as a person. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

It's a whole different character; it really is, and I guess that's part of the reason why I enjoy it because with having the, loving the whole performing, being up in front of people. I love the spotlight. I just love it. I love being on a stage, just, it's an adrenaline rush that it's not comparable to any drug, or anything. It's just complete and utterly in the moment, and just inhibitions are gone, and you just go with your strengths and hope nothing happens.... It's a character. It's something you're portraying, you know. It's a

whole different thing. It's letting me get my creativity out...coming from the whole drug scene, which I had let myself get into – which that is a whole different topic – I was like, you know, I did all that, let who I was go, my creativity, so it's time for me to get back into it. You know, and that's really, me being able to get my creativity out and express my joy of entertaining is the biggest thrill I guess I get out of drag... We know how hard things are and in music and dancing, performing, being together, it totally lets us escape, you know, society saying, “Hey, ya'll can't get married ‘cause ya'll are two men.” You know, “Ya'll can't adopt because ya'll are two men.” You know it's, it, that's our time to get away, and enjoy, and let our rainbows out. Enjoy our, you know, enjoy our sunshine, our brightness, our bubbiness, just and enjoy each other.... That's my biggest thing with who, me performing is, just being me being me, having a blast, you know, having a good time, not really worrying about stuff. That's when, you know, my performance is when I try not to worry.... Outside society, you know bills, and stuff like that, it's not part of that night. It's about me, the music, the crowd, the outfit, the lights, the sweat, the, you know, the adrenaline, the heart-pounding, all of it. It's just, you know, totally living in the moment. (Toby, Gogh-Go Divine)

Interviews with the entertainers were often abundant with laughter and smiles.

Entertainers were happy to be discussing drag and the positive benefits they derive from performing. Although all of the performers doted upon the benefits and positive aspects of performing, a few costs and negative aspects were mentioned; however, these costs were sparse and overall different for each performer. Even though entertainers discussed these costs, they often dismissed them with a shrug or a smile that indicated that nothing is perfect and that these were small prices to pay when compared to all the positive aspects of performing.

The part that I really do hate about it, I would have to say is the aftermath. Like, taking off all the make-up, the travel back home. If I can skip all that it'd be great. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

The cattiness behind, backstage. (Tony, Scrumptious)

You want to be known, and then they start knowing you as your drag name even when you're a boy, and you're like ‘Nooo, that's me, but that's not me!’ So I mean, it's kind of the, I guess the negative about the pluses. (Gogh-Go Divine)

Uh, money. It cost a lot to do this. I have a \$5,000 wardrobe and it keeps building and building. I mean, I have a wig that cost \$900.... I drop thousands of dollars a year probably. But I make everything I wear so that kind of helps. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

Wearing, wearing all the make-up and the uh five pairs of panty hose we have to put on to make ourselves look more feminine. It's very uncomfortable. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

Entertainers of all kinds are in the business of giving people what they want.

Drag entertainers are no exception. One way that a drag entertainer determines whether he is giving the audience what it wants is based on whether members of the audience tip him during his performance. Entertainers discussed various reasons why they believe that people do or do not tip them. When respondents reported why they believed audience members tipped, the motivations were focused on personal factors about the performer. Five entertainers thought people tip because they like some aspect of your performance (the look, the act, the song, etc). Two respondents believed that people tip because they personally like the entertainer. One person thought audience members tip because they want to be included in the show. Jackson concisely summed all of these perceived motivations when he stated:

Because they enjoy the, some people like doing it because it makes 'em feel like they're a part of the, of the show, like they're a part of the experience. And it, some of 'em I think do it because they um like the number I'm doing, or some of them just do it 'cause they're my friends and they like me. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

When entertainers discussed why people do not tip, they split between personal and nonpersonal factors, which focused on reasons that were beyond the control of the entertainer. Four entertainers stated that people may not tip you because they do not like you or do not like something you did in that particular performance. These people are stating the logical opposition to those who tip because they like the entertainer or something the entertainer did in his performance. Five entertainers stated that some people did not tip because of the poor economy, and that the audience members might be poor, broke, or simply not wanting to spend money. One entertainer said that some

people do not tip because they do not understand or may even fear drag entertainers.

Christian mentioned several other reasons why some people do not tip, and he goes on to state that choosy tippers encourage diversity and creativity among cast members.

Well, you know, to be honest, like this economy right now, like I said I feel like it's an honor to get tips because you know that's money coming out of your paycheck and you know you could be paying your bills with that. So, I think you know maybe some people come and they're like, they want to watch a show but they don't have the money to tip you. Maybe they want to um. Some people may not like you, like what you're doing. It may have, you know, everybody I think has their favorites so. I think that plays a big factor in it. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

Fear or don't understand a queen, or they don't like the queen, or they just don't want nobody to see them there. That's typically how it is.... It's ok to be out now, but they still don't want too many people to see them. They'll just go to the show, sit, "Here's my dollar. Take it up to her." I've seen that happen before. (Tony, Scrumptious)

If they don't, I just look at it like, you know, it wasn't what they like. Or, um, they're too drunk to get up. Or, you know, they're talking. Whatever. I don't look for every person in there to tip me. Um, I know they won't. Because if they did, then the world would be very, very boring. Because, I mean, ... you know, like if they all just loved what I did, you know, so much different than what all the rest of them do, and that's what you have to be as a cast. You have to be different, ... or the show is boring. If they all loved what I did, then that means I'm taking away from the rest of 'em. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

Entertainers believe that the amount of tips earned is inherently tied to personal factors, which can be controlled or influenced. Entertainers also believe that non-personal factors, factors which are uncontrollable, are responsible for them not earning tips. In this sense the performer has power over how many tips he will earn in a given performance. Tips provide proof of his expertise, proficient decision making about the routine, and his personal likability. Thus, tips become imbued with significant symbolic meanings, which are incorporated into the entertainer's self-image, leading to greater self-esteem, confidence, and personal satisfaction.

It makes me feel that I'm actually doing something right. Like, I, I always want to make sure I am doing something right, and if somebody is definitely taking the time to get up

out of their seat to give me like maybe a dollar or two, I mean, it's... what I am definitely all about is good customer service. And what I produce onstage is customer service. They are consumers coming in to get what they want, and that is, um, that is a show. They want to have a good time, and I am there to show them a good time. I am just like a waitress. I serve them a good performance, and they will tip me if I do a good job. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

They like it, they actually liked it. So I must've done something right. That's what I keep telling myself. I gotta do something right. They keep coming back. They like me. (Tony, Scrumptious)

It feels good. It's their hard-earned money. They don't have to give it to me. They choose to give it to me. And I realize that when they do give me a tip you know that they appreciate what I was doing, like Tony was saying. They appreciate what you're doing and they're showing their gratitude for that. Um, and that makes me feel good. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

Well, you know, I, to be honest, I feel honored that they're, you know, that they're willing to spend a dollar on me or whatever they tip. So I really, whether I like the person or not, I really appreciate that they came up and tipped me. So. I mean, would you be excited if you got a dollar tip for just sitting here? (Jake, Chloe Macy)

These feelings are, again, one of the many positive benefits of doing drag and encourage the entertainer to take on the role of others, namely the audience, when planning his future routines. If the entertainer can accurately predict what the audience wants and appreciates, he will be rewarded with tangible and intangible tips.

Techniques

During my observations, I noticed particular ebbs and flows in the number of tippers which corresponded to certain aspects of the performances. Although not always constant, when entertainers performed a popular song, or wore minimal clothing, or executed athletic tricks, such as the splits or cartwheel, or interacted with the crowd in some way, the number of tippers often increased. I used these observations as the basic guideline for my interview guide in order to determine whether these techniques were a conscious decision based on the entertainer's belief that these actions would encourage

the audience members to tip.

Perhaps the most important choice an entertainer makes is the song selection because the song is the foundation for the entire routine. But does the song itself play a role and encourage people to tip the entertainer? Jonathan (Ava Diva) succinctly responded, “Um, yeah, if it's a sucky song, no one's going to. They're not going to tip me.” While Jonathan expressed what did not work, other entertainers discussed types of songs that were successful. They often chose from a wide variety of genres including, but not limited to, Today’s Top 40, hip-hop/R&B, pop, ballads, and Broadway. Whether the entertainer chose a Top 40, classic drag, or ballad, the deciding factor, according to the entertainers, was to know the venue and to know the audience. By taking the role of the audience and imagining the types of songs to which the audience normally listens, an entertainer can freely choose a song that entertains the audience and increases his chances of being tipped.

That depends on the place too.... Um, [National Avenue], lotta ghetto stuff. Um, or pop. You know, if I came out and did 4 Non-Blondes there, I don't think they would really go for it. Um, I mean, they might, but, you know, you still have to, you have to weigh in on the crowd. There is an older crowd that would know 4 Non-Blondes or that would know the Mamas and the Papas even, or Janis Joplin. But then you got the young, young kids in there. That they grew up with Britney Spears or Christina Aguilera, or, you know, Trina or somebody like that. So, you have to like think about the audience. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

A lot of times brand new popular songs that are like fresh on the radio are really, um, a lot times those will get you a lot of good money. And, then a lot of like classic drag stuff. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

Um, yeah. ‘Cause, definitely, if it's a song that they know, they're like “Oh my god, I know this song!” So you know, that's kind of a given. That, you know, do it really well, and they're going to tip you. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

I typically find a new song that comes out, maybe by Mary or Tina Marie, or whoever it is, that I know they all listen to, and I tip really well. (Tony, Scrumptious)

Two of the performers attributed the song's success to other factors such as the entertainer's creativity or energy level. During one memorable routine, Christian (Queen of the Night) performed as Tracy Turnblad from *Hairspray*, and he danced very energetically over the entire stage. Not only did he look like Tracy Turnblad, but his energy level also corresponded to the character. People flocked to the stage to tip him and several of the audience members stood in ovation during the big dance solo. Mallory (Nola Macy) also mentioned having the right energy for a song and stated that she often evokes her own emotions when performing a ballad by using hurtful things that people have said to her as a way to connect to a song as if it were her own.

Um, [pause] creative stuff whether it's ghetto or crazy, gets you really far with tips... The more creative you are with your music and the song, like, how you perform it or the costumes you wear, the more tips you get. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

Um, for the majority it's the energy that you bring to it. 'Cause I mean, you know, if it's, even if it's a ballad, if, you know, if you bring enough energy, and you make that look like it's you performing that for them, you're gonna have them, you're gonna have them wrapped up in the feeling that you've got, you know, that's it's all about you putting that much emotion and energy and, you know, umph behind what you're doing.... If you pick a, a song that majority of your crowd loves, they're gonna just go wild, especially if you come out and perform and do good.... So, I mean, it, it really, it, it's mainly, yeah it's majority the energy you put behind it, cause you can make even the drabbiest song a good performance. (Toby, Gogh-Go Divine)

I have done some songs where it's very sad. And there have been times where like, I have done a song on stage, where like a ballad, and I really did start crying.... You have to [incorporate] your life into it. Like, what have you been through, what have you witnessed in your life like, it's not a very, especially my, you know being transgender. It's not a very accepting life by, you know, true society so you do kind of hear some commentary, regardless if it's to your face or you know, just kind of like evil little glares up and down, I mean. You do, I do, personally, like, you know, walk away and just like 'It's whatever.' But really and honestly it does hurt. And, sometimes, some of the songs that I use and do will kind of remind me of that, and especially while being on stage it definitely helps that performance. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

Jake (Chloe Macy) also pointed out that an entertainer really has to know the genres of songs that he can perform. Some of the entertainers I observed performed only

to ballads, typically always dressed in long evening gowns, and used very feminine hand movements. Others, on the other hand, were known for their dancing or athletic tricks during a performance or their use of song mixes. It is important for an entertainer to discover what style of performing makes him happy so that he will be comfortable on stage. As Toby (Gogh-Go Divine) stated, “[Y]ou have to enjoy yourself ‘cause the more you enjoy yourself, the more the crowd is going to enjoy watching you enjoy yourself.” If an entertainer is uncomfortable with the style of his routine in any way while performing, it will not only affect the entertainer but also the audience.

It really does, like I tell people all the time, you know, like I always say “you do you.”... So, yeah, it really does matter what kind of song you pick ‘cause if you're going to do a ballad and you're not a ballad person, then you know people are just going to be standing there, looking at you like “What are you doing?” (Jake, Chloe Macy)

For Jake, and other entertainers, the overall look of the performance is what is important, not just one particular element. The song is just the beginning, the outfit is next. Entertainers used a variety of outfits for their routines. Some entertainers used very feminine outfits that the entertainers described as “fishy.” These outfits could be subdivided into two types of feminine dress – scanty and sexy or dressy and classy. Dressy and classy outfits included evening gowns, which flowed over the entertainers’ bodies, or other covering outfits such as dress suits. Sexy and scanty outfits often consisted of barely more than a bathing suit. These outfits highlighted the sexual aspects of a performer’s body – the breasts and buttocks – typically with low-cut tops and very short skirts. Some entertainers opted for more flamboyant outfits that highlighted their creativity. These outfits included lots of sequins, hand-made back pieces or head pieces, or multiple costumes for one performance that were layered over the entertainer’s body.

Thinner entertainers used provocative outfits more often than did larger-bodied

entertainers. The thinner entertainers were more likely to be able to pass as females because of their slender builds. This ability to pass was especially strong among cast members at Fun because several of the entertainers were transsexuals and in the process of transitioning from men to women. These entertainers were very thin and had obviously had breast implant surgery. When they entered the stage, they often wore little more than bathing suits. Their tops covered their breasts but left little to the imagination, and their briefs were as small as they could be while still completely covering all necessary areas of their bodies. Some outfits had streamers or tassels attached to the briefs in order to compliment the flow of the entertainer's movements as well as provide a bit more cover.

Entertainers earned tips from both types of outfits; however, smaller outfits were more attention-grabbing and were better tools for hyping the crowd. Tippers often tipped in more degrading and objectifying ways when entertainers wore smaller outfits. When an entertainer performed in an evening gown, there seemed to be an air of respectability and class about her. Audience members seemed to sense this intangible quality of the performer and mainly tipped hand-to-hand as if they did not want to offend the "lady." However, when entertainers performed in scanty outfits, there seemed to be a "sex sells" quality, and the audience treated the entertainer like a sex toy, shoving the money down into her top, putting into the top of her briefs, or offering it mouth-to-mouth. While the type of outfit seemed to affect tipping from my perspective as an audience member, I asked the entertainers whether they felt the outfit made a difference in tips. The response was overwhelmingly yes; the outfit makes a difference, but it does not just depend on the size of the outfit. Creativity and whether an outfit corresponds to the song are also key

factors.

Christian's (Queen of the Night's) outfits were typically very creative rather than, what he refers to as Wal-Mart drag:

I go for shock value. I don't want people to see me like I just walked out of Wal-Mart with a bag.... The more creative you are with your music and the song, like, how you perform it or the costumes you wear, the more tips you get.... Sometimes you can do the worst song ever, um, but as long as you have a costume that is creative and can carry it, then, yeah, you pulled it off.... some people don't like the costumes. You know, some of 'em are perfectly happy coming out with very fishy, girl stuff on. Um, I'm not. So, I have to have a costume. You know, they don't have to be like all like the big feathers or a dance costume, but I like something with like a drag flare to it.

Jonathan and Jackson agree that flashy and creative costumes bring in more tips.

Yeah. If I wear a big costume that's like six feet over my head, you're probably going to tip me because you're like "Oh wow," and it's definitely going to make a difference. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

Something, something, um, something stagey, something that's gonna catch eyes, something with like sequins, uh feathers, anything like that, anything real rhinestoned out, really jewely, just jeweled out, I think. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

Like many of the other entertainers, Jackson goes on to state that tipping depends a great deal upon the audience. If an entertainer knows his audience and the type of music they enjoy, he can then predict what type of outfit works best for his song choice.

Three other entertainers restated this understanding about matching the outfit to the song.

But yeah, like in country, you know, I'll wear a pair of uh women's jeans with boots, and a cowboy hat, you know what I mean, 'cause that you know that works for that. I'll make, and I'll make good money that way too. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

Really, it all depends on the music that you do because you always want to have an outfit that matches your music. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

Yes, like it has to match what song you're doing. 'Cause, you know, why would you come out doing a ballad with a dance costume on? You know? So, yeah, it matters a lot. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

Well, my, my thing is it's all about, to me it's all about the music. My outfit has to match the look of the performer in my head or as me doing it, to the beat of the song. That's

what everything to me boils down to, is the beat of the song.... That I'm like, "No, you know, you're not going to come out and do a Mary J. song wearing a ball gown."... It's, it's gotta match up. (Toby, Gogh-Go Divine)

Four of the entertainers stated that scanty outfits bring in more tips. Tony pithily stated, "Less clothes, more money," and Tommy followed closely by saying that "usually sluttier outfits" bring in more tips. Mallory and Jake believe this increase in tipping is due to the fact that the audience is impressed and appreciates the illusion of the female body by a male entertainer.

Yes. Outfit does matter. Because sometimes you might get, um, it's kind of like going to a strip club, but not total full frontal nude or anything like that. It's kind of like, "Oh my god that's a man." "Oh my god, really that's a man?! I got to give him a dollar for this. That chick is hot!".... I seem to get a lot more tips by the less I wear. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

Like, if you have the body to wear a skimpy costume, like if they've had work done, then yeah that matters because I think the crowd likes to see that we look like women. 'Cause that's, you know, that's what we try to pull off, so yeah I think that matters. Like us plus-sized queens like we can wear skimpy costumes, but we kind of have to keep it covered and sucked in and tucked in. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

In almost every performance at National Avenue, one of the cast members would do some type of athletic trick. Sometimes it was a simple cartwheel, but other times it would be a backflip followed by the splits. One of the performers was a member of the cheerleading squad during high school and has a very strong gymnastic background. He had earned a reputation for being able to perform these tricks and the crowd often sat waiting for these tricks to occur. Once he accurately executed one of these tricks, the crowd would explode and rush to the tip lines. Although these tricks seemed to be popular with the audience, I questioned whether athletic tricks were a tool commonly used and valued by performers themselves.

All nine respondents agreed that athletic tricks engage the audience. However,

three of the entertainers were quick to point out that even though athletic tricks work, they should only be used to a certain extent and should not be overdone.

I can do a cartwheel. Um, I can't really do backflips or anything like that. Um, a lot of that, I don't see that as performing. Um, a cartwheel, you know I can't really talk about anybody cause yeah, I do a cartwheel. Um, I feel like if you have to rely on gymnastics or that type of the flip, or that, that you, it won't carry you very far.... Um, it works for people. It really does, but if you, if that's all you have to rely on is a flip or, you know, shaking your butt or, you know, just doing some kind of arm motion during every number. If they see it over and over and over.... then they'll get bored with it. I'm not gonna do a multiple cartwheel, or I'm not gonna do three backflips in a, one song.... or whatever because they're here to watch a drag show. This isn't the Olympics. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

If it's done correct.... You know, there, there's some girls that, that get to an extreme and they, you know, it's like, you can almost clock it.... She'll have back flip in 3-2-1-backflip! You know. And that gets to be a little, you know, I guess, mun-, mundane. Is, is that the word I'm looking for here? Um. I mean, I just like girls that are, I like uh, I, I do like athletic tricks, but I like them to be done correctly and not overdone. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

Yeah, the crowd, yeah, the crowd goes crazy. Especially if you pull it off. Like, 'cause we have one which who we just invited on cast.... So, she pulls a lot of, you know, cheerleading tricks out. So she's doing, she did a backflip with a half-tuck, and on the dance floor and you hear "Whoo!" just everybody, I mean. If you can come out and do major tricks like that, it will have the crowd up [snaps fingers].... I mean, in a heartbeat, you know. And they're, like, when, as soon as you do your first trick, they're starting to line up getting the dollars out. I mean, so, I, you know, I try to tell people, pull some tricks out. Don't try to pull all your tricks out 'cause you don't want to use up your bag of tricks within one night, but pull 'em out here and there.... Space it out, you know. (Toby, Gogh-Go Divine)

Not all performers use athletic tricks because they are often difficult and have a high risk of injury. More often entertainers use crowd interaction as a technique to engage the audience. Entertainers interacted with the crowd in different ways: the emcee talked to the crowd and used them as punch lines for jokes; some entertainers played with tippers when they came up to the stage; some entered the crowd during a performance; and a few entertainers occasionally picked on obviously heterosexual audience members. When an entertainer looked directly at someone while performing, he gave the

impression that he was performing for that particular person. This technique never seemed to be questioned when the entertainer moved on to another audience member and looked directly at him or her. For the time that the entertainer and audience member were engaged in this eye-lock, it gave the impression that their interaction was the most important at the time. As Mallory stated, "I love looking at like one person, and just like, you know, 'I am going to perform for you.'" Crowd interaction is important because it connects the entertainer with the members of the audience and increases the entertainer's chances of being tipped.

Um, in order to get the tip... You know, it's all about the interaction. Um, I love performing at [National Avenue] because you can walk around and you can go through there, and you can actually talk to somebody or mess with somebody, and it just, it really depends on how you mess with a person or how they see you with how they tip you.... Um, sometimes I'll just go and sit in somebody's lap. Or you know I'll just go and I'll mess up their hair or something like that. It's just something to let them know that like I care about them being there. Whether it's I'm embarrassing them by pulling them up on stage or whatever, I'll do it. You know just to let 'em know that, "Hey, I know you're here, and you're here for a reason." (Christian, Queen of the Night)

I am the highest paid, um, so far at every show that I've ever been in. I'm the highest paid.... I honestly believe that it's because I get out there, off the stage, and out of the spotlight for a minute. You know, and, and you know, and bring other people into my performance. When you're singing, you're talking to somebody most of the time, you know, in, in your song, so you need to interact with people.... getting in their laps, you know, not even sexual, just you know, moving around, and getting everyone interested because some people don't want to come to the stage so you have to go to them.... Some people are there to watch, not to get up and work. They're there because it's a break. So I move around and I get out there, and I, I make a lot of tips. (Sally, Shady Dawn)

Um, yes. I try to [involve the audience].... I also MC and host the show. So I'm the one with the microphone up there cracking jokes and, uh, you know, kinda, I, you know, kinda, I might pick on somebody a little bit, but it's usually somebody I know, that I know is taking it with a, you know, a grain of salt, and they know it's all in, you know, all in the sake of good humor and entertainment. [Do you involve them during the song as well?] Yeah, I might, like, uh, you know, grab someone's hand and, or grab their faces and do the motor-boat thing or something like that for fun.... I'll walk right over to the table, I might like kinda like sit up on the edge of it. I might, you know, grab somebody's face and sync, like lip-sync right at 'em. Stuff like that. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

[Do you involve the audience?] All the time. It's a must. Especially if you don't look like you're having fun, uh, you're going to get pulled into the act. So, and it's gonna happen.... I will sit on their lap. Like, the one guy last night, during my first number, he was sitting up against the wall. I sure put my leg right over his head.... And, I started rolling. I will do whatever it takes.... He didn't have to tip me. I just wanted to make sure he was having fun. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

When I do gospel numbers, I tend to use the crowd as my choir.... I'm like "Ya'll can sing. Ya'll know the song. Come on!"... or I grab somebody just randomly, "Man, come here." And they'll be like "Oh, what you bout to do?" "I don't know, do you? You'll see when I get up here. Just follow me. Just everything I do just follow me." (Tony, Scrumptious)

Um, eye to eye contact, I like go up to them, I use them in my show. I pull them onstage. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

Um, if I'm doing more of an upbeat dance number, I will go out and dance on them.... going out with them, like especially if there's a table full of, you know, heterosexuals, and you see men who are kind of like scared 'cause they're like "Oh gosh," like usually if you go to a table and start dancing onto them, then that gets people riled up, so that gets people more into it. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

All entertainers involve the audience through tipping because of the necessary interaction between the entertainer and the tipping audience member when money is exchanged; however, the level of involvement with tippers differs from entertainer to entertainer. Some entertainers believe that allowing the audience to tip in whatever way they deem fit encourages them to tip more and satisfies the tipper's need to be a part of the show. The entertainers expressed three different types of attitudes when discussing preferable and allowable tipping behaviors. The first type of attitude was very permissive; the entertainer would allow the tipper to offer her money in any way that the tipper deemed fit.

I like them really to be handed to me, but when they, I really don't have a total preference because it's, you know, when they give you a tip a certain way, like they want to give it to you lip-to-lip or put it in like your bustier or something, they want to be pulled into the act as well. So you have to pull them in as like getting that tip. So, you are performing with them. (Mallory, Nola Macy)

Um, anyway. Like, not necessarily like putting it down my panty hose of course.... Um, the mouth is fine, I don't care just don't mess up my lips. (Christian, Queen of the Night)

That, it doesn't matter to me. It doesn't matter to me at all. I mean, as long as they're not throwing it at me, which ain't so bad as long as it ain't like change or anything. Uh, but yeah it doesn't matter. I mean, however they feel comfortable with giving it. If they wanna crawl on hands and knees up to me, I'll take it. Or they want me to crawl to them, I'll crawl to 'em, you know all the way up 'em, take it out of their mouth with my, with my mouth, I've done that. So it, it doesn't matter how they give it to me, as long as they're giving it. (Toby, Gogh-Go Divine)

[Do you have a preference?] No not really some will try to stuff your bra. (Tommy, Wana Mann)

The second type of attitude was limited to appropriate and respectful behaviors.

Tips were expected to be offered hand-to-hand.

I prefer people hand me tips in my hand. I think it's tacky to, you know, put a dollar bill in your pants, and let it hang out. And a lot of times they expect you to go down 'em with their, with your mouth, and be a stripper. Not me, honey! I grab it. Ha ha, with my hands. (Sally, Shady Dawn)

Usually hand to hand. I don't like being abused when I'm on stage. (Jonathan, Ava Diva)

The third type of attitude was a compromise between the permissive and the limited attitudes. Entertainers deemed some behaviors appropriate and allowable, such as placing the tips in their tops, but deemed other behaviors, such as trying to get the entertainer to put the tip in his mouth, too extreme.

I don't like people wanting me to get tips out of their mouth with mine. Money, money has been in stripper's crotches, it's the nastiest shit on the planet. I'm not trying to put my mouth on a dollar bill like it, or like I've seen people come up and they'll stick 'em down here, in their crotch, and like expect me to go down with my mouth and pick it up. Hell no, I'll take that shit right out with my hand. I ain't doing that.... They can stick it in my brassiere, now that's, that's fine. I can do that. (Jackson, Miss Diva)

I typically stick my hand out like I talk to them and they stick it in my hand, or they can stick it in my chest. Just feeling all over me –uh-uh! Can't do that. Would you do your mama that way? Don't do me that way. That's what I tell them. [What about mouth-to-mouth tips?] Oop, don't do that. I have this big thing with diseases, and I can't do that. Ain't no soap I can wash my lips after they just touched yours, cause I don't know where your lips been. That's what I tell them. (Tony, Scrumptious)

You know, like, I guess I do have a pet peeve, like if the dollar's wadded up, like it makes it very inconvenient to hold and try to perform. So, I like the dollar folded in half, longways, and then handed to me. [Would you prefer that they not give it to you mouth-to-mouth?] Yeah, I prefer that. Most of the time, you will see me take it from them. If they're very persistent, I will, you will see me just grab it with the edge of my teeth so it won't touch my lips or anything else. 'Cause you know I think money is like one of the dirtiest things, you can, 'cause you don't know where it's been, who's wallet it's been in. (Jake, Chloe Macy)

Whenever tips were offered in unflattering ways, such as the mouth-to-mouth tip, entertainers usually subtly took the money with their hands while kissing the tipper on the cheek. If the tipper was persistent, the entertainer would chide them in some way with a look or shake of the finger or head, playfully grab the money from the tipper, or just barely touch the money in the desired way to take it without upsetting the tipper. Fun's regular cast (excluding guest performers) almost always took tips hand-to-hand. On several occasions, typically later in the evening after the audience had the opportunity to consume a large amount of alcohol, the tippers began to tip in more degrading ways. They often would want the entertainers to dance in front of them to earn their tip, or tried to entice the entertainers to take the money from their mouths, or placed the money somewhere on their bodies. Only one performer played along with most of the tipping behaviors, dancing when requested, allowing tippers to shove money into her top or briefs, and taking tips when offered from tippers' mouths. On occasion, she kissed the tipper directly on the mouth when the tip was offered. The other entertainers on cast danced for tippers a few times, but they never allowed the tipper to place the money on their bodies and never took the money with their mouths.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Drag entertainers inhabit a unique position in the realm of gender. Theoretically, entertainers hold the power to reinforce, as well as transcend, traditional gender roles due to the active construction of their female characters. By forming cohesive images of females through their use of dress, song selection, and feminine body movements, entertainers in this study reinforced cultural images of female beauty and the traditional assumptions that females should be soft, graceful, and sexy. Due to these portrayed images and the entertainers' interactions with the crowds, the drag shows left a distinct impression of heteronormativity.

One way that drag entertainers reinforced heteronormativity was through the use of counterfeit intimacy with audience members. I argue that drag entertainers engage in a similar but distinctly different counterfeit intimacy with customers than that of exotic dancers. The counterfeit intimacies are similar in that both types of entertainers must portray a particular self to engage customers and entice them to tip. What is distinct about each technique is the type of intimacy offered by the entertainer. Ronai and Ellis (1989) stated that dancers create counterfeit intimacy by "turning on" customers. This phrase means sexually arousing patrons and manipulating their hopes of eventually engaging in sexual intercourse with the dancer (Ronai and Ellis 1989; Sijuwade 1995). For this researcher, drag entertainers "turn on" their patrons by manipulating their

fantasies that the entertainer is performing directly for him or her.

In order to create this counterfeit intimacy, a drag entertainer must first engage the customer's attention to his performance. Drag entertainers actively take the role of their audiences as a way of identifying and predicting which aspects of a performance will engage audience members. Identifying which aspects of a performance an audience enjoys allows an entertainer to use impression management (Goffman 1959) to give the customers what they want, expect, and appreciate. Customer satisfaction is important because customers are more likely to tip when they are satisfied, thus making the performance mutually beneficial for the customer and the entertainer. Performing popular songs, wearing sexy or classy outfits, executing athletic tricks, and interacting with the crowd are all rational techniques that drag entertainers use to engage the audience and often cause an increase in tipping. When an audience member tips, that is the time that the entertainer engages in counterfeit intimacy. The entertainer creates counterfeit intimacy by maintaining eye contact, leaning in to accept the tip, often kissing the tipper on the cheek, and exchanging some verbal remark such as "thank you." All of these actions provide a sense of intimacy for the tipper by separating his or her interaction with the performer from the entire performance and other audience members. Important to this interaction is the way that the tipper offers the tip to the entertainer. The entertainer allows, and sometimes even encourages degrading tipping techniques, such as the mouth-to-mouth tip or cleavage tip, in order to incorporate the tipper and build the counterfeit intimacy. Because drag queen entertainers were tipped by men more than women, the immediate illusion that occurred during a tipping interaction was the illusion of heterosexuality due to the counterfeit intimacy created by the entertainer. These

findings add to the previous literature, which finds that drag entertainment reinforces gender roles and heteronormativity (Dolan 1985; Frye 1983; Gagne and Tewksbury 1996; Schacht 1998, 2000, 2002a, 2002b; Tewksbury 1993, 1994).

The positive benefits that entertainers report in this study reiterate the reported benefits from previous studies. Hopkins' (2004) participants reported that they love to entertain others, are empowered by their experiences, can escape personal problems, and can repair or fulfill perceived deficiencies in the entertainer's male self. Taylor and Rupp (2004) also add that performing allows entertainers to fulfill their desire for attention. This study supports the findings of both Hopkins (2004) and Taylor and Rupp (2004) but also adds to their findings with the reported benefits of becoming someone completely different – not just changing perceived deficiencies but the entire persona – and offers entertainers an outlet to express their creativity. There is also a monetary benefit; however, this benefit often lacks significance due to its inconsistency. The respondents in this study, like those in Hopkins' (2004), reported that doing drag is not their sole occupation. These various benefits for doing drag far outweigh the costs mentioned by the entertainers making drag entertainment a valuable activity for the performers.

Several limitations obstruct this study. The first limitation is the small sample size of interview participants. Entertainers performing in larger cities typically perform more often and may make more money in tips than smaller town drag entertainers; thus, entertainers from Big City may have inherently different conceptualizations about the costs and benefits of performing and may define the symbolic meaning of tips differently than the entertainers performing in Collegetown and/or Angelville. Further, the fact that several of the cast members performing in Fun are transsexuals may affect how they

prefer and allow people to tip them. Although differences between transsexual entertainers and gay-male entertainers were not apparent in this study, the small sample size may have hidden this effect.

Second, all of the settings and entertainers were centralized in a small region of the mid-South. The locales of these shows may have affected the responses of the participants as well as the observed actions of the participants within the settings. Tolerance and acceptance of drag entertainers may be higher in larger cities where there is a greater diversity and diffusion of ideas than in smaller communities. The size of the city could shape the boundaries that drag entertainers push because entertainers may have to act in more attention-grabbing ways in order to make people question the social construction of gender than they would in smaller communities. On the other hand, larger cities may have stricter rules or laws governing what actions are appropriate for entertainers.

Third, there exists a lack of definition, both in the literature and in the current study, for what constitutes a professional or amateur drag show. Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein's study (2007) attempted to define the types of drag venues based upon level of spatial separation between gay men and drag entertainers. It is sad that this attempt is relevant only to their specific research focus and locations. If a dichotomy or ranking system exists in the drag entertainment industry (from amateur to professional), responses and observations may vary based upon level of professionalism. Due to these limitations, the findings are not generalizable to all drag shows or all drag entertainers. Nor are these findings constant over time because of continual cast changes; as casts change over time, so might the observed behaviors and attitudes of entertainers.

Despite these limitations, this study has explored several important aspects of drag shows that have previously been understudied: the ways in which audience members tip drag entertainers, the symbolic meaning that drag entertainers attach to tips, and the benefits and costs that drag entertainers receive from performing. Further, it has added support to previous literature focusing on reasons why drag entertainers perform and whether drag entertainment reinforces or transgresses traditional gender stereotypes and roles. Some of these issues have been explored for the first time, and it remains to be seen whether these patterns hold over time and space.

Future research could spawn from the limitations and the beginning explorations of this study, especially in regard to tipping. Researchers should begin to explore the differences between drag shows hosted in venues in very large metropolises and small communities. Difference in city size may lead to differences among entertainer attitudes, techniques they use to engage the audience, as well as differences in the clientele and how audience members tip entertainers. Further, future studies could focus on the audience members and how they conceptualize tips, why they attend shows, and what techniques they use in order to manipulate the entertainer. These explorations could lead to a definitive ranking system of drag venues based upon professionalism. Researchers would also benefit in comparing drag-queen entertainers with drag-king entertainers. There may be important differences between the two that have yet to be discovered due to the marginality of drag kings within the drag scene. The excitement of being entertained by a drag king may not be as fulfilling because women can easily pass as men, which damages the entertainment value and ultimate product of the show. Drag king personas are not as eye-catching or flamboyant as drag queens and may not share a

similar experience of performing, especially in regard to tipping, audience acceptance, or audience involvement. These suggestions are only a few of the many interesting topics that can be further explored within the distinct field of drag entertainment, and I encourage researchers to examine these aspects in order to further our sociological knowledge.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Interactions between Female Impersonators and Tipping Audience Members

Investigator: Leslie Abell, WKU Department of Sociology, (270) 316-0108, under the supervision of Drs. Amy Krull, Steve Groce, and Matt Pruitt

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted by the above investigator at Western Kentucky University. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him/her any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. **Nature and Purpose of the Project:** The purpose of this work is to study the techniques female impersonators use to earn tips from audience members and the ways audience members interact with performers.
2. **Explanation of Procedures:** You will be interviewed using in-depth interviewing procedures. The questions asked are designed to encourage you to give your own feelings and opinions. The interview will be audio taped.
3. **Discomfort and Risks:** Because this topic reflects a personal lifestyle of which some do not approve, strong emotions may be experienced. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, you may choose not to answer it.
4. **Benefits:** It is possible that you will reflect on your lifestyle and activities and feel more comfortable with yourself or have a better understanding of your own life.
5. **Confidentiality:** Every precaution will be used to insure your confidentiality. A pseudonym will be created for you, and the interview will be held in private. The tapes and transcripts will be available **only** to the investigator.
6. **Refusal/Withdrawal:** Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any

time with no penalty.

You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.

By stating your continued cooperation in this interview by phone or in person will imply your anonymous consent.

THE DATED APPROVAL ON THIS CONSENT FORM INDICATES THAT
THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY
THE WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD
Paul Mooney, Compliance Coordinator
TELEPHONE: (270) 745-4652

APPENDIX B

Interview Questionnaire

- How old are you?
- Where are you from?
- Are you currently in school?
- Are you married?
- Do you have any children?
 - How many?
 - How old are they?
- How long have you been performing as a female impersonator?
- When is your next performance?
- What are you looking forward to the most at that performance?
 - Why?
- What do you like best about performing?
 - Why?
- What do you like least about performing?
- How often do you perform?
 - Do you perform at particular places?
 - Why those places?
 - Which places are best to perform at?
 - Why?
- How old were you when you began female impersonation?
- How did you begin female impersonation?
 - How did you learn about female impersonation?
 - Did someone tell you? Who?
 - Did you learn some other way?
 - How did you learn how to be a female impersonator?
 - Did someone tell you? Who?
 - Did you learn some other way?
- How did you decide who you were going to become?
 - How did you decide the female personality?
 - How did you decide what she would look like/act/sound like/enjoy?
 - Were these choices based on other performers that you knew?
 - Did other people help you decide who to become?
 - How did they do that?
 - Did people approve of the female character you were trying to be?
 - How did they show approval?
 - How did that make you feel?

- Why?
 - How did they show that they didn't like your character?
 - Did they suggest ways they thought you should change?
 - How did that make you feel?
 - Why?
- Why do you perform as a female impersonator?
 - What does performing do for you?
 - What emotions do you feel when you're on stage?
 - Why do you feel that way?
 - What makes you feel that way?
- Do you or any performers you know physically change your bodies for performing?
- How do you feel about performers who do that?
- Do they do this just for the performance aspect or because they are transgendered?
- Would you ever use those techniques?
 - Why/not?
- What kinds of song do you like to perform to?
 - Why do you like those songs?
 - What kind of songs do you like to watch others perform?
- Do many people tip you when you perform?
 - How does that make you feel?
 - Why?
- Do you make enough money in tips to live on?
 - If no, do you work full/part time?
- Do tips mean more than just money to you?
- Do you know anyone who performs only for tips?
 - How do people give you tips?
 - Do you prefer for them to give you tips a certain way?
 - Why do you like that particular way of tip-giving?
 - Why do you think they give you tips?
- How do you get more tips from people?
 - Does the song matter?
 - What kind of song brings in more tips?
 - Does the outfit matter?
 - What kind of outfit brings in more tips?
 - Does the attitude or personality you perform bring in more tips?
 - What kind of attitude brings in more tips?
 - Why do you think that is?
 - Why do you think some people tip but others do not?
 - Do you use any athletic tricks when you perform?
 - Why did you first include it in your performance?
 - Why do you continue to include it?
 - Do people like athletic tricks?
 - How do you know?

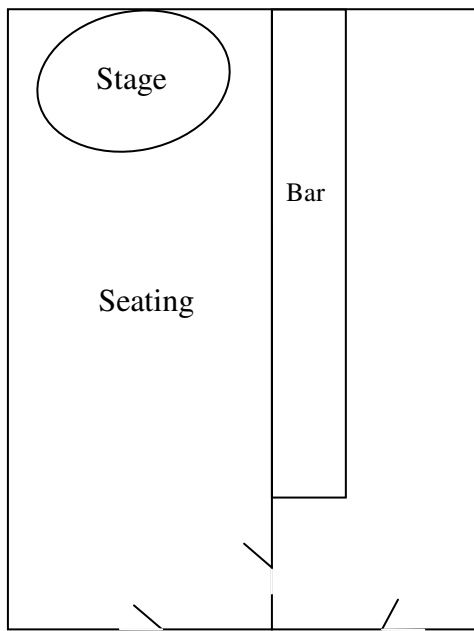
- Do you have any trademark moves or tricks you use in your performances?
 - Why do you use them?
 - How did you come up with the idea for that trick?
- Do you involve the audience in your performance?
 - How do you involve them?
 - If the audience isn't involved enough, how do you get them more into the performance?
- How long do you think you will perform?
 - Why?
- Would anything make you stop performing?
 - What would make you stop performing?
 - Why would that make you stop?
- Are the other performers friendly?
 - Do you know the other performers personally or only through the shows?
- May I contact you again if I have further questions?
- If you were comfortable with this interview, please feel free to pass around my information to any other entertainers. I would love to talk to as many performers as possible. Thank you so much for your time!

APPENDIX C

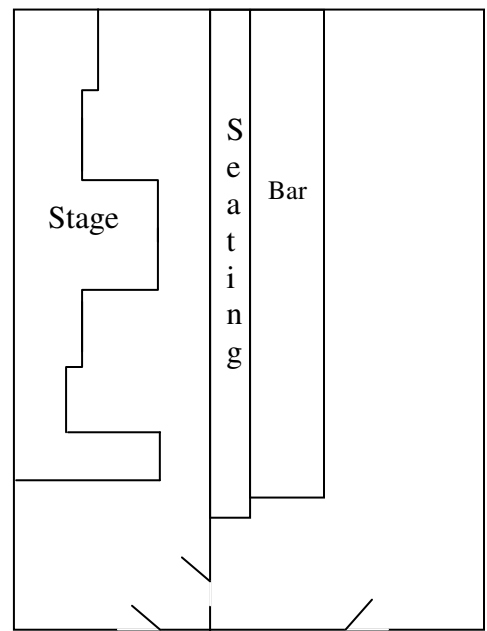
Venue Layouts

Rainbows Layout

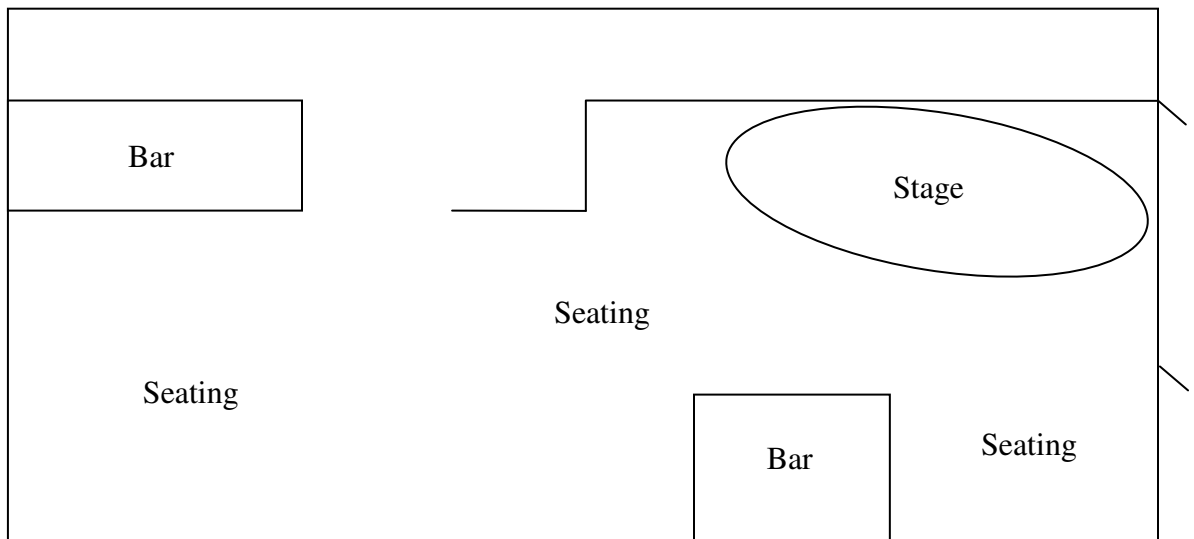
Before Renovation



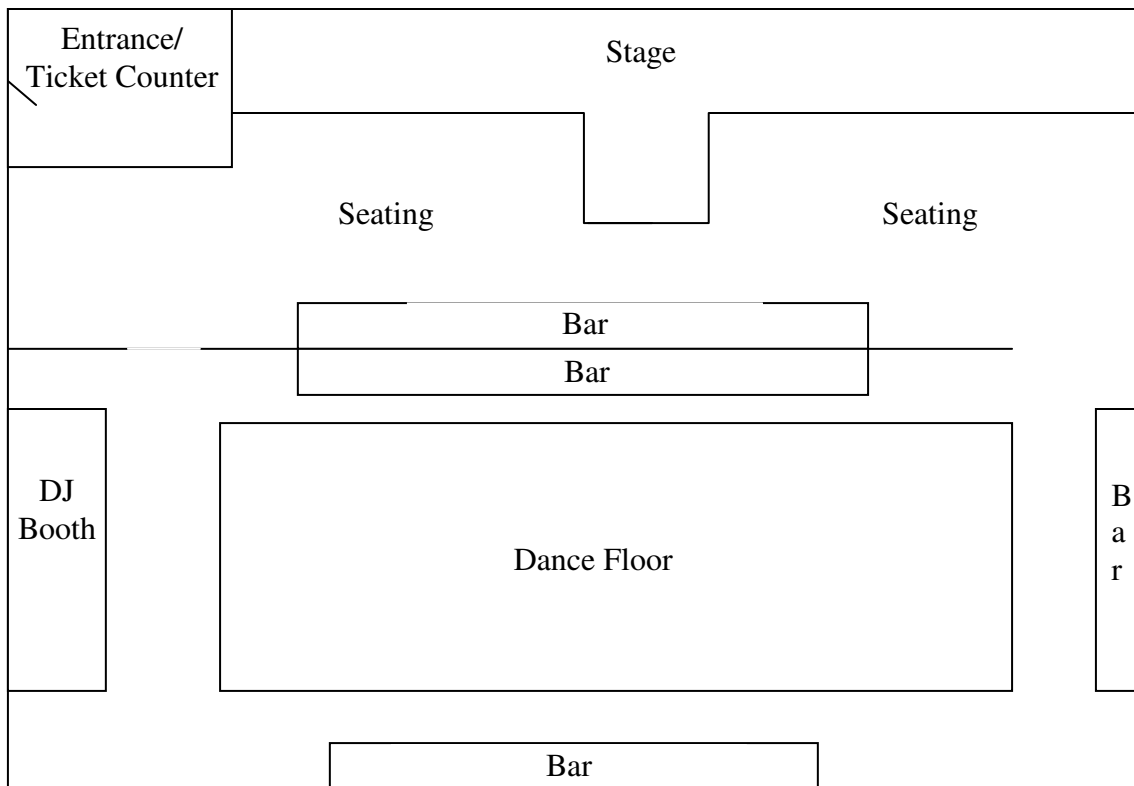
After Renovation



National Avenue Layout



Fun Layout



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