

HOW TO READ LIKE A QUEEN: THE LANGUAGE OF RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE

by

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(Under the Direction of Ruth Harman)

ABSTRACT

“Reading is the real art form of insults. You get in a smart crack, and everyone laughs and kikis because you’ve found a flaw and exaggerated it, then you’ve got a good read going...” - Dorian Corey (Livingston, 1990)

Within the format of the *RuPaul's Drag Race* program, there exists a challenge focused solely on the art of reading. The goal here is to understand what indirectness strategies and themes are utilized in successful reads. It is hypothesized that conversational implicature is essential to the effectiveness of reads. Using the Gricean framework of implicature as distilled by Levinson (1983), winning reads were coded based on indirectness strategies and for theme to compare with previous work. Implicature was the most prolific indirectness strategy used by successful reads, and a majority were directed at an addressee's appearance. This work sets the groundwork for future projects using naturally occurring language data (Dyrel, 2011a).

INDEX WORDS: [READING, THROWING SHADE, *RUPAUL'S DRAG RACE*, PRAGMATICS, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, IMPLICATURE]

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DEDICATION

To all the queer people who came before and all who will come after me.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Reading is the real art form of insults. You get in a smart crack, and everyone laughs and kakis because you’ve found a flaw and exaggerated it, then you’ve got a good read going...” - Dorian Corey (Livingston, 1990)

To those who frequent queer spaces, consume queer media, and interact with queer people, the art of reading is an essential skill. *Reading* refers to the act of witty insult, oftentimes in a playful way not intended to cause true harm. The act of reading, and its twin sister *shade*, are innately queer phenomenon, where reading is the act of mock insult and the resulting effect of such insult is shade. As is often the case with phenomenon originating from disenfranchised groups, reading has been historically understudied from the perspective of how to successfully perform the practice. The goal with this thesis is to understand how reading is successfully performed and comprehended. To accomplish this, instances of reads found in the television program *RuPaul’s Drag Race* were analyzed within the framework of Gricean implicature to establish a foundational understanding of the practice that can be applied to future study.

When considering the understanding of both shade and reading, we must consider the famed quote from Mother Dorian Corey, which is still used today as the key definition for the terminology.

“Shade comes from reading. Reading came first... Shade is, I don’t tell you you’re ugly. But I don’t have to tell you, because you know you’re ugly. And that’s shade.” (Livingston, 1990)

The definitions of both reading and shade, when detailed by those who use these strategies, maintain the pattern set by Corey which uses examples and personal accounts as a means of definition (Davis, 2019). The first academic

definition of reading is found in the work of E. Patrick Johnson, who defines reading as “to set [someone] ’straight,’ to put them in their place, or reveal a secret about someone in front of others in an indirect way —usually in a way which embarrasses a third party” (Johnson, 1995: 125).

1.1 What is a Read and Where Did It Come From?

Before *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, there was drag. Before drag, there was ballroom. While the origins of ballroom stem from enslaved Black and brown peoples in the Antebellum South, the culture as it is known today first began its distillation in early 20th century Harlem. At that time, queer people of all shades would meet and perform in balls (Criales-Unzueta, 2023). Abram Hill, a playwright, described these events as where people “got together for a grand jamboree of dancing, love making, display, rivalry, drinking and advertisement” (Hill, 1939). Ballroom persisted through to the 1960s but not without struggle with homophobic governments, the Great Depression, and later, the AIDS crisis. During the 60s, drag queens Crystal and Lottie LaBeija established the House of LaBeija, a response to the anti-Blackness that had overcome the culture, and began to host balls of their own, where the ballroom we know today finally takes its shape (Criales-Unzueta, 2023).

Along with the distinct culture which ballroom is credited for, it is also the birthplace of *throwing shade* and *reading*, which is where this study is focused. While the concept of shade can be traced back to Jane Austen’s novel *Mansfield Park* (1814), the first explicit explanation of the terms as we know them today is found in the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*, directed by Jennie Livingston. The groundbreaking film gave an intimate look at New York’s ballroom scene and queer existence in the mid-1980s, focusing on its founders and the family dynamics which lay the foundation of the culture (Livingston, 1990). Included in the film, there are a number of interviews with both general members of the scene as well as the original matriarchal figures of the familial units that made up the competitive ‘houses,’ referred to as ‘mothers.’

The reference to indirectness is a consistent feature across research surrounding the practice of reading and throwing shade. Johnson claims that to read someone is to “set them straight... in an indirect way” (Johnson, 1995: 125). In his 2019 work, Davis defines shade as “calling them out in a smart way” or “saying it without saying it” (Davis, 2019: 62). The drag queen Eva, who was the focus of McKinnon’s 2017 work on reading in the context of backstage talk, said in an interview response “...reading is supposed to be funny and creative. And that is the thing, it’s not like ‘oh girl well you’re a bitch and you’re ugly,’ that’s

not reading, that’s just being rude.” (McKinnon, 2017: 105). In other words, to read someone is to insult them in an indirect and not necessarily harmful way, the resulting effect of such insult being shade. Each of these definitions makes reference to the non-explicit nature of the practice. Martina Podboj, in her work investigating the discursive genre of the *RuPaul’s Drag Race* Reading Challenge, goes as far as to say that throwing shade is “a result of implied insult” (Podboj, 2023: 80). In addition to involving indirectness and insult, another major factor assumed to be present in the acts of reading and throwing shade is the need for closeness between the speaker and the addressee. One of the interviewees of Davis’s work states plainly that “in order to throw shade, you have to know someone” (Davis, 2019: 61).

To best visualize the phenomenon of reading, we need to view examples. As mentioned previously, the data used for this study originates from *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, the tokens of which were collected from a recurring challenge in the program titled the Reading Challenge. The Reading Challenge is a reading-based competition which gives each contestant the opportunity to read their fellow competitors. The transcription in Figure 1-1 was taken from the Reading Challenge on the second season of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, airing in March 2010. The speaker is contestant Jujubee, the winner of the challenge, and her addressee is Tatianna, a fellow competitor. The contestants, also referred to as *queens*, will be referred to only by the name of their drag character, and to accommodate this, the pronouns ‘*she*’ and ‘*her*,’ both in transcriptions and data analysis.

1	<i>Camera is on Tatianna who is laughing from the the previous read</i>	
2	Jujubee	Miss Tatianna: . miss %honey . you think you’re so
3		<i>[camera cuts to Juju holding glasses above her eyes [camera cuts back to Tatianna who is covering her mouth still laughing]</i>
4	Jujubee	so:ft . . not by the hai:rs of your chinny chin chin
5		<i>[camera cuts to Juju who takes off her glasses [Juju waggles her finger [Juju brushed her hand across her chin [again [again]</i>
6	RuPaul	[OOOhh: . ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh
7		<i>[Ru doubles over in laughter]</i>
	<i>Camera cuts back to Tatianna who leans over still laughing</i>	

Figure 1.1: Jujubee vs Tatianna

In the verbal component of the read, which is split across lines 2, and 4, Jujubee is referring Tatianna’s self-identified feminine image by using the word ‘soft,’ which is a word used in the drag and queer community as an adjective meaning feminine. She follows this reference by saying “not by the hairs of your chinny chin chin,” a line from the 1800s nursery rhyme *Three Little Pigs*. By using this quote, Jujubee is presupposing that Tatianna has visible hairs on her

chin, otherwise known as a beard. Within the art of drag, it is widely frowned upon to have visible facial hair as it makes the goal of appearing as a biological woman, or passing for one, impossible. Using this presupposition, Jujubee implies that Tatianna cannot, and is not, 'soft'. As a note, while there are now performers whose drag includes facial hair, in the case of this read, having visible facial hair was extremely frowned upon.

1.2 *RuPaul's Drag Race as Data*

While being a common language practice within the overarching queer and Black communities, reading has also made its way into the mainstream through the program *RuPaul's Drag Race*. *RuPaul's Drag Race* is a growingly popular drag competition which combines the challenges of *Top Model* and *Project Runway* with the reality TV gold of reality dramas such as *The Circle* and *Real Housewives*. The show sees a set of drag queen contestants competing to be crowned America's Next Drag Superstar, as determined by the world's most famous drag queen, RuPaul Charles. An overwhelming majority of contestants are self-identifying gay men who have made a career performing as female entertainers, with trans men, trans women, women assigned female at birth (AFAB), and a singular straight man fleshing out the body of competitors over the sixteen regular seasons and eight *All Stars* seasons. While the empire of Drag Race has expanded to fourteen additional countries and counting, the focus of the present study uses seasons set in the United States, as insult is a heavily cultural phenomenon.

The data analyzed for this study originates in a formal challenge based on the art of reading, titled The Reading Challenge, as briefly mentioned above. The Reading Challenge occurs once per season and sees the contestants read one another in a structured frame, as seen in Figure 1-2.



Figure 1.2: Reading Challenge, *All Stars 7*

One by one, each contestant leaves the side of the room where the contestants are lined up to move to the right hand of RuPaul. They then have the opportunity to read all of the competing queens in attendance, the goal of the challenge being to perform the most successful and most comedic reads as judged by RuPaul. While each contestant has the opportunity to read all of their fellow competitors, the final edit of the program shows a curated collection of the best and the worst reads in the challenge. The goal of this thesis is to better understand the language used in successful reads, and in order to accomplish this, the reads used for analysis were only those delivered by the winner of each season's challenge.

1.3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

The indirectness of reading is the foundation for my primary hypothesis concerning how successful reads are accomplished. I hypothesize that the indirectness of successful reads is accounted for using the framework of Gricean implicature. Implicature refers to meaning that is not explicitly stated by the speaker but is nevertheless understood by the hearer. The implicature being referenced here is specifically the Gricean-proposed 'conversational implicature', which can be simply defined as an "account of how it is possible to mean more than what is actually 'said'," (Levinson, 1983: 97).

Such implicatures are understood to have five defining features which they must possess. The first is defeasibility, or the ability to be canceled; the second is non-detachability, which is an innate connection with the semantic meaning of the utterance; the third is calculability, where the implied meaning can be calculated using the given utterance and context; the fourth is non-conventionality, or meaning not found in conventional meaning; and finally the fifth is being non-stagnant, or situationally variable. Select reads that are found to use implicature were analyzed according to these features to confirm their validity as implicature. It was hypothesized that the majority of reads found within the Reading Challenge of *RuPaul's Drag Race* utilize conversational implicature to some degree.

As mentioned above, another common factor in the study of reading is the necessity for closeness between the speaker and the addressee. This leads us to the secondary hypothesis, which supposes that the reads collected from the *All Stars* seasons of the program will have different results when compared with those of the regular seasons, as the cast of said shows have existing relationships due to being returning contestants. Finally, comparisons were made between the thematic content of the data to previous work done by Podboj (2023). In

her work surmising Reading Challenge of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, Podboj not only argues that reading within the drag community acts as its own discursive genre, but also codes all reads found in both regular and *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* for their thematic content using six general categories. In an effort to arrive at more specific conclusions, less general categories were used in the coding than originally used by Podboj. The results found in the data were then compared to Podboj's results in an effort to find any thematic differences between successful reads and those that were less successful.

1.4 Brief Outline of Methodology

To explore the questions detailed above, all segments of the transcribed data identified as reads in the Reading Challenge of both the regular seasons and *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* were transcribed. The nearly 600 reads collected were deemed to be outside of the scope of the present project, as each individual read would need to be manually coded as either a success or a failure. To limit the size of the data to be analyzed, the sample size was reduced to include only the reads spoken by the winner of each challenge, as these reads were deemed to be successful by RuPaul, resulting in 96 individual reads. This avoided the need for more extensive, peer reviewed coding.

Each token was then coded for their use of Gricean implicature, as well as any other indirectness strategies used. Other indirectness strategies that appeared through out the data included explicit meanings and double entendres. Each read was additionally coded for theme, with each read being assigned a category for each thematic reference, to then be compared to the thematic results of Podboj's 2023 study. The categories used for thematic coding included appearance, status/quality, intelligence, personality, plastic surgery, general dislike, hygiene, age, femininity, competition competence, promiscuity, and wealth. For reads that referenced the addressee's appearance, a secondary category was assigned according to the specificity of appearance. These included face, body, fashion, weight, teeth, wigs, and genitals. Finally, the results of the data analysis were divided according to regular seasons and *All Stars* seasons, in an effort to compare the practices of the two sister series of the program.

As the practice of reading is common in the gay and drag communities, it is unsurprising to see contestants employ the practice throughout their time on the show. The production team behind the scenes of the program is aware of the benefit of catching these practices on camera as well, restricting contestants' interactions to when they are on camera to ensure that all conflicts or relationship development happens on film. Due to the produced nature of the

program, stipulation must be made when applied to naturally occurring data. While a study similar to the present one could be conducted using naturally occurring reads, either found in the program or elsewhere, the conclusions made here cannot be assumed to be directly mirrored by natural language (Dyner, 2011a).

1.5 Project Structure

Chapter 2 provides a review of existing literature on the topics of implicature, shade, and reading. While there is no published research on implicature and reading, past research on the topics of both reading and shade have nevertheless created a foundation upon which my hypothesis is built. Continuing to Chapter 3, the methodologies used in performing this study are outlined, including the standards for transcription and the need for expanding into nonverbal features. The resulting findings are summarized in Chapter 4, which includes examples of individual reads, illustrating the results of the above inquiries. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes and concludes this project and propose future work of similar frame.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the overarching goal of this work is to better understand the forms and themes of successful reads, using data from *RuPaul's Drag Race* to investigate the hypotheses proposed previously. In order to conduct this investigation, it is essential to discuss the existing pertinent literature, specifically works on Gricean implicature, the relationship between reading and throwing shade, and previous work influential to the study of reading. To preface the thematic comparison, the work of Podboj which is concerned with her thematic results was also reviewed.

2.1 Gricean Pragmatics

To begin my review, I will discuss the pinnacle research within the field of pragmatics and conversational implicature. In terms of the history of implicature, all roads lead back to the many works of H. Paul Grice, the British philosopher of language credited with the origination of implicature as a pragmatic concept as well as other theories which guide the current understanding of meaning. In the following section, these core theories will be outlined and refined, particularly as they relate to the study at hand, as outlined in one of the premiere texts in the field *Pragmatics* (1983) by Stephen C. Levinson.

2.1.1 Defining Pragmatics and Gricean Meaning

Before discussing the specifics of conversational implicature, I must first define meaning as an overarching concept as situated in the field of pragmatics. The origins of the field can be traced back to philosopher of language Charles Morris, who in his 1938 work focused on the science of signs, or semiotics, determining three major branches in which signs could be studied: syntax, semantics, and

pragmatics (Morris, 1938). Syntax, which is defined as “the formal relation of signs to one another,” is not of major interest in the present work, while future study which investigated the syntactic structures commonly found in the practice of reading would be an interesting proposition. The second and third branches are semantics, or “the relation of signs to the objects to which signs are applicable,” and pragmatics, “the relation of signs to interpreters” respectively (Morris, 1938:6). The latter two branches, and their interactions, is where the understanding of meaning begins to take shape.

In the present day, semantics can simply be defined as the study of meaning, a field widely studied through mathematical frameworks such as logic and set theory (Coppock and Champollion, 2022). Concerned primarily with natural meaning, semantics orients meaning according to truth conditions, being the situations in which the utterance in question can be found to be true (2022: 43) The study of semantics does not necessitate the knowledge of whether a sentence is in fact true in our world to determine its meaning, only what is needed for it to be true. For example, let’s take the following sentence.

(1) I saw a unicorn.

Regardless of the state of the natural world, native speakers of English can understand that the semantic meaning of the sentence is that the speaker maintains the ability to see, exists in a world where unicorns exist, and was in close enough proximity to see one. Semantics alone cannot account for everyday language usage however, as ordinary conversation does not strictly follow the fixed meanings of words as stratified in the logic of semantics. Considering back to the sentence in (1), the semantic meaning cannot be true in the current world. It can, however, be true should the speaker be using the word ‘unicorn’ to create an additional meaning where they saw something out of this world or unusual. To account for this phenomena, we must introduce the study of pragmatics, which while carrying a number of different technical definitions will be assumed here to be “the study of all those aspects of meaning not captured in semantic theory” (Levinson, 1983: 12)

The Gricean perspective on the dichotomy between semantics and pragmatics can be seen in his categorical distinction between what is said and what is meant, with ‘saying’ aligning with the conventional semantic meaning of the utterance and all information gathered outside of the semantic weight of a sentence existing outside of what was ‘said’ (Grice, 1975: 44). This same structure is easier understood in his introduction of natural versus non-natural meaning, or meaning-*nn*, in his work on meaning (Grice, 1957: 378). This difference is illustrated through the following examples, pairing Grice’s original with another.

- (2) ‘Those spots mean (meant) measles.’
- (3) ‘There is a new spot on my arm.’

In (2), the intended meaning is derived simply by observing the relationship between the semantic components of the utterance, where the existence of spots lends itself to the reality of measles, exemplifying natural meaning. Using the format seen in Levinson (1983), (3) can be seen in two differing contexts.

- (4) a. I do not normally have spots on my arm.
- b. There is a new spot on my arm.

c. The spot on my arm is abnormal, I should see a doctor.

- (5) a. I have spots on my arm.
- b. There is a new spot on my arm.

c. I have observed a common phenomenon.

In (4), the statement could be noting a reason for a visit to the doctor. In (5), the statement could simply be an observation. This illustrates that what is said and what is intended to be communicated are not identical, showcasing the non-natural meaning. The utterance meaning arrived at by the hearer when considering meaning-nn, such as in (3), is defined in pragmatics as conversational implicature.

2.1.2 Conversational Implicature

Steven Levinson in his 1983 book states that conversational implicature is “one of the single most important ideas in pragmatics” (Levinson, 1983: 97). Following his lead, conversational implicature will hereby be referred to as implicature for the sake of simplicity. To put it plainly, implicature allows for explanation of how more can be meant than what is said, acting as a label on the non-natural meaning described above. Consider the following prototypical example used by Levinson:

- (6) a. A: Can you tell me the time?

b. B: Well, the milkman has come.

(1983:98)

Through the lens of semantics, the response of B would be a direct neglect of speaker A's question, as they do not state the time. A pragmatic lens, however, and one of native natural speakers, B's response is understood to mean the following:

(7) B: "*No I don't know the exact time of the present moment, but I can provide some information from which you may be able to deduce the approximate time, namely the milkman has come.*"

(1983:98)

Here, while the information is not given directly, speaker B is adequately answering A's question to the best of their ability, a fact which cannot be accounted for from standard semantic theory. Consider a secondary example inspired by Levinson:

(8) They got married and had a baby.

(9) She bought apples and she bought oranges.

(10) ?They had a baby and got married.

(11) She bought oranges and she bought apples.

The above example sees two differing functions of the word and, with lines (8) and (10) signifying order and lines (9) and (11) signifying addition. Levinson uses a similar example to illustrate that the possible explanations of this slight difference in the use of and from the perspective of semantics are undesirable. From the point of view of semantics, there are either two definitions of and, resulting in an infinite number of possible, slightly differing definitions, or words can only be assigned vague definitions. Implication provides an otherwise nonexistent solution, allowing for utterances to carry both a "simple, stable, and unitary sense" as well as an "unstable, context-specific pragmatics overlay" (1983:99) In order for an interlocutor to be able to grasp the potential non-natural meanings intended by the speaker, Grice claims that there exists certain assumptions which are integral to conversation, namely the co-operative principle.

2.2 Co-operative Principle and Gricean Maxims

As the name implies, the co-operative principle is a supportive convention which is assumed to be followed by all participants of a conversation which

sees all participants in a given interaction sharing the goal of productive communication. Below these conventions are defined and outlined:

- (12) *The Co-operative Principle*: Make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

(Levinson, 1983: 101)

Grice pairs this general principle with a set of four maxims which additionally govern conversation, all of which are outlined below:

- (13) *The maxim of Quality* - try to make your contribution one that is true, specifically:

- a. do not say what you believe to be false
- b. do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

- (14) *The maxim of Quantity* -

- a. make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange
- b. do not make your contribution more informative than is required

- (15) *The maxim of Relevance* -

- a. make your contributions of relevance

- (16) *The maxim of Manner* - be perspicuous, and specifically:

- a. avoid obscurity
- b. avoid ambiguity
- c. be brief
- d. be orderly

(Levinson, 1983: 101-102)

To vastly over generalize, the co-operative principle on the whole assumes that speakers in a conversations are being cooperative, speaking “sincerely, rele-

vantly, clearly, and... sufficient[ly]" (1983:102) Should a speaker's response not directly follow this principle, the hearer still assumes the principle is being followed on a deeper level, lending itself to alternate or differing meanings not directly apparent. Implication arises when the semantic meaning of an utterance is paired with its context and the assumption of cooperation, leading the hearer to derive additional, indirect meaning.

These maxims and principle are not exclusive to language either, as they are seen to be followed in most all interpersonal interactions. Consider the situational example given by Levinson, which sees individual A attempting to repair a car and another individual B offering them assistance (Levinson, 1983: 103). Should A ask B to provide them with oil, B would not knowingly give them brake fluid, or else they would violate the maxim of quality. Should A need a bolt, B would understand they were expected to provide that bolt at the present moment, and not in a week, or else violate the maxim of relevance. In this example, if B does not comply with the appropriate action in accordance with what they have been asked, they are knowingly violating the co-operative principle of the interaction, regardless of what conversation is enacted.

2.2.1 Properties of Implicature

Continuing in the specification of implicature, Grice goes on to provide five essential properties which all implicatures possess, the first of which, and most important as noted by Levinson, is that of defeasibility (Levinson, 1983:114). To be defeasible is to be cancelable, more specifically in the case of implicature, it should be possible to add information to the original claim which renders the inference impossible. Consider the following example:

- (17) a. I have dug up 1001 carrots.
b. Every one of the 1001 carrots is orange.

-
- c. Therefore, all carrots are orange.

(Levinson, 1983: 114)

Should (a) and (b) be true and we find when digging up the 1002nd carrot that it is green, not orange, this new information cancels the implication made in (c). Defeasibility can also be seen in the evaporation of implicature when further context indicates that such an inference could not have been what was intended by the speaker.

The second essential property of implicatures is that they are non-detachable. To be non-detachable is to be innately connected to the semantics of the ut-

terance, not to any particular linguistic form. This feature is applicable to all implicatures with the exception of those originating with the maxim of Manner. Let us assume in the context of the utterances seen in example (18) that both the speaker and the hearer have a shared knowledge of an individual, John, and additionally share the understanding that John is not very bright.

- (18) a. John's a mental prodigy
b. John's an exceptionally clever human being
c. John's an enormous intellect
d. John's a big brain

(Levinson 1983:117)

With each slight change from utterance to utterance included, the implication of irony is unaffected, as the changes made between each utterance maintain the original intended meaning.

Continuing, the third feature carried by implicature is maintaining calculability, meaning any implicature can be calculated from the literal meaning carried by the utterance paired with its context and the co-operative principle (Levinson, 1983). Put plainly, an implicature must be reasonably derived by any interlocutor using the given information. The fourth distinguishing feature has to do with implicatures being non-conventional. While the meaning of the implicature can be arrived at using the meaning of the utterance, as in the explanation of calculability, this implied meaning cannot be a part of the conventional meaning of the linguistics forms in use. As Levinson explains: "since you need to know the literal meaning or sense of a sentence *before* you can calculate its implicatures in a context, the implicatures cannot be part of that meaning" (Levinson 1983:117).

Finally, implicatures must not be stagnant, with different implicatures achievable using a single utterance in different situational contexts. Take the following Levinsonian example:

- (19) John's a machine.

Should this utterance be made in the context of a work environment, the implication could be that he is an efficient and productive worker. Alternatively, if this utterance is made when discussing a potential relationship between an interlocutor and John, the implication becomes that John is cold and unfeeling. Not only is the implicated meaning changed based on the context, but the value of the implication is additionally changed, with the first occasion being positively implicated and the second being negative.

2.3 “Shade comes from reading... Reading came first.”

The discussion of reading cannot be sufficient without the discussion of its twin sister, shade. In the quote by Dorian Corey previously discussed in Chapter 1, “Shade comes from reading... Reading came first.” (Livingston, 1990). While these terms have become more and more common in popular culture, beyond queer media such as *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, it is of the utmost importance to understand that this language practice originated with Black queer people in the United States. In his article for *Literacy in Composition Studies*, Dr. Seth E. Davis interviewed patrons of Washington D.C. Black Pride to distill the origins and definitions of shade and reading, collecting authentic, real world accounts which acts as the foundation of the working definitions used here (Davis, 2019).

2.3.1 Shade in Use

In his interviews, Davis sought out participants who had knowledge of Black queer slang while additionally identifying with the Black queer community at large. These interviews resulted in Davis reaching a number of overarching conclusions concerning shade and reading, particularly that they represented a large, dynamic literacy for Black queer people and women. He found that the practice of reading was primarily utilized for developing close interpersonal relationships and as a practice “for survival and self-defense” (Davis, 2019:57). Early on in his work, Davis acknowledges that these literacies were coined and defined by Black trans women, circulating from there to the greater Black queer community. While few of the participants he spoke to gave a straightforward definition of what shade is, some simply pointed to the 1990 documentary film *Paris is Burning* to find a definition. The definition referenced is one introduced by Mother Dorian Corey, who famously defined shade as: “Shade is... ‘I don’t tell you you’re ugly, but I don’t have to tell you because you know you’re ugly.’ Now that’s shade.” (Livingston, 1990). Even in this, most famous example, shade as a concept is difficult to stratify, better understood with example and experience. One participant in the interview defines shade as ‘playful “sass”’ while also being a way in which one can “cut someone down with words” (Davis, 2019:60).

Continuing with the quote made by Dorian Corey above, the abstract concept of shade is a key piece of the definition of reading. “Shade comes from reading. Reading came first.” (Livingston, 1990). Using this definition, we can reach the conclusion that shade is the result of reading someone, while simultaneously to read someone is to throw shade. While these definitions are quite circular, the key themes of playful insults are consistent. In continuing with the review of Davis’s and other’s work, conclusions made about shade will be

understood to apply to reading as well, as the quotes above establish an intrinsic link between the two practices.

Throughout the interviews, the participants considered shade to be actively appropriated by popular culture, such as through media such as *RuPaul's Drag Race* or *Real Housewives of Atlanta* (Davis, 2019:63). The participants shared mixed emotions on this appropriation, as while they view the exposure of their culture to be positive, they simultaneously feel as if their identities have been co-opted by the same groups which have historically harmed them. One participant in particular drew attention to the ways in which “white heterosexual culture often oppresses Black and Brown queer people and their cultures, while simultaneously aping and commodifying [their] cultural productions for higher profit.” (Davis, 2019:65). The issue of linguistic appropriation is one that is pervasive not only in this context, but across the introduction of slang, the study of marginalized groups through the lens of white saviorism, and the historical adoption of language which originates within black communities while continuing to discriminate against those same communities for using the same language (Hill, 2008). This reality is essential to note, as while there exists a great deal of potential research concerning these practices, the access we have to them often comes at the cost of those who created them.

A major use of shade is to build close relationships, a consistent note made by participants. A common purpose is enjoying the game of playful insults with close friends, as one participant states “in order to throw shade at someone, you have to know them” (Davis, 2019:61). Others note that it can act as a ‘rite of passage’ or a way to build connections and ‘confirm friendships’ (Davis, 2019:65)

Another key point made across Davis’s work is that of shading being an essential mechanism for survival, as Davis himself as well as many of his participants referenced using shade as a tool to fight oppressive and harmful forces (Davis, 2019). An author for the site Fader views shade as ‘armor.’ “[Shade] protected me from bullying and the harsh realities of gender-based violence and body shaming throughout middle school, high school, and my early years of college.” (Lewis, 2016). The different forms which reading can be found as described here are similarly discussed in the pinnacle academic work with reference to reading, specifically the work of E. Patrick Johnson, which are reviewed in the following section.

2.3.2 Playful vs Serious Reading

A prominent researcher in the field of communication, E. Patrick Johnson, while completing his doctoral degree, was interested in investigating the phenomenon known as SNAP! or ‘snapping,’ a nonverbal component originally exclusively used by Black women and Black gay men (Johnson, 1995: 123). In this work, he defined the practice of snapping in the context of nonverbal communication as the snapping of the fingers whilst moving one’s arm in a “sweeping

motion, usually from left to right, [with] the snap coming at the end of the movement.” (1995: 123). Johnson found that snapping often exists alongside reading, a similar practice to other traditional Black language practices such as ‘signifying’ and ‘playing the dozens,’ both communal practices which sees individuals attempting to best one another in a game of witty insult (Johnson, 1995:124). Johnson’s definition of reading was the first academic explanation to the phenomenon, claiming that “to read someone is to set them “straight,” to put them in their place, or reveal a secret about someone in front of others in an indirect way” (Johnson, 1995:125). This particular definition, as mentioned in Chapter 1, informed the original hypothesis of this current study, with the indirectness supposed by Johnson being investigated in the form of implicature.

Following this definition, Johnson proposes that reading can take one of two possible modes, one serious and one playful. In the case of reads which are intended to be serious, the speaker utilizes a distinctly “hostile and aggressive” attitude (Johnson, 1995:125). The proposition of serious reads as a subcategory of the greater practice parallels with the secondary function detailed by Davis above, which references reading being used in a serious, defensive capacity (Davis, 2019). Playful reads on the other hand, involve a speaker indirectly calling attention to something which would embarrass the addressee to some level (Johnson, 1995:125). This is similarly echoed by Davis in his discussion of reading as means of building close friend relationships (Davis, 2019:61). When performing a read, the subcategory in which it falls is not stagnant, however, as there exists the possibility of playful reading breaching over into the realm of serious reading, such as when a speaker reveals something the addressee feels is too personal (Johnson, 1995: 125). This is also possible when in mixed company, where reading someone in a playful way is understood as serious when in the presence of those not in the queer community, as to read in such situations violates assumed social etiquette. Playful reading is assumed to only be used between those within the queer community to others within that same community (1995: 125). Reading whilst in mixed company, even should the speaker and addressee both be members of the queer community, leads to a breach of this assumption, shifting the category of the utterance to serious.

In the same way as the conclusions of Davis (2019), which established reading as having the potential for both relationship building and defensive maneuvers, Johnson’s proposition of reads exist within either the playful or serious subcategory. Looking through the perspective of mock insult, the next work in need of review is that of Sean McKinnon, specifically in his work on reading and backstage talk at a drag show.

2.3.3 Mock Impoliteness

Defining reading as a language practice within the drag queen community, McKinnon’s 2017 work discusses how the social practice works to “build a thick

skin” for those who employ it and those to whom it is directed to (McKinnon, 2017). The framework used by McKinnon in his analysis was that of mock impoliteness as formally proposed by Haugh and Bousfield (2012). Mock impoliteness is defined by McKinnon as the “positive evaluation” of verbal and nonverbal communication which has the capacity for a true insulting interpretation (McKinnon 2017: 95). The evaluation of an utterance as mock insult is not a stagnant state of being, as the evaluation of such utterances is an ongoing process, taking constant consideration of “the setting, the relationships between the participants, intentionality” and other factors (1995: 95). McKinnon applies this framework in his analysis of the data he collected from both interviews and backstage talk of drag performers during the night of a show, the goal being to understand the natural uses of shade and reading. In his discussions with the queens, it became quickly apparent that the hostility discussed previously by Davis faced by queer individuals is shared by the drag community, with multiple accounts of queens being verbally and physically accosted due to their status as a drag queen. Whilst becoming more visible in popular culture, drag queens still maintain a marginalized status within the queer community at large, as the overtly feminine performance which drag showcases is still largely unaccepted (1995: 93). This reality, McKinnon writes, is a large reason for the practice of reading, as it provides ammunition to individuals suffering from physical and verbal violence, as mentioned previously. The ability of marginalized individuals to respond with quick and witty insults sends a clear message to those attempting violence, not only illustrating that they have the capacity to respond with greater quickness and bitterness, but also that any affront will not be taken quietly.

In his analysis, McKinnon proposes that in the context of backstage, the act of reading is “predisposed to evaluations of mock impoliteness,” as the participants understand and participate in the shared goal of using reading to build interpersonal relationships (McKinnon, 2017: 99). This claim is supported by further observation by McKinnon, where he notes that upon entering the exclusive backstage environment, the queens are knowingly participating in the practice of playful reading, maintaining complete understanding that all participants within the said context are expected to participate and have the potential to be targeted (1995: 104). The original reason for this dynamic is defined by McKinnon to be “building a thick skin for in-group members,” a sentiment previously discussed by both Davis and Johnson in their categorization of reads as being a way to build interpersonal relationships.

2.3.4 Reading and *Drag Race*

Though minimal, previous linguistic research regarding reading has explored the specific context of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. Most notable of these is Martina Podboj’s work in defining the Reading Challenge as a unique discursive genre

situated within the speech of drag queens as an overarching community. In her analysis of the same Dorian Corey quote included in both chapter 1 and previously in the current chapter, Podboj distills three major requirements which reads need to possess (Podboj, 2023: 82). The first of these is that a read needs to be ‘smart,’ a sentiment echoed by Davis in his acknowledging shade as the “art of wit” (Davis, 2019). The second is that reading should maintain the goal of making the hearers laugh and ‘kiki.’ The term ‘kiki’ within the greater queer community refers to the gathering of queer people with the intention of gossiping and sharing company (“Kiki Meaning & Origin | Slang by Dictionary.Com,” 2018). Podboj’s last element is that reads must be made within in-groups, otherwise they become genuine insults, a recurring finding across all the literature discussed in this chapter.

In application, Podboj determines that the reads which occur in the context of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* follow consistent structuring, specifically a two-part sequence where the speaker opens by addressing the direction of their insult by name, followed by a read often in the form of a one-liner joke (Podboj, 2023: 85). The other goal of Podboj’s analysis is concerned with the thematic content of the reads, coding each read seen in the Reading Challenge across the pertinent regular and *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*. Of the five categories determined by Podboj, poor drag performance was found to be the most frequent thematic feature (2023: 86). Included in this category were reads which were directed at a queen’s skills and appearance in drag, including makeup, fashion, and wigs, a queen being unoriginal, and a queen doing poorly at the challenged set within the competition. The comparison between Podboj’s results and those collected for the present study are summarized in chapter 4.

2.4 Film Discourse

Unlike traditional research within the world of pragmatics and discourse analysis, this project uses data originating in a television program. While *RuPaul’s Drag Race* itself is considered a reality show, and therefore is not scripted, we must still take into account the differences that exist when considering how the addressee is assumed to understand the speaker’s utterances versus the audience’s understanding. To account for this, all analysis was understood to exist on two communicative levels, based on the framework pioneered by Polish linguist Marta Dynel, entitled *film discourse* (Dynel, 2011a).

2.4.1 Film as Linguistic Data

While originally created to account for humor in the popular television show *Friends* (1994-2004), the methodologies of film discourse are applicable to any research which uses filmed media as data. As defined by Dynel in her 2011 work on the subject, the goal of film discourse is to sufficiently analyze the utterances

made by characters in a filmed piece of media, such as television or films, by accounting for not only the utterance in isolation, but its construction as affected by the entire production crew of said piece of media and its being heard not only by other characters, but by an audience (Dynel, 2011a).

To do this, the traditional dyadic model of discourse must be discarded, as it solely defines utterances as spoken by a speaker, toward an addressee, with the possibility of a ratified third party and of an unratified overhearer (Goffman 1981:111). The third party being a participant to whom the utterance is not explicitly intended but is nevertheless being directed, is understood to make their own conclusions based on the speaker's perceived intentions while an overhearer are those who are in proximity of discourse who are not intended to be listening. Previous research concerning film assigns the audience as a ratified member in the category of overhearer, which results in a paradoxical model in which viewers are assumed to be both ratified and unratified (Kozloff 2000; Bubl 2006, 2008; Richardson 2010). Dynel acknowledges that this cannot be the case, as the utterances created in film data are intended to be understood by both the addressee and the audience, regardless of the utterance itself not being explicitly directed at the viewer, which therefore requires a separate, ratified classification of the viewer (Dynel, 2011b).

To account for this, Dynel argues that film discourse must be analyzed on two communicative levels, the *inter-character level* and the *recipient level*. The intercharacter level accounts for the dialogue spoken by a character with the intent of being understood by the character(s) being addressed (Dynel, 2011b). Dynel proposed that the inter-character communicative level exists within a greater dynamic, a secondary, two layer framework where those working behind the scenes in creating a piece of film are categorized as the *collective sender layer* and the resulting film exists as the *fictional layer*, where the inter-character communicative level is housed (Dynel, 2011b). The traditional discourse model above additionally fails to account for the number of additional groups involved in the production of an utterance within film, as unlike in everyday talk, an utterance within film is not an untouched piece of discourse. Whether it is the writer's working on the scripting of a media or the production and editing team working with unscripted dialogue, the utterance as it appears cannot be taken at face value. This dynamic can be visualized clearly in Figure 2-1 below, included in Dynel's 2011 work within the Journal of Pragmatics, with the intercharacter level being understood within the fictional layer.

The discourse which exists on this level follows the traditionally understood discourse model as seen in everyday talk, in which the characters in a given interaction are participants in the discourse. This allows for all previously mentioned participants, including the third party and the overhearer, to exist within the film itself (Dynel, 2011b). While analysis of this level can be conducted following the guidelines of everyday discourse, there must be recognition of the collective

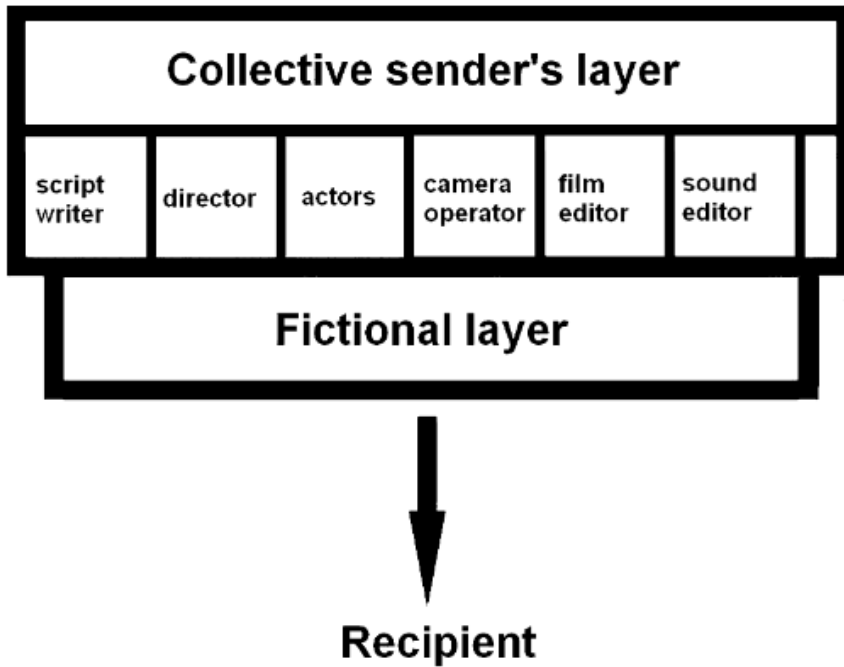


Figure 2.1: (Dynel, 2011, p. 1635)

sender, and the data collected from this level must therefore be acknowledged as unequal to traditional everyday talk.

The second level is the recipient level, which represents the interaction between the film as a whole and its audience, the viewers (Dynel, 2011a, 2011b). This secondary communicative level sees the viewers, referred to from this point as the recipient, witnessing conversation between the characters at the inter-character level. The conversation visible to the recipient has been carefully crafted for whatever is necessitated, meaning that the inferences and understanding of the recipient is a result of the workings of the collective sender. In order for this process to be executed effectively, the recipient must maintain an intentional ignorance to the collective sender, focusing only on the utterances as if naturally occurring and untouched.

As previously mentioned, the data used in this study is from a reality program, not a purely scripted one. It is widely understood that reality television has an element of scriptedness, not acting as a true to life representation of events, but rather a modified, dramatized version. Because of this fact, the data collected from these pieces of media cannot be treated as equal to natural data. The results arrived at in this work should be viewed as a beginning look into nat-

ural language phenomena. For all data used in this study, analysis which looks at the inter-character level was used to determine the indirectness strategies used.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Contextualizing Study

To contextualize the data used in this study, additional review on the topic of drag as a performance is needed to best situate the environment where our data has been collected.

3.1.1 What is *drag*?

“Drag is anytime that someone is putting on clothing that is considered to be not appropriate to them, and then wearing it with some type of ironic distance. . . it is of the people, by the people and for the people.” - Joe E. Jeffreys (Davies, 2018)

While society’s understanding of drag is based on the mainstream popularity of programs such as *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, the history of drag as an art form was not always directly connected to the queer community. The art of performing gender other than your own can be traced back to the age of William Shakespeare, as the original theatrical performances of his work were put on in a time when women were not legally allowed to perform (*The History of Drag, and How Drag Queens Got Pulled into Politics - CBS Minnesota, 2022*). As a result of this, men would perform the roles of women by cross-dressing to satisfy the imagery needed for the play they found themselves in. (Allure, 2018). The use of the word ‘drag’ for such performances is believed to have originated with the performers describing the long gowns they would wear while performing, as gowns traditionally had trains which would drag along the floor (Allure, 2018). Men donning women’s clothing was not isolated to the theater, however, as there exist party invitations that instruct the attendees to “come in drag” as early as 1870 (THEM, 2018).

Moving on to the early 1900s, drag can be seen in the American vaudeville circuit, a popular form of entertainment which showcased 10 to 15 individual performance acts such as magicians and dancers (*Vaudeville | Definition, History, & Facts | Britannica, 2023*). By the 1920's, the word 'drag' was a common piece of gay vocabulary, with some scholars theorizing it was introduced through Polari, a secret slang based language which was created as a result of the heavy criminalization of homosexuality in 20th century England (THEM, 2018). This link between drag and the queer community was formally established in the 1927 *Manual of Psychiatry* by A.J. Rosanoff, which defined drag as either "an outfit of female dress worn by a homosexual" or "a social gathering of homosexuals at which some are in female dress" (Rosanoff, 1927). This is not to say that the art of drag was exclusively for the men of the time, as women such as Gladys Bentley became popular for their performance as male impersonators (THEM, 2018).

With this explicit connection between homosexuality and drag, paired with the heavy segregation of the 1920s, queer people of color in Harlem created a safe space for their performance of drag and other queer identities, calling them 'drag balls' (THEM, 2018). While the first record of a drag ball can be traced as far back as 1867, these balls showcased individuals, both men and women, dressed in drag and competing for titles such as best dressed or most feminine figure. At the same time, white gay men were divided into two groups, those who sought to fit in with masculine stereotypes, and those who presented more feminine and dressed in drag. Some gay men even dressed in drag when going out to bars to avoid prosecution for same-sex dancing (THEM, 2018). By the 1950's, drag was being performed for audiences in bars and other spaces meant for queer people, and as more of these establishments began to appear, drag cemented itself as key art from within the queer community.

Shifting into the 1970s and 1980s, drag made its way into traditional popular culture with works such as John Water's film *Pink Flamingos* (1972) and Sylvester's hit song "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)" (THEM, 2018). With the 1990 *Paris is Burning* documentary and the beginning of the annual Wigstock festival, drag had become much more visible to mainstream audiences, leading to the Washington Post's 1993 honorific "America's Favorite Drag Queen," where the world at large is first introduced to RuPaul Charles, who was invited to perform his song "Supermodel" on main stage at the March on Washington put date (THEM, 2018).

3.1.2 *RuPaul's Drag Race*

While RuPaul's individual fame as a spokesperson for drag grew steadily, it was not until 2009 that his television program *RuPaul's Drag Race* premiered on Logo TV (THEM, 2018). The performance of drag seen on the program takes its inspiration from the drag ball scene, also known as ballroom, mixed with the modern day drag performances found in gay and queer establishments found all across the world, with each season seeing an average of 13 queens competing to be America's Next Drag Superstar (*Rules You Didn't Know 'RuPaul's Drag Race' Contestants Have to Follow*, 2023). Each season of the program sees a number of traditional episodes, which include an occasional mini challenge, a maxi challenge, a runway, and a lip sync, with the expectation that a single queen is eliminated at the end of each episode.

The mini challenges are format, shorter challenges which sees the queen compete in a casual way, often including "quick drag," where queens are given a short time frame to get into drag before competing. The winner of the mini challenge is determined by RuPaul, receiving an advantage for the next challenge and occasionally a monetary prize. The maxi challenges are larger scale challenges which take place every episode and are centered around an aspect of drag performance, be it comedy, improvisation, creating garments, or others. A queen's success in the maxi challenge is considered by RuPaul, along with their runway performance, to determine the overall winner of that week's episode, who then receives some form of accolade, usually in the form of monetary reward. The runway of each episode is based on a brief given to contestants ahead of their arriving to film the program. At the end of each episode, the two worst performing queens as decided by RuPaul compete in a "Lip Sync for Your Life," with the queen performing the best of the two earning her ability to stay in the competition. The losing queen is then asked to 'sashay away,' being eliminated from the competition.

Each season also has a finale, and as the program has gained popularity, the finales have simultaneously gained both in budget and scope. In recent years, the finale sees a top three or four queens compete in a bracketed "Lip Sync for The Crown," either to original music created for each contestant, existing popular music, or both. The queen who performs the best out of the finalists is awarded the title of "America's Next Drag Superstar," with the winner of the previous season passing on their title, similar in fashion to large scale pageant competitions. Most seasons additionally have a reunion, airing before the finale, which sees the entire cast of a season reunite and discuss the ups and downs of their season.

3.1.3 “The Library is Officially Open”

The data collected for this project originates from a recurring mini challenge titled the Reading Challenge. Occurring once every season of the show, the contestants are tasked with reading their fellow competitors one by one, as seen in Figure 1-2 in Chapter 1 (page 14). The challenge is organized with RuPaul standing in front of the queens, often accompanied by a pit crew member, a model who aids in the show’s competitions. In the context of this challenge, the pit crew member is seen holding a pillow with different pairs of brightly colored and odd fake glasses, which the queens put on before they begin their reads, a play on the term ‘reading glasses.’ RuPaul then calls each contestant one by one to come up and read each of their fellow competitors. While each contestant has the opportunity to read all other contestants, the editing of the program only showcases a few from each queen. After all of the contestants have taken a turn in addressing the other queens, RuPaul then determines whose reads were the most successful, awarding them the win for the challenge.

3.2 Previous Methodological Approaches

While the present study concerning the formation of reads within the queer community is far from the first, there is a lack across multiple fields of research (McKinnon 2017: 91). The studies which do exist consider reading from a number of theoretical perspectives, such as the existence of reading accompanied by the nonverbal “snapping” cue (Johnson, 1995), the use of reading as found within the 1990 documentary film *Paris is Burning* (Oishi, 2015), reading within the Black community (Davis, 2019; Dozono, 2023), reading and drag (McKinnon, 2017; Woods, 2023), and general analysis of the act of reading (Birnie, 2019; McDonald, 2019).

In contrast with the minimal work on reading, *RuPaul’s Drag Race* has been the focus of many works. Notably, studies concerning the construction of identity, such as race and gender (Campana et al., 2022; LeMaster & Tristano Jr., 2023; Moore, 2013), development of interpersonal relationships (Passa, 2021), the program’s effect on drag as an industry (Edelman, 2023), and general philosophy and history (Fitzgerald & Marquez, 2020; Hendrik Kempt & Megan Volpert, 2020) are particularly prolific.

3.3 Collection of Data

Of the fifteen seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, thirteen seasons followed the traditional format as described previously in this chapter. As the reading challenge was not introduced until the second season, season one was excluded from the collection of data. Additionally, the twelfth season reformatted the reading challenge based on an episode sponsorship, and therefore did not qualify for data collection. Of the eight seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*, seven were deemed applicable to the present study. The first season of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*, which aired in 2012, had all of the returning queens compete as pairs, rendering the challenge from this season not conducive to the present study.

Each individual reading challenge showcases each queen addressing all present. Each read was transcribed using a minimal transcription key based on American English, as seen in Figure 3-1.

,	short pause
...	long pause
.	utterance end
?	interrogative
--	cut off

Figure 3.1: Transcription Key

At the time of transcription, each read was simultaneously coded for the season and episode at which it occurred, the contestant who was speaking, and the other contestant(s) that were being addressed. This resulted in a total of 573 individual reads, which was deemed out of the scope of this project. To transition the data set into a more manageable sample size, it was determined that the contestant who was chosen as the winner of their respective challenge would be used as the focus of the project, using the evaluation of RuPaul in place of manually coding all reads. The data was then separated to only include reads delivered by the winner of each season's challenge resulted in the final data set of 96 reads. Of the 96 tokens, 56 were collected from the regular seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and 40 were collected from the sister series *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*.

3.4 Transcription Conventions

For select reads which exemplified findings, a more detailed transcription was required for a number of reasons. The first was to better visualize the intended implication made by the speaker, the second was to allow for the evaluation of the addressee as to the categorization of the read as playful or serious, and the third was to account for the data being collected from film, which cannot be accounted for with the minimal transcription key presented in Figure 3-1. To complete this, a secondary transcription key was utilized, as found in the appendix, based on the key given in the ‘Outline of Discourse transcription’ (Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Cummin, and Paolino, 1993). The conventions of this key can be found in Appendix A and applied in all figures found in Appendix B. The page numbers of all tables is included directly after the table of contents.

For each read, the nonverbal components of both the speaker and the other participants in the discourse were recorded in italics underneath each spoken read, with a bracket, ‘[’, used to indicate where in the spoken read a nonverbal action took place. This can be seen in lines 3, 5, and 7 of Figure 1-1. Movements of the camera were given a separate line within the transcription, also in italics, which included a description of the scene as it is visible on the screen as well as the non-verbal actions of the other participants visible to the viewer. When there was overlapping speech, the second speaker’s dialogue would be similarly bracketed to indicate at what point the overlapping took place. Each symbol used can be divided into five separate categories, pause, pronunciation, and vocal noise.

The symbols used to indicate pause were similar to those given by Du Bois et al. However they were simplified in terms of length, with a short pause being indicated by a single period, ‘.’, a long pause being indicated with three periods, ‘...’, and a pause that fell in between what the researcher felt was long and short being indicated by two periods, ‘..’.

The next categories of symbols are those indicating pronunciations which were marked as being different from the rest of a speaker’s dialogue. This included elongation of vowels, indicated by a colon, ‘:’, individual words within an read pronounced without pause, indicated by a dash, ‘-’, words that were emphasized by the speaker, indicated by an exclamation point, ‘!’, and instances where the speaker’s voice became more guttural, which was indicated by a percent sign, ‘%’. The category of symbols representing vocal noises was also based heavily off of the work by Du Bois et al., making use of the symbols for inhalation, ‘(H),’ exhalation, ‘(Hx),’ laughter, ‘@’, and false starts/stuttering, ‘< >’.

Laughter which is overheard in the background of the scene was accounted for in the inter-line description of the scenes, as the speaker(s) laughing cannot be identified.

3.5 Coding Conventions

After the data was cemented and transcribed, each read was then analyzed to determine what indirectness strategies were present. The indirectness strategies found within the data included implicature, double entendre, and metaphor, with reads also using no indirectness strategy and instead using explicit meaning. To visualize the relationship between the different strategies found in the data, the graphic found in Figure 3-2 was created.

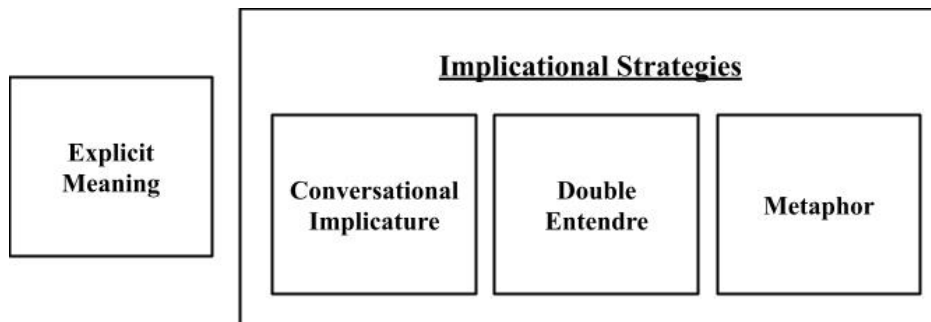


Figure 3.2: Indirectness Strategies

Within the use of indirectness strategies, conversational implicature refers to the Gricean proposed implicature discussed in Chapter 2. Examples of these can be seen in Appendix C tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, and 21. Double Entendre refers to the use of a single word to call upon multiple meanings. In this context, both possible meanings are being utilized by uttering the word in question, and are usually seen setting up an implicature or use of explicit meaning. Examples of this can be seen in Appendix C tables 9, 10, 11, 12, 19, and 20. Metaphor refers to the application of features onto something which does not have the capability to possess such features. Examples of this can be seen in Appendix C tables 18 and 21. All of these strategies are indirect to some degree, distinguishing them from uses of explicit meaning. Explicit meaning refers to reads which directly references or insults without using any indirectness strategies. Examples of this can be seen in Appendix C tables 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, and 22.

Reads were coded as using implicature when there existed additional meaning to the semantic content of the read, as defined in chapter 2 (Levinson, 1983: 99). In the coding of the data, reads that utilized multiple indirectness strategies

were coded as individual categories, including the order the different indirectness strategies appeared. For example, if a read began with the use of a double entendre and proceeded to include an implicature, that token was coded as 'Double Entendre followed by Implicature.' For each read that was found to utilize implicature, the implied meaning was recorded and confirmed using the features described by Levinson 1983. The conclusions of this analysis were peer reviewed by researchers of diverse linguistic backgrounds to ensure validity. The reviewers were given access to the completed analysis and confirmed that the coding of indirectness strategy was correct and that the implied meaning was concurrent with their understanding. All reviewers had prior knowledge of the program of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and the practice of reading and were additionally members of the queer community. Finally, the intended insult of each read was additionally defined, as well as coded for theme in an effort to compare the results of Podboj's previous research to results collected only from reads deemed successful.

3.6 Ethical Considerations and Positionality

In conducting research on language practices that are deeply ingrained in both the Black and queer communities, it is important to note my relationship with the communities being discussed. While the data being collected exists as a piece of extremely popular mainstream media, it is still of the utmost importance to call attention to the fact that discussion is being made concerning the language practices of historically disenfranchised and minority groups. Both queer people and people of color, even more so those who exist within the overlap of these two groups, continue to deal with tremendous adversity and when being centered in research must be treated with care.

While my identity as a queer person provides me with a measured access to the community in which the data being used was created, it must be emphasized that the analysis here is one of a white queer person. While queer people globally deal with a growing amount of hostility, there exists a great amount of privilege awarded to white individuals in the community that is not shared by its non-white members. Additionally, I do not face the same hardships as other queer people, as the relationship I am in appears outwardly as a heteronormative one. As discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.1, the language practices widely understood to be "drag language" or "gay language" nearly universally originate from Black and brown members of the queer community, particularly through the ballroom scene (Hill, 2008). The creation of ballroom as a whole was as a result of the unequal treatment of queer people of color, and the study of such

language without due respect being awarded to those deserving of it would be unethical.

It is also important to note the demographics of *RuPaul's Drag Race* as a program. While it is understood that the practice of reading is an intrinsically Black practice, the demographics of the contestants on *RuPaul's Drag Race* are still primarily white or white passing, particularly in the context of queens who gain success and a following from the program. In an analysis done comparing the number of Instagram followers of queens who placed in the top half of their season, 32 of the 67 were white (Henderson, 2018). To position the results of this study as unanimously applicable to the practice of reading as a whole would be entirely incorrect. Any conclusions drawn in this work are done so as a pilot for potential further study, with future work collecting data from the communities which showcase the practice in their everyday talk.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The following chapter begins with situating the results according to prior research by McKinnon (2017) and Johnson (1995) before presenting the conclusions of analysis according to the following research questions and hypotheses: Are implicatures the most frequently used indirectness strategy? Are there differences in data between regular and *All Stars* seasons? And are there any differences in thematic usage between all reads and successful one?

4.1 Predisposing Playfulness

As discussed in McKinnon's 2017 work, reading as a language practice exists within the phenomenon of mock impoliteness when used by community members (McKinnon, 2017). The evaluation of mock impoliteness, is based on a number of factors, including setting, intention, and interpersonal relationship (2017: 95). This same sentiment is echoed by Johnson (1995), who distinguishes between two different forms of reads, one serious and one playful, with the playful being indicated through attitude and lack of hostility (1995: 125).

In the context of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the structured nature of the Reading Challenge predisposes the reads made to be interpreted as mock impoliteness according to McKinnon and as playful according to Johnson. In the analysis of the reads included in this thesis, the response of the addressee was used to make assumptions about the evaluation of the read as either playful or serious. This is additionally supported by the statements made by the contestants themselves after the filming and airing of the program. During the airing of *All Stars* season seven, a viewer posted speculation on Twitter concerning whether the success of the queen Jinkx Monsoon, who was originally on the fifth season of the regular series, upset the contestants who did not support her on her original season. One of the queens referenced responded to the viewer, stating: "we're

all CHEERING for @JinkxMonsoon cause she’s our sister!” (Roxxy Andrews [@RoxxyAndrews], 2022). The same sentiment can be seen across seasons and franchises, with queens coming to the defense of their fellow competitors a vast majority of the time, often referring to other queens who have been on the program as ‘sisters.’

The predisposition of the Reading Challenge to produce playful, mock-insulting reads does not, however, indicate that reads cannot breach outside of this distinction, as previously discussed in Chapter 2 in the works of both McKinnon (2017) and Johnson (1995). While contestants may have mended relationships after the filming and airing of the program, there still exist situations where addressees of a read do not respond positively. We can see an example of this in the following read, taken from the 15th season of the regular season, where Loosey LaDuca is addressing Mistress Isabelle Brooks. To contextualize this read, Loosey and Mistress spent the entirety of their season at odds with one another, resulting in a noticeable amount of animosity between the two.

1	<i>camera pans to Mistress, who is smiling at Loosey. Loosey begins speaking while off screen.</i>	
2	Loosey	Mistress . now I know we all read her for those kitten heels,
3		<i>[camera moves to Loosey who is gesturing toward Mistress]</i>
4		but it’s not her fault .
5		<i>[camera zooms in closer to Loosey who gestures to Mistress again]</i>
6		they start off as stilettos.
7		<i>[Loosey uses her hand to show how tall the heels start as [Loosey nods her head slightly, still looking at Mistress.]</i>
8	<i>camera pans back to Mistress who is no longer smiling and is now pursing her lips still looking at Loosey</i>	

Figure 4.1: Loosey LaDuca vs Mistress Isabelle Brooks

In the read, the verbal component of which is split across lines 2, 4, and 6, Loosey is making reference to the type of shoe Mistress has been known to wear, specifically a ‘kitten heel,’ which is shoe which has a heel that is not fully flat, but noticeably shorter than a traditional heeled shoe. The insult here is referencing Mistress’s being overweight, with Loosey implying the shoes begin as a heel of normal height but are shortened under her weight. In line 8, we can see that Mistress has a visible change of attitude after Loosey completes her read. This visible shift of attitude is an indicator that the read in question may have begun to push against the line where play reading becomes serious, likely due to the existing animosity between Loosey and Mistress. Unless explicitly noted, the data being analyzed in this chapter was assumed to be playful as distinguished by previous research and the contestant’s own acknowledgment.

4.2 Implicature vs. The World

After coding each read for the indirectness strategies used, the following Table 4-1 was created illustrating the frequency of each patterned construction. As previously noted, reads which utilized multiple indirectness strategies were categorized as individual categories, maintaining the order and forms present.

Table 4.1: Indirectness Strategies - All Reads

Indirectness Strategies	Number	Percentage
Implicature	48	50.00
Double Entendre followed by Implicature	11	11.46
Double Entendre followed by Explicit Meaning	9	9.38
Explicit Meaning	8	8.33
Implicature followed by Explicit Meaning	7	7.29
Implicature followed by Implicature	3	3.13
Explicit Meaning followed by Implicature	2	2.08
Metaphor	2	2.08
Double Entendre	2	2.08
Explicit Meaning followed by Double Entendre followed by Implicature followed by Explicit Meaning followed by Double Entendre followed by Explicit Meaning	1	1.04
Explicit Meaning followed by Implicature followed by Metaphor	1	1.04
Explicit Meaning followed by Explicit Meaning	1	1.04
Non Applicable	1	1.04
Total	96	100.00

To better visualize the difference between the top three different categorizations, a selection of exemplary reads were further transcribed. As can be seen in the table, reads which utilized implicature alone were the most frequent construction with 48 tokens and making up 50.00% of the total data. The second place holder in the top three most frequent constructions was double enten-

dre followed by implicature, with 11 tokens and the third was double entendre followed by explicit meaning, with 9 tokens.

4.2.1 Implicature Examples

In the next example seen in Figure 4-3, we see season 11 contestant Brooke Lynn Hytes addressing her competitor Silky Nutmeg Ganache, utilizing implicature to complete her read.

1	<i>camera is still focused on Shuga Cain laughing from the previous read</i>	
2	Brooke Lynn	Si:lký . Nutmeg . Ganache .
3		<i>[camera pans to Silky who has a hand behind her head</i>
4	Silky	in the flesh
5		<i>[camera cuts back to a wider shot of Brooke Lynn and Ru</i>
6	Brooke Lynn	Ru . isn't she precious?
7		<i>[Brooke Lynn nodding to Silky</i>
8	RuPaul	ye:s
9		<i>[move in to Ru</i>
10	Brooke Lynn	no . really . isn't that Precious?
11		<i>[Camera pans back to both Brooke Lynn and Ru [Brooke Lynn removes reading glasses and leans over to Ru [Brooke Lynn leans toward Silky as if investigating</i>
12	RuPaul	@ ahh:: @
13		<i>[camera pans to Silky who purses her lips at Brooke Lynn</i>

Figure 4.2: Brooke Lynn Hytes vs Silky Nutmeg Ganache

In this read, we see that Brooke Lynn extends the discourse to include RuPaul, directly asking her the seemingly kind question “isn’t she precious?” in line 6, which RuPaul obliges with a similarly kind answer in line 8. We then see Brooke Lynn reiterate and rephrase her question as “isn’t that Precious?,” explicitly defining her intended use of the word Precious as being a formal name. As clearly seen by the participants in the exchange, the reference being made when comparing Silky, who is present, and Precious, a figure which is neither defined nor present, is quickly and easily understood, which is only possible due to their sharing of a shared background context. The reference being made here is to the 2009 film Precious, the lead character of which is played by Gabourey Sidibe, a plus size Black woman. By referencing the film’s lead, Brooke Lynn implies that Silky looks similar to Gabourey Sidibe as she appeared in her role as Precious. For this implication to be received successfully, not only does Silky need to be in view, but the background knowledge of the film and its lead must also be shared by all participants. Below is a better visualization the relationship between what is said and what is meant, with A being what is said and B being what is meant.

- (i) a. ‘Isn’t that Precious?’

- b. *Silky Nutmeg Ganache looks like Gabourey Sidibe's character Precious.*

To contextualize the insulting nature of this read, we need to further discuss the film. Released in 2009, the character Precious is a plus size, Black 16 year old who is both pregnant by her father and illiterate. The film chronicles her work to leave her abusive home whilst dealing with all of these challenges. By equating Silky to Precious, Brooke Lynn is insulting her in multiple ways, one being the implication that she looks like she is pregnant, with an over extended belly, or that she is illiterate, unable to read or write. The insult in the read is embedded in the implicature, where by treating the two as interchangeable, Brooke Lynn is assigning the above negative attributes to Silky.

To further confirm the above example as a case of conversational implicature, we can test for each required property of implicature as summarized in chapter 2 section 1.4 (page 24). The first property is that of defeasibility, or the ability to be canceled. In the read above, Brooke Lynn implies that Silky Nutmeg Ganache looks like the character Precious, which can be canceled if an explicit comparison of the two individuals is conducted and found to be false. The next feature, being non-detachability, is the connection between the implicature to the semantic meaning of the read. In this case, the language of 'is that not Precious?' can be changed while maintaining the semantic meaning and similarly maintain the intended implicature. The statement could have been changed to 'are you sure that is not Gabourey Sidibe?' or some similar construction and the implicature is unaffected.

Next, we can prove that the above read is calculable. The individual being addressed, Silky Nutmeg Ganache, is in view of all interlocutors and therefore her appearance is visible information, with her being a plus size, Black individual. When Brooke Lynn makes the statement referencing Precious, specifically confusing Silky and Precious, the hearer can conclude that the two must look alike, regardless of if they have seen the film in question, as to be confused they must share similar features. This calculability can also be seen from the opposite direction, should the hearer know the film and not be in view of Silky. The last two properties are that of being non-conventional and non-stagnant. Both are maintained by the above read as the uttering of the question 'isn't that Precious?' does not carry it's implication through its conventional meaning and can be said to any individual who shares similar traits to the character Precious.

Another example of a read which utilized implicature is seen in Figure 4-4.

The read in Figure 4-4 is taken from the tenth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and sees the queen Eureka O'Hara addressing her fellow competitor, Aquaria. Eureka begins the read by assumingly paying Aquaria a compliment, admiring

1	<i>Camera on Aquaria who is laughing at the previous utterance</i>	
2	Eureka	Aquaria . I love your confidence-you're always telling yourself how
3		<i>[camera cuts back to RuPaul and Eureka</i>
4	Eureka	you're beautiful . . . how you're talented . . . how you're gonna win .
5		<i>[Eureka starts counting her fingers [camera cuts to Aquaria whose head is held high and is making a smug face [camera cuts to the Vixen who side eyes Aquaria [camera cuts back to Eureka</i>
6	Eureka	you're also a pathological liar
7		<i>[Eureka gestures both hands open [camera cuts to Kameron Michaels whose mouth is open laughing [camera cuts to Aquaria who grits teeth and shrugs in agreement</i>

Figure 4.3: Eureka O'Hara vs Aquaria

her confidence, then proceeding to list statements which Aquaria has said to or about herself, including calling herself 'beautiful,' 'talented,' and how she's 'gonna win.' Eureka concludes her read by then calling Aquaria a 'pathological liar,' implying that all the statements mentioned previously are false. The implicature is summarized below.

- (2) a. 'You're also a pathological liar.'
- b. *Aquaria has said she is beautiful, talented, and going to win, all of which must be false because she is a pathological liar.*

In this season, season 10, Aquaria was only 21 years old, not only the youngest queen of the season, but the youngest queen to ever compete on the show, a title she still holds. For being such a young queen, Aquaria maintained an extremely high level of confidence throughout her season, which she supported by performing excellently across the challenges with no bottom two placements and three episode wins before the finale. Due to her age, many of the queens in her season felt this overconfidence somewhat misplaced, leading to the above read being an attempt to call out this so-called over confidence. In an interesting twist of irony, Aquaria did go on to win season 10, becoming the youngest winner of the American version of the show.

As conducted in the analysis of the previous example, the read seen in Figure 4-2 can similarly be confirmed as an implicature by conducting tests to validate the necessary properties. The first property, being defeasibility, can be proven true as should information be presented which claims that Aquaria is not a liar, or should any of the claims made be proven to be true, the implication becomes cancelled. Continuing, the read which carries the implicature, 'you're a pathological liar,' can be changed in ways that maintain the semantic meaning, such

as ‘you can’t tell the truth,’ and maintain the implication. The read is similarly calculable, as by framing Aquaria as a liar, the hearer understands that all reads made by them should be assumed to be false. The non-conventionality and non-stagnant nature of the read can be seen as by simply stating that someone is a liar does not inherently carry an implication while the situations where it is intended to be an implication are vast.

4.2.2 Double Entendre followed by Implicature Example

Below is a review an example of data which saw Double Entendre followed by Implicature, the second more frequent indirectness strategy used.

1	<i>camera quickly cuts to Valentina who is facing Peppermint</i>	
2	Valentina	Peppermint .
3		<i>[camera pans to Peppermint who is laughing</i>
4		You need one.
5		<i>[Valentina states matter-of-factly with a slight head tilt entire room erupts with laughter</i>
6	<i>camera pans back to Peppermint whose mouth is open with a slight smile with her hands together in front of her face. She leans back slightly and covers her mouth with her hands.</i>	

Figure 4.4: Valentina vs Peppermint

In Figure 4-5 we see an interaction between Valentina and Peppermint, two contestants from season 9. As we have seen previously, most speakers begin their read by addressing their addressee by name, which Valentina follows here, seen in line 2. As she continues however, it becomes clear that she is utilizing multiple meanings of the word, as not only is Peppermint the name of her fellow queen, a peppermint is a traditional remedy for bad breath, which she references by stating in line 4, “you need on”. By stating that her addressee needs a mint, Valentina is using the double entendre to create a implicature which follows it, where she implies that Peppermint has bad breath. In order for the implicature to be understood, the meaning being referenced through the double entendre must simultaneously be understood. Definition of implied meaning is seen below.

- (3) a. ‘Peppermint. You need one.’
- b. *Peppermint has bad breath and thus need a peppermint.*

Similar to the analysis of previous implicature, the implication seen in Figure 4-4 can also be confirmed using the features of implicature. To make comprehension easier, as we are dealing with a case of double entendre, the use of the word ‘peppermint’ will appear in two different forms, one being ‘Peppermint’ which references the queen, and the second being ‘peppermint’ which references that

mint. First and foremost, implicatures must be defeasible, or cancelable. Should information be provided that it is not the case that Peppermint has bad breath, the implicature is easily cancelled. Next, implicatures must be non-detachable, being intrinsically connected to the semantics of the utterances. The semantics of the word 'need' can be understood as an absence of something that is necessitated, which when paired with a peppermint, lends itself to the implicature described above. This fact leads to the next feature, calculability, as the need of a peppermint means that one does not have one, which in this case means that the necessary solution to bad breath is not present.

The final two features are non-conventionality and being non-stagnant. In the case of non-conventionality, while the conventional meaning of 'need' as described above, is to not have but necessitate, which does not directly relate to the implied meaning of bad breath. As for being non-stagnant, the reader satisfies this as well. One example would be that the reader is not implied at all, but instead an explicit meaning which calls attention to someone's need for peppermint, be that in a garden or a recipe. Alternatively, should 'peppermint' not be utilized as a double entendre meaning a mint, the implicature could be derived from a non-verbal gesture which directs the addressee to what is needed.

4.2.3 Double Entendre followed by Explicit Meaning Example

The indirectness strategy which was seen in the third highest frequency among our data was double entendre followed by explicit meaning. The first example of this, seen below, comes from the first ever Reading Challenge from season two.

1	<i>camera cuts to Jujubee standing next to RuPaul who is laughing. Her hands are on her hips and she is facing the other contestants.</i>	
2	Jujubee	Miss Ty:ra . . . was your barbeque ca:nce:led? . . .
3		<i>[shakes head slightly [camera cuts to Tyra who cuts her head and raises an eyebrow [camera cuts back to Jujubee</i>
4	RuPaul	(Hx): ohhhh
5		<i>[RuPaul doubles over with laughter</i>
6	Jujubee	your grill is f*beep*ed . %Up.
7		<i>[camera cuts to Tyra who is leaned over laughing</i>

Figure 4.5: Jujubee vs Tyra Sanchez

In the transcription seen in Figure 4-6, taken from season 2 of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, we see the speaker Jujubee addressing her fellow competitor Tyra Sanchez. In line 2, Jujubee is seen asking a question which is seemingly irrelevant to the frame, 'was your barbeque canceled?'. The irrelevance of the statement is

mirrored by Tyra’s eyebrow raise seen in line 3. Line 6 sees Jujubee rationalizing her prior statement in saying ‘your grill is fucked up’. This statement sees two consecutive indirectness strategies being used, the first being a double entendre in the word ‘grill’. On the one hand, ‘grill’ is a cooking appliance used for outdoor cooking, specifically known for use at barbeques. Secondly, the word ‘grill’ is a colloquial term to reference someone’s teeth. Using the double meaning of ‘grill’, the statement in line 6 of ‘is fucked up’ is applied to both meanings, making relevant the reference to barbeque with the goal of stating that Tyra’s teeth are fucked up.

Another example can be seen in the following Figure, which sees Latrice Royale addressing Jiggly Caliente in season 4 of the regular season.

1	<i>camera is focused on a shot of Latrice standing next to RuPaul</i>	
2	Latrice	Jiggly Caliente . B . M . W .
3		<i>[snap [snap [snap [camera pans to Jiggly who is smiling with her head cocked to the side [camera pans back to Latrice</i>
4		body . made . wrong .
5		<i>[snap while moving hand across body [snap while moving hand across body [snap while moving hand across body</i>
6	camera cuts to Jiggly who is bent over laughing	

Figure 4.6: Latrice Royale vs Jiggly Caliente

In this example, Latrice initially uses the acronym BMW as a double entendre in line 2, with BMW being a generally positively evaluated car manufacturer. The use of the initialism, before continuing the read, has a confused response, as seen in Jiggly cocking her head to the side. In the completion of the read in line 4, Latrice uses the initialism to simply say that Jiggly has a “body made wrong,” directly insulting her physical figure, adding a new meaning to BMW that is negatively. Considering back to Figure 4-1, where an insult on the topic of weight was also made, the difference between explicit insult and implied insult is easily visible.

An additional interesting factor of note is the delivery of Latrice’s read, where in both the verbal delivery of “BMW” and “body made wrong,” Latrice uses the nonverbal behavior of ‘snapping’ as studied by Johnson, summarized in chapter 2 (1995). While in the first half of the read the camera has shifted off of Latrice and therefore the snapping can only be heard, when delivering the second line, the camera sees Latrice snapping back and forth across her body at the end of each word, following exactly what is expected by Johnson, as included in his analysis he states snapping is often “used in combination with words,... occur[ing] at the end of each word.” (1995: 123). The use of snapping further supports Johnson’s claims through identity as well, as Latrice is an

African American gay male, the demographic which is noted as being the main community utilizing the practice.

4.2.4 Reads with Implicature vs. Without

In surveying the indirectness strategies used the most frequently across our data, two of the top three forms include implicature in some manner, whether it be implicature alone or paired with other forms. This pattern is consistent across the whole of the data, with implicature being used in 73 of the 96 total reads. The comparison of the frequency of reads which use implicature versus those which do not can be seen in Table 4-2.

Table 4.2: With Implicature vs Without

Implicature	Count	Percentage
Reads with Implicature	73	76.04
Reads without Implicature	23	23.96
Total	100	100.00

This table confirms the primary hypothesis, where the use of implicature was hypothesized to be used as an indirectness strategy a vast majority of the time. Looking toward future work, confirming this analysis using quantitative analysis would be an interesting continuation.

4.3 Regular Seasons vs. *All Stars*

The secondary hypothesis was formulated on the topic of the regular seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* in comparison to *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*. When separated according to season type, there were 56 tokens from regular seasons and 40 tokens from *All Stars* seasons. To conduct this comparison, the data was separated according to season type, with all of the above tables being replicated for both regular seasons and *All Stars* seasons.

4.3.1 Indirectness Strategies - Regular Seasons vs. *All Stars*

The following table in Table 4-3 distinguishes the different distribution of all reads according to regular seasons and *All Stars* seasons.

Table 4.3: Indirectness Strategies - Regular vs *All Stars*

Indirectness Strategies	Regular Season	<i>All Stars</i> Seasons
	Percentage	Percentage
Implicature	46.43	55
Double Entendre followed by Implicature	12.5	10
Double Entendre followed by Explicit Statement	14.29	2.5
Explicit Statement	7.14	10
Implicature followed by Explicit Statement	12.5	0
Implicature followed by Implicature	0	7.5
Explicit Statement followed by Implicature	1.79	2.5
Metaphor	0	5
Double Entendre	0	5
Explicit Statement followed by Double Entendre followed by Implicature followed by Explicit Statement followed by Double Entendre followed by Explicit Statement	1.79	0
Explicit Statement followed by Implicature followed by Metaphor	1.79	0
Explicit Statement followed by Explicit Statement	0	2.5
Non Applicable	1.79	0
Total	100.00	100.00

For both the regular seasons and the *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, implicature alone was the most utilized indirectness strategy used in the practice of reading, with regular seasons using them 46.43% of the time and *All Stars* seasons using them 55% of the time. The categories which visualize the

greatest difference, other than those only seen in one series, was that of double entendre followed by explicit meaning, where the *All Stars* seasons used more than 10% less than the regular seasons.

4.3.2 With Implicature vs. Without - Regular Seasons vs. *All Stars*

When considering the frequency of reads with implicature usage in juxtaposition to those without, the result of the entirety of the data saw implicature being used in some form over 70% of the time. The following table shows this same frequency according to season type.

Table 4.4: With Implicature vs Without - Regular vs *All Stars*

Implicature	Regular Season Percentage	<i>All Stars</i> Seasons Percentage
Reads with Implicature	76.78	75
Reads without Implicature	23.22	25
Total	100.00	100.00

As seen in the table 4-4, the resulting frequencies are nearly identical to that of the data overall, with a difference of only .7% for the regular seasons and 1% for the *All Stars* seasons. While not illustrating any difference between the two season types, this result does affirm the previously confirmed hypothesis which claimed that implicature would be used a vast majority of the time.

4.3.3 Closeness in Other Forms - Regular Seasons vs. *All Stars*

While the tables above show minimal to no difference between the regular and *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, there still exists one major difference between the two seasons which supports the need for closeness in reading. Within all the data collected for the regular seasons of the program, the Reading Challenge occurs on varying episodes throughout the seasons, with the average being the seventh episode. Alternatively, with the exception of *All Stars* 8's challenge being held on the last episode, every single *All Stars* season hosts the Reading Challenge on the first episode of the season. Production is not able to have the

reading challenge early on in the season for regular seasons of the program due to the contestant's unfamiliarity with one another, whereas when filming *All Stars* seasons, all contestants have not only been a contestant previously, but also has some level of awareness of their fellow competitors from outside of the program, with many having friendships and working relationships from being in close proximity. The reality of *All Stars* seasons not requiring a prolonged period before performing the reading challenge supports the hypothesis that closeness is essential for the practice of reading, as there is not a need to use the program to build this closeness between competitors.

4.4 Insult Topic Comparison

Martina Podboj's previous work on reading in the context of *RuPaul's Drag Race* included an analysis of the thematic features present across all reads seen in the reading challenges of all applicable seasons of *RuPaul's Drag Race* and *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* up to the year 2021. A similar thematic analysis was conducted on the data being used in the current study to allow for comparison between thematic frequencies across all reads and those of only reads deemed to be successful. As the collection of data for the present study is occurring at a later date, the addition of two regular seasons and two *All Stars* seasons are present. Another reason for the comparison to previous work is the dissatisfaction with the coding of Podboj's work. The six categories used by Podboj were unevenly broad and narrow, with one category including many subcategories, such as poor drag performance, and others being extremely narrow, such as age. As a result, the conclusions of the analysis are weighted in favor of the broader categories, lacking specific conclusions. To account for this, a more specific set of categories was used in the coding of the data used here, with comparison being made by equating Podboj's categories by combining the applicable categories.

4.4.1 Present Study

The themes of insult found across the data here were as follows: Appearance, Quality, Intelligence, Personality, Plastic Surgery, General Dislike, Hygiene, Age, Femininity, Competition Competence, Promiscuity, and Wealth. For fourteen tokens within our data, two themes were intended targets of the read and were thus counted as two individual tokens when calculating the total use of each theme, resulting in a total of 110 tokens. The distribution across these categories can be seen in Table 4-5.

Table 4.5: Insult Topics

Category	Count	Percentage
Appearance	46	41.8
Quality	20	18.2
Intelligence	12	10.9
Personality	7	6.4
Plastic Surgery	5	4.5
General Dislike	4	3.6
Hygiene	4	3.6
Age	3	2.7
Femininity	3	2.7
Competition Competence	3	2.7
Promiscuity	2	1.8
Wealth	1	0.9
Total	110	100.00

As seen here, the most prominent topic utilized by speakers when successfully reading their fellow competitors is appearance, making up 41.8% of the total data. Within the category of appearance, it was established eight subcategories in order to account for the variability within the category and make comparison with previous research simpler. The distribution across the subcategories can be seen in the chart found in Table 4-6. The most prominent subcategory seen among the data was that of the addressee's face, which included reference to beauty, and facial structure.

Table 4.6: Appearance Categories

Category	Count	Percentage
Face	11	23.91
Body	9	19.57
Fashion	8	17.39
Weight	7	15.22
Teeth	5	10.87
Wigs	3	6.52
Makeup	2	4.35
Genital	1	2.17
Total	110	100.00

4.4.2 Previous Research Comparisons

The themes determined by Podboj in their thematic analysis included six general categories (Podboj, 2023). The first, and most prominent, was poor drag performance, which was defined as acknowledging “poor drag skills and appearance, unoriginality, [and] poor performance in earlier challenges.” The next category was physical appearance, which included “being fat, skinny, having weird teeth... plastic surgery,” etc. The third category was personality, including a queen’s lack of intelligence or being annoying. The fourth category was addressing a queen’s age. The fifth category was focused on sexuality and the sixth was a catch all for all other possible topics.

In order to make an accurate comparison, the categories used in the present study were organized according to the categories used by Podboj. For the theme of poor drag performance, the following categories were included: fashion, wigs, face, femininity, quality, and competition competence. For the theme of physical appearance, the categories of body, weight, teeth, genitals, and plastic surgery were included. The theme of personality included intelligence, personality, and general dislike. The theme of age simply included age and the theme of sexuality solely included promiscuity. All categories which did not fit into a theme were included in the miscellaneous category. The results of the comparison can be seen in Table 4-7 below.

Table 4.7: Thematic Comparison: Present Study vs Podboj (2023)

Category	Present Percentage	Podboj Percentage
Poor Drag Performance	45.5	42.3
Physical Appearance	24.5	29.8
Personality	20.9	14.4
Age	2.7	3.4
Sexuality	1.8	3
Misc	4.5	6.9
Total	100	99.8

While the total percentage included in Podboj’s study does not equal a perfect 100%, the difference of .2% was deemed inconsequential. In the present study, the order of frequency of each category was the same as previously determined, with poor drag performance being the most heavily featured. Only two categories showed variation of over 5%, physical appearance and personality. The results of this analysis illustrate that while winners of the Reading Challenge use reads which reference physical appearance 5% less and those which reference personality 6% more, the general assumption can be made that the reads deemed most successful in the challenge do not vary notably from the general averages.

4.4.3 Thematic Overlap with Implicature

In an attempt to make a definitive conclusion of the most common construction of successful reads within the Reading Challenge of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, it was decided after completing the above comparison that a similar analysis should be made which aimed to see what themes were most frequent in reads which utilized implicature. As the primary hypothesis was validated in finding that a vast majority of successful reads utilized implicature in some capacity, a set of reads which utilized implicature was created, which included 86 thematic references, with 13 of the 73 reads referencing two themes. The resulting analysis is visualized in the Table in Figure 4-14.

Table 4.8: Implicature and Thematic Overlap

Category	Count	Percentage
Appearance	36	41.86
Quality	17	19.77
Intelligence	10	11.63
Personality	5	5.85
Femininity	4	4.65
Hygiene	3	3.49
Plastic Surgery	3	3.49
Age	2	2.33
Promiscuity	2	2.33
General Dislike	2	2.33
Wealth	1	1.16
Competition Competence	1	1.16
Total	80	100.00

Using the above table, we can make the claim that a majority of successful reads seen in the Reading Challenge across the United States series of *RuPaul's Drag Race* are reads which use an implicature and are directed at the appearance of the addressee.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To conclude this project, the following chapter summarizes all previous discussion. The hypotheses and research questions as outlined in chapter 1 are restated first, followed by the results of analysis found in chapter 4. Finally, the limitations seen in the conduction of the present study and propositions for future work is discussed.

5.1 What is a Read and How is it Accomplished?

Let's return to the famed and heavily referenced quote of Dorian Corey, "Reading is the real art form of insults." (Livingston, 1990). It has been established throughout this work that the practice of reading is historically a widely understudied phenomena, as is often the case with language originating in Black communities. Of the few existing works which look to better understand both reading and shade, none consider the fact that not all reads are executed effectively or successfully, as would be expected with any language practice. The intention of this work is to begin to bridge that gap, using the United States series of *RuPaul's Drag Race* as a foundational platform to understand what distinguishes reads which are successful from those which are not through analysis of reads collected from the recurring mini challenge titled the Reading Challenge.

In all previous work, the authors make reference to specific key features which the practice of reading requires. The first discussed in this work is indirectness, as referenced by Johnson (1995), Davis (2019), McKinnon (2017), and Podboj (2023). While each of these works include a reference to indirectness in some form, none have yet to go so far as to specifically analyze their data for the

indirectness strategies where indirectness appears. Bolstered by these previous works, it was a goal of this work to explicitly define reading as a language practice which primarily utilizes conversational implicature. Originally defined by Grice (1975) and further refined by Levinson (1983), conversational implicature refers to additional meaning intended by the speaker beyond the semantic meaning of an utterance, or how more can be meant than is said.

Another feature referenced across all previous works on the topic of reading and shade is that “in order to throw shade, you have to know someone” (Davis, 2019: 61). The United States franchise of *RuPaul’s Drag Race* has two recurring series, the first being regular seasons of the same name which see a new set of drag queen contestants compete on the program for the first time, and the second being *RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars*, which sees queens from previous seasons return and compete a second or third time. The Reading Challenge occurs once per season across both series, with the cast competing in the challenge on the regular seasons having just met at the start of filming and the cast competing on the *All Stars* seasons all coming in with prior relationships to their other competitors, as alum of the program interact heavily after the conclusion of their respective seasons. The heightened closeness seen within the cast of the *All Stars* seasons leads to the hypothesis that reads performed in said seasons would show differing results from those of the regular seasons of the program.

The final goal of this work is to affirm previous conclusions on the frequency of thematic categories as seen in Podboj’s 2023 work. The data used by Podboj in her analysis of the Reading Challenge included all reads performed by all contestants up to the point of publishing, not distinguishing between reads which were evaluated as successful or unsuccessful by RuPaul, the fellow contestants, or the viewers. In an effort to confirm the results of Podboj’s thematic analysis, a similar analysis was conducted on the data set used in this work, made up solely of reads which were deemed successful by RuPaul.

5.2 Conclusions

Of the hypotheses detailed above only one was found to be correct. Across all of the data, including the sets of data which separated the regular seasons from the *All Stars* seasons, conversational implicature was used a vast majority of the time, with the frequency of use being over 70% in every case.

Alternatively, a failure was seen in investigating the proposed difference between the regular and *All Stars* seasons of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, with all results showing insignificant variation. While the data did not support the proposed hypothesis, a separate difference between the regular and *All Stars* series of the

show gave a different perspective. As mentioned previously in this chapter, *All Stars* sees contestants returning from previous seasons with prior knowledge of their potential fellow competitors. This is reflected in the fact that the Reading Challenge seen in *All Stars* seasons is traditionally included in the premiere episode, while the regular series sees the challenge around the seventh episode. Should the closeness of speakers and addressee not be a contributing factor to the success of reading, there would be no reason to account for this stark contrast, as the casts of *All Stars* season do not need time to get to know one another before participating in the practice of reading.

The final goal of this work was to make thematic comparison to the existing work of Martina Podboj (2023). While separate categories were used in coding the data in this study as I found the categories proposed by Podboj to be over simplified, the results were organized according to the six categories originally proposed to allow for a less difficult comparison. It was found that the prominence of each category was the same across the set of all reads and the set of only successful reads, with poor drag performance being the most common thematic category. After completing this initial comparison, a secondary comparison was done to visualize the overlap between thematic category and the use of implicature. This analysis resulted in the claim that the majority of successful reads, as seen in the Reading Challenge on *RuPaul's Drag Race* utilized implicature alone and were thematically directed at the addressee's appearance.

5.3 Limitations

As the scope of this work was that of a master's thesis, the time frame and availability of myself as the researcher as well as those needed to peer review and collect necessary data limited this project to only using the data found in the successful Reading Challenge performances. This project began with the hope of collecting all reads which occurred naturally on the program, excluding those found in the Reading Challenge as the structured nature of the challenge made applying results directly to the practice as it occurs naturally impossible. This continued to be an issue when the data was limited to only the 572 reads found in the reading challenge, as in order to create a data set which only included successful reads, each individual read would need to be evaluated for success or failure by not only me, but multiple fellow researchers to ensure validity. These limitations resulted in the use of the winning performances of each challenge, as they were explicitly given the evaluation of success by Rupaul within the context of the challenge itself.

As mentioned previously in chapter 3, the conclusions made by this work are additionally limited due to the limiting nature of *RuPaul's Drag Race*. The practice of reading existed long before the start of Drag Race and will continue to exist regardless of the program, particularly in communities that are still underrepresented on the program. Ideally, given the time and resources, this study would be conducted using naturally occurring data collected from within the applicable communities in a research team that would include members of the community, as that is the only way to apply the conclusions to the practice as a whole.

5.4 Future Work

Continuing with the point made in the previous section, it is my hope that this study will be replicated by myself or others using naturally occurring data. It would be particularly interesting to compare the features or reads which are performed in the originating community, being the Black community, to the adopted and arguably appropriated form of the practice as used by the queer community. This could be pushed further still to include reads used by speakers who do not exist within either community, as the trend moving forward suggests that reading as a phenomenon is on its way to integrating into white, heteronormative culture. Special consideration would need to be made distinguishing the act of reading from other, existing forms of mock insult which can be found in a number of different global communities.

Another interesting proposition of future work is distinguishing between implied meaning and implied insult, as while implied meaning as intended by the speaker can be understood by an addressee or recipient, that does not simultaneously mean that the addressee or recipient understands how the implied meaning is intended to be an insult. For example, a common read seen across the data saw the speaker implying that the addressee has a visible beard or masculine jaw line, such as Jujubee's famed read addressing Tyra Sanchez by saying "not by the hairs of your chinny chin chin." The intended insult here comes from the assumption that successful drag would not reveal such features as they are considered more masculine and therefore disrupt the intended female impersonation. The implication made by using the phrase "hairs on your chin" is a generalized one implying a visible beard, the intended insult is dependent on the addressee and recipient understanding the disapproval of drag performers who do not successfully cover their masculine features. Further coding the data in a way which would categorize the intended insult as generally understandable

versus dependent on background knowledge would be an interesting point of discussion.

At the time of writing this, there is the new, current, sixteenth season of *RuPaul's Drag Race* airing on MTV, with a cast of 14 new queens. While we are only a few episodes into the season, there is a particular queen who frequently claims to attempt reading her fellow competitors playfully, but who universally performs reads which are evaluated to be true and serious insults. Multiple contestants have confronted or discussed this contestant in the very little existing screen time of the program at this point, all discussing how the utterances made by this queen are not reads at all, but genuine attacks, regardless of what the speaker is claiming. An analysis applying the conclusions made here concerning what makes reading successful to the attempted reads made in this current season would be an interesting investigation in comparing reads that are determined to be unsuccessful with what features were found here to be used in reads deemed successful.

APPENDIX A

TRANSCRIPTION KEY

Table A.1: Caption

Pause	
Short	.
Medium	..
Long	...
Pronunciation	
Elongate	:
Connected	-
Emphasis	!
Guttural	%
Vocal Noise	
Inhale	(H)
Exhale	(Hx)
False Stars	< >
Laughter	@

APPENDIX B

CODED TRANSCRIPTIONS

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 15

Episode: 5

Air Date: January 27th, 2023

Chanel: MTV

Speaker: Loosey LaDuca

Addressee: Mistress Isabelle Brooks

1	<i>camera pans to Mistress, who is smiling at Loosey. Loosey begins speaking while off screen.</i>	
2	Loosey	Mistress . now I know we all read her for those kitten heels,
3		<i>[camera moves to Loosey who is gesturing toward Mistress</i>
4		but it's not her fault .
5		<i>[camera zooms in closer to Loosey who gestures to Mistress again</i>
6		they start off as stilettos.
7		<i>[Loosey uses her hand to show how tall the heels start as</i> <i>[Loosey nods her head slightly, still looking at Mistress.</i>
8	<i>camera pans back to Mistress who is no longer smiling and is now pursing her lips still looking at Loosey</i>	

Figure B.1: Loosey LaDuca vs Mistress Isabelle Brooks

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 2

Episode: 7

Air Date: March 8th, 2010

Chanel: LogoTV

Speaker: Jujubee

Addressee: Tyra Sanchez

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars*

Season: 3

1	<i>camera cuts to Jujubee standing next to RuPaul who is laughing. Her hands are on her hips and she is facing the other contestants.</i>	
2	Jujubee	Miss Ty:ra . was your barbeque ca:nce:led? . .
3		<i>[shakes head slightly [camera cuts to Tyra who cuts her head and raises an eyebrow [camera cuts back to Jujubee</i>
4	RuPaul	(Hx): ohhhh
5		<i>[RuPaul doubles over with laughter</i>
6	Jujubee	your grill is f*beep*ed . %Up.
7		<i>[camera cuts to Tyra who is leaned over laughing</i>

Figure B.2: Jujubee vs Tyra Sanchez

Episode: 1

Air Date: January 25th, 2018

Chanel: VH1

Speaker: BenDeLaCreme

Addressee: Trixie Mattel

1	<i>camera is focused on Ben who is holding a pair of opera glasses.</i>	
2	BenDeLaCreme	Tri: xie: -now . a lot of people clock your makeup
3		<i>[camera cuts to Trixie who is side eyeing Ben and fixing her hair [camera cuts back to Ben</i>
4		but I TOTally get it . ya-know you're just painting for the back of the room .
5		<i>[Ben shakes her open hand at Trixie [Ben waves her hand gesturing to the room [camera cuts to Trixie nodding and pointing in approval</i>
6		which makes sense because that's where your audience collects
7		<i>[camera cuts to a wide shot of all of the queens [Ben is moving her hand to symbolize collecting</i>
8		if you remember to lock the door
9		<i>[Ben moves hand to pinch her thumb and forefinger together as if to hold a key [Ben smiles</i>
10	Trixie	@haa: ah ah@
11		<i>[camera cuts to Trixie waving fists in the air laughing</i>

Figure B.3: BenDeLaCreme vs Trixie Mattel

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 6

Episode: 6

Air Date: March 31st, 2014

Chanel: LogoTV

Speaker: Darienne Lake
 Addressee: Adore Delano

1	<i>camera is focused on Darienne who begins leaning forward while speaking</i>	
2	Darienne	ah: do: re: duh: la:: no: .
3		<i>[Darienne is bowing up and down slowly with her hands together [camera cuts to Adore who is nodding with Darienne with an open pursed mouth]</i>
4		I: m go: ing: to: say: this ve: ry slow:ly so you: can u: ndersta: nd . . *ding*
5		<i>[camera cuts back to Darienne who is continue moving back and forth [Darienne purses hands and adds them to her movement [camera cuts back to Adore who is nodding along smiling looking confused [camera cuts back to Darienne]</i>
6		your dumb .
7		<i>[Darienne abruptly stops her movement [camera cuts to Adore who bends over laughing]</i>
8	RuPaul	@ Ah:: Ah ha ha Ah ha ha Ha ha: @
9		<i>[camera cuts back to RuPaul laughing [camera pans across contestants who are all laughing]</i>

Figure B.4: Darienne Lake vs Adore Delano

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*
 Season: 11
 Episode: 9
 Air Date: April 25th, 2019
 Chanel: VH1
 Speaker: Brooke Lynn Hytes
 Addressee: Silky Nutmeg Ganache

1	<i>camera is still focused on Shuga Cain laughing from the previous read</i>	
2	Brooke Lynn	Si:lky . Nutmeg . Ganache .
3		<i>[camera pans to Silky who has a hand behind her head]</i>
4	Silky	in the flesh
5		<i>[camera cuts back to a wider shot of Brooke Lynn and Ru]</i>
6	Brooke Lynn	Ru . isn't she precious?
7		<i>[Brooke Lynn nodding to Silky]</i>
8	RuPaul	ye:s
9		<i>[move in to Ru]</i>
10	Brooke Lynn	no . really . isn't that Precious?
11		<i>[Camera pans back to both Brooke Lynn and Ru [Brooke Lynn removes reading glasses and leans over to Ru [Brooke Lynn leans toward Silky as if investigating]</i>
12	RuPaul	@ ahh:: @
13		<i>[camera pans to Silky who purses her lips at Brooke Lynn]</i>

Figure B.5: Brooke Lynn Hytes vs Silky Nutmeg Ganache

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*
 Season: 4
 Episode: 7
 Air Date: March 12th, 2014
 Chanel: LogoTV
 Speaker: Latrice Royale
 Addressee: Jiggly Caliente

1	<i>camera is focused on a shot of Latrice standing next to RuPaul</i>	
2	Latrice	Jiggly Caliente . B . M . W .
3		<i>[snap [snap [snap [camera pans to Jiggly who is smiling with her head cocked to the side [camera pans back to Latrice</i>
4		body . made . wrong .
5		<i>[snap while moving hand across body [snap while moving hand across body [snap while moving hand across body</i>
6	camera cuts to Jiggly who is bent over laughing	

Figure B.6: Latrice Royale vs Jiggly Caliente

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 9

Episode: 8

Air Date: May 12th, 2017

Chanel: VH1

Speaker: Valentina

Addressee: Peppermint

1	<i>camera quickly cuts to Valentina who is facing Peppermint</i>	
2	Valentina	Peppermint .
3		<i>[camera pans to Peppermint who is laughing</i>
4		You need one.
5		<i>[Valentina states matter-of-factly with a slight head tilt [entire room erupts with laughter</i>
6	<i>camera pans back to Peppermint whose mouth is open with a slight smile with her hands together in front of her face. She leans back slightly and covers her mouth with her hands.</i>	

Figure B.7: Valentina vs Peppermint

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 10

Episode: 7

Air Date: May 3, 2018

Chanel: VH1

Speaker: Eureka O'Hara

Addressee: Aquaria

1		<i>Camera on Aquaria who is laughing at the previous utterance</i>
2	Eureka	Aquaria . I love your confidence-you're always telling yourself how
3		<i>[camera cuts back to RuPaul and Eureka</i>
4	Eureka	you're beautiful . . . how you're talented . . . how you're gonna win .
5		<i>[Eureka starts counting her fingers [camera cuts to Aquaria whose head is held high and is making a smug face [camera cuts to the Vixen who side eyes Aquaria [camera cuts back to Eureka</i>
6	Eureka	you're also a pathological liar
7		<i>[Eureka gestures both hands open [camera cuts to Kameron Michaels whose mouth is open laughing [camera cuts to Aquaria who grits teeth and shrugs in agreement</i>

Figure B.8: Eureka O'Hara vs Aquaria

Show: *RuPaul's Drag Race*

Season: 2

Episode: 7

Air Date: March 8th, 2010

Chanel: LogoTV

Speaker: Jujubee

Addressee: Tatianna

1		<i>Camera is on Tatianna who is laughing from the the previous read</i>
2	Jujubee	Miss Tatianna: . miss %honey . you think you're so
3		<i>[camera cuts to Juju holding glasses above her eyes [camera cuts back to Tatianna who is covering her mouth still laughing</i>
4	Jujubee	so:ft . . not by the hai:rs of your chinny chin chin
5		<i>[camera cuts to Juju who takes off her glasses [Juju waggles her finger [Juju brushed her hand across her chin [again [again</i>
6	RuPaul	[OOOhh: . ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh
7		<i>[Ru doubles over in laughter</i>
		<i>Camera cuts back to Tatianna who leans over still laughing</i>

Figure B.9: Jujubee vs Tatianna

APPENDIX C

ALL DATA

Table C.1: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
2	2	7	Jujubee	Tatianna	"And, Miss Tatianna, Miss Honey. You think you're so soft. Not by the hairs of your chiny chin chin."
3	2	7	Jujubee	Jessica Wild	"And let me tell you something, puerca. You won't understand this anyways... (in Laotian) Get my gist? Do ya understand?"
4	2	7	Jujubee	Pandora Boxx	"Pandora, can we talk about sun tanning?"
5	2	7	Jujubee	Raven	"And you! Legendary, you think you are. Legendary? Looks like leg AND dairy (rubbing her stomach)!"
6	3	8	Shangela	Delta Work	"Mimi Imfurst."
9	3	8	Shangela	Carmen Carrera	"And, aw, Carmen Carrera. Honey, just go jump in the ocean. You won't drown. Silicone floats."

Table C.2: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
12	4	7	Latrice Royale	Willam	"Willam, Miss Industry, congratulations on your new role as the Big Bad Wolf, by the hair on your chinny chin chin!"
14	5	7	Alaska	Alyssa Edwards	"Alyssa Edwards, Miss US- oh wait."
15	5	7	Alaska	Detox	"Detox, you're so seductive, but unfortunately it's illegal to do it with you because most of your parts are under 18 years of age."
16	5	7	Alaska	Coco Montrese	"Coco Montrese, I don't know why everyone keeps calling you old. How old are you? I'd say you look somewhere between 40 and death!"
17	5	7	Alaska	Jinkx Monsoon	"Next up Pandora Boxx, so nice of you to join us again."
23	6	6	Darienne Lake	Laganja Estranja	"Laganja! You're not yourself today. I noticed the improvement immediately."
25	7	9	Trixie Mattel	Katya	"Katya, where do you get your outfits, girl? American Apparently Not?"
26	7	9	Trixie Mattel	Ginger Minj	"Ginger Minj, girl did you ever save Carol Anne from the poltergeist in the TV?"
31	8	6	Bob The Drag Queen	Kim Chi	"Kim Queef. How would I describe your teeth? 'Thuthpicious.'" (suspicious, said with a lisp)

Table C.3: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
36	9	8	Valentina	Shea Couleé	Ladies, we're gonna do an exercise. Everybody raise your arms up to the sky, and Shea this is for you, one word. Deodorant, bitch.
39	10	7	Eureka O'Hara	Aquaria	"Aquaria, I love your confidence. You're always telling yourself how you're beautiful, how you're talented, how you're gonna win. You're also a pathological liar."
41	11	9	Brooke Lynn Hytes	Plastique Tiara	Plastique Tiara. I'm looking for a new apartment, how much are you charging for the vacant space between your ears?
42	11	9	Brooke Lynn Hytes	Shuga Cain	Shuga Cain. I'm redoing my fireplace and I'm short of brick. Can I borrow your face?
43	11	9	Brooke Lynn Hytes	Vanessa Vanjie Mateo	Miss Vanjie... Now the real reason I keep kissing you is because it's the only way to get you to shut the fuck up.
54	15	5	Loosey LaDuca	Mistress Isabelle Brooks	"Mistress, now I know we all read her for those kitten heels, but it's not her fault... They start off as stilettos."
55	15	5	Loosey LaDuca	Sasha Colby	"Now Sasha, I know that the pineapple is a sign of welcome; is that why you have one tattooed on the inside of your lip?"

Table C.4: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
56	15	5	Loosey LaDuca	Amethyst	"Mammothyst—uh, Amethyst. Now not a lot of people know this, but when Amethyst first started drag a month ago, she expressed interest in being my drag daughter, and after seeing you in this competition, I can truly say... that will never happen."
58	AS2	1	Alaska	Adore Delano	"Adore Delano, these other girls are gonna say you have terrible makeup skills, you have no fashion sense, and you're dumb as a rock. But they're wrong! You don't have terrible makeup skills."
59	AS2	1	Alaska	Roxxy Andrews	"Roxxy Andrews, obviously a diet consisting of nothing but hatred for Jinkx Monsoon does a body good!"
60	AS2	1	Alaska	Phi Phi O'Hara	"Phi Phi O'Hara, you hand make all of your outfits, and I love them. My favorite one was that, um, one that was like a jumpsuit, it was all orange. ... So good."
61	AS2	1	Alaska	Tatianna	"Tatianna, [looks at RuPaul] really?"

Table C.5: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
64	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	Thorgy Thor	"Well I'm very excited to read all of my sisters. Oh, Thorgy, I love this full outfit. I usually only get to see about this much [Gesturing to her face] when you're handing out balloons from that sewer grate."
65	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	Shangela	"Shangela! You have come so far! Initially, your makeup was kind of busted and your outfits were a mess and your personality was super grating, but look how far you've come now. You are much older."
66	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	Trixie Mattel	"Trixie, now, a lot of people clock your makeup, but I totally get it. You know, you're just painting for the back of the room, which makes sense because that's where your audience collects if you remember to lock the door."
68	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	Chi Chi DeVayne	"Chi Chi, Alaska might have been the first one to wear garbage bags, and Alyssa might have done drop splits before you, and I might have made hot glue couture before you. But, AS ₃ is a whole new opportunity; you can still go home first."
70	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	Morgan McMichaels	"Phoenix. Oh, I'm sorry, Nicole Paige Bro... Uh... Pass."

Table C.6: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
71	AS ₃	1	BenDeLaCrue	Ajae	"Aja, I feel like people didn't really get your whole thing. I mean, you do amazing special FX makeup; everybody in the room can look like they're brightly lit, but you still somehow look like you're under that one flickering light in a haunted hospital."
72	AS ₄	1	Latrice Royale	Naomi Smalls	Naomi Smalls, legs, legs, legs. Could we get a side of brains with that?
73	AS ₄	1	Latrice Royale	Valentina	Valentina, take that thing off your face. Oh. It is your face. Your other one.
74	AS ₄	1	Latrice Royale	Jasmine Masters	Girl, welcome to a season that somebody will give a shit about.
78	AS ₅	1	Jujubee	Mariah Paris Balenciaga	Mariah Paris Balenciaga. Great, you're here, so we have to change the name to <i>RuPaul's Drag Race "Some Stars"</i> .
84	AS ₅	1	Blair St. Clair	Derrick Barry	Derrick Barry. you know, the girls in your season said you weren't a real drag queen because you couldn't paint and you could only do Britney, but I completely disagree. I don't really think you can do Britney.
85	AS ₅	1	Blair St. Clair	Mariah Paris Balenciaga	Mariah, girl I love you, but your career only has movement because the earth has to spin on its axis.

Table C.7: Appendix C - Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
86	AS5	I	Blair St. Clair	India Ferrah	And India Ferrah... Oh! I'm pausing so we can all Google who you are.
87	AS6	I	Ginger Minj	RuPaul	Look at this cast, Ru. God, my cholesterol is higher than your standards these days.
89	AS6	I	Ginger Minj	Silky Nutmeg Ganache	Oh, she was in such a hurry to get here she put her ass on backwards today.
91	AS7	I	Jinkx Monsoon	Jaida Essence Hall	"Jaida Essence Hall. Look over there! It's the exit."
93	AS7	I	Jinkx Monsoon	Monét X Change	"Oh Monét, people are always comparing Monét to Bob The Drag Queen, and I don't think that's right, and I don't think that's fair. Bob is very talented."
96	AS8	II	Mrs. Kasha Davis	Kandy Muse	Kandy Muse! You know people say they look like their pets. I have a husky, huh! wide. you, a Tasmanian Devil, bleghstnqwpidnwein-toqwih.

Table C.8: Appendix C - Double Entendre followed by Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
8	3	8	Shangela	Manila Luzon	"Manila Luzon, Asian role model. Well, I hope you were referring to the rolls all over your body."
18	5	7	Alaska	Everyone	"Long story short, the season of the fish smells like trout."
29	8	6	Bob The Drag Queen	Robbie Turner	"Robbie Turnter [sic]. I know you're a huge fan of classic movies and television. May I recommend one of my favorite classic movies and TV shows: Flipper."
37	9	8	Valentina	Peppermint	Peppermint. You need one.
49	14	8	Bosco	Lady Camden	"Lady Camden. I've learned so much from Lady Camden. Did you know in British, 'fag' means cigarette? Yeah, It's crazy. So, can someone send this cigarette home?"
50	14	8	Bosco	Kerri Colby	"Kerri Colby. Your face is so frozen that it just asked me 'do you want to build a snowman?'"
51	14	8	Bosco	Everyone	"And finally, I was walking around backstage and actually found RuPaul's will. You have some very weird criteria in there: she wanted to be buried on the catwalk, and she wanted you all to be her pallbearers. That way, you can let her down on the runway one last time."

Table C.9: Appendix C - Double Entendre followed by Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
57	AS ₂	1	Alaska	Detox	"Detox, no really, I mean that. This is actually your intervention, you should really stop... this."
67	AS ₃	1	Ben DeLa Creme	BeBe Zahara Benet	"And BeBe, I hear that this is the year that you might get two crowns. Which is really not a lot of dental work as far as those early seasons are concerned."
80	AS ₅	1	Jujubee	Alexis Mateo	Alexis Mateo. I don't wanna be shady, so I'm not gonna bring up your weight. But when you work, do they pay you in pounds?
81	AS ₅	1	Jujubee	Ongina	Oooooon-gina, is there an off-gina button?

Table C.10: Appendix C - Double Entendre followed by Explicit Meaning

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
1	2	7	Jujubee	Tyra Sanchez	"Miss Tyra, was your barbecue cancelled? Your grill is fucked up."
10	4	7	Latrice Royale	Jiggly Caliente	"Jiggly Caliente, BMW... Body Made Wrong!"
19	6	6	Darienne Lake	Milk	"Milk, your beauty and fashion is listed right on the side of your carton under 'Missing.'"
24	6	6	Darienne Lake	Trinity K Bonet	"Trinity K. Bonet, she says she has an eight inch penis, but it smells like a foot."
27	7	9	Trixie Mattel	Violet Chachki	"Violet, I don't believe the rumors. I don't believe that you took Sharon Needles' crown. I don't believe you're taking this one either."
34	9	8	Valentina	Alexis Michelle	Alexis Michelle, you're oh so BROOOAADWAAAY, but you're also very broad.
40	10	7	Eureka O'Hara	The Vixen	"The Vixen, do you have a housekeeper, girl? Your kitchen is a mess."
52	15	5	Loosey LaDuca	Malaysia Babydoll Foxx	"Miss Malaysia, I really think you should commit to the name Malaysia and disappear like that flight."
94	AS8	11	Mrs. Kasha Davis	Jaymes Mansfield	Jaymes Mansfield! oh my God that voice, those wigs ugh someday you'll go far. let's just help you stay there.

Table C.II: Appendix C - Explicit Meaning

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
7	3	8	Shangela	Raja	"Raja, I know you call yourself <i>Top Model</i> , but I think Tyra Banks and I would agree you're just fashion roadkill."
13	4	7	Latrice Royale	Sharon Needles	"Sharon Needles, two words, "Sideshow Freak!""
20	6	6	Darienne Lake	Ben DeLa Creme	"You remind me of a Russian doll, full of yourself."
45	13	7	Gottmik	Utica Queen	"Utica, bitch you're fucking weird, RuPaul could walk up in here in cargo shorts and I would still vote you most confusing thing in the room."
75	AS4	1	Latrice Royale	Monét X Change	Monét X Change. Or shall I call you Sponge Bob Square shape?
82	AS5	1	Jujubee	India Ferrah	Miss India Ferrah. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, don't unpack, go back. Okay?
83	AS5	1	Jujubee	Blair St. Clair	And here's my sister, Blair St. Clair. Winning the crown is like your hit song "Now or Ever". Not now, and probably never."
88	AS6	1	Ginger Minj	Jiggly Caliente	Alright, Jiggly Caliente, may I call you... stupid?

Table C.12: Appendix C - Implicature followed by Explicit Meaning

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
11	4	7	Latrice Royale	Phi Phi O'Hara	"Phi Phi O'Hara, although reading is fundamental darling, you want to spell first, you illiterate f***!"
21	6	6	Darienne Lake	Adore Delano	(slowly) "Adore Delano, I'm going to say this very slowly so you can understand. You're dumb."
22	6	6	Darienne Lake	Courtney Act	"Pretty little Courtney Act, her real beauty is on the inside. I guess that's why you've let so many men inside you. Courtney Act, Australian for whore."
32	8	6	Bob the Drag Queen	Naomi Thorgy Thor	"Thorgy Thor is a cautionary tale of why musicians shouldn't mate. You'll end up with an f-a-g on r-d-r with a-d-h-d with compulsion o-c-d, okaay?"
33	8	6	Bob The Drag Queen	Naomi Smalls	"Naomi Shambles. I find it amazing you have eleven brothers and sisters and no one loved you enough to tell you not to wear those shoes on national TV. She's so skinny, she has to run around in the shower just to get wet."
35	9	8	Valentina	Trinity Taylor	Trinity Taylor, I once told you that you're so beautiful inside and out, I lied you ugly stripper.

Table C.13: Appendix C - Implicature followed by Explicit Meaning

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
53	15	5	Loosey LaDuca	Salina Es-Titties	"Salina EsTitties, I think we can all agree when I say Yolanda shot the wrong Selena. Because bitch, you are bitty bitty dumb dumb."

Table C.14: Appendix C - Implicature followed by Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
63	AS2	1	Alaska	Alyssa Edwards	"Alyssa Edwards, whoever said everything's bigger in Texas has obviously never seen your dick. But you know what they have seen? Your body."
79	AS5	1	Jujubee	Mayhem Miller	Mayhem Filler. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I mean, Meh-hem Miller.
92	AS7	1	Jinkx Monsoon	Raja	"Roger. You've always been like a sis- You've always been like a mo- You've always been like a grandmother to me. You know they say Gemini have two faces. Have you been putting the good makeup on the other face?"

Table C.15: Appendix C - Explicit Meaning followed by Implicature

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
48	I4	8	Bosco	Jasmine Kennedie	"Jasmine. You are one brain-dead slut. You put the bottom in lobotomy."
69	AS3	I	BenDeLaCr Kenne Daven- port	Kennedy	"Kennedy, I realise that your reads today weren't that great, but in fairness, I don't expect you to be a good reader because you [slowing her speech] always talk like you're sounding everything out."

Table C.16: Appendix C - Metaphor

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
90	AS6	I	Ginger Minj	Pandora Boxx	Pandora Boxx, oh! This bitch is so old her wigs have osteoporosis.
95	AS8	II	Mrs. Kasha Davis	Alexis Michelle	Alexis Michelle! Gorgeous! From this angle, stunning. From the back, like a helicopter landing pad

Table C.17: Appendix C - Double Entendre

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
62	AS2	1	Alaska	Ginger Minj	"Ginger Minj, you're so full of shit, you should change your name to ginger rectum."
77	AS4	1	Latrice Royale	Manila Luzon	Manila Luzon. You remind me of a Mound and Almond Joy. Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't.

Table C.18: Appendix C - Explicit Statement followed by Double Entendre followed by Implicature followed by Explicit Statement followed by Double Entendre followed by Explicit Statement

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
28	8	6	Bob The Drag Queen	Derrick Barry	"It is a known fact that Derrick Barry is not very smart. When she heard Britney Spears, she said, 'Does she? I prefer fencing.' It is very hard to have an intelligent conversation with Derrick Barry. The only thing harder is Robbie Turner's wig lines."

Table C.19: Appendix C - Explicit Statement followed by Implicature followed by Metaphor

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
30	8	6	Bob The Drag Queen	Chi Chi DeVayne	"Chi Chi DeVayne. We all know she's poor and cheap, in fact you ring her doorbell, the toilet flushes. Why is everyone so shocked she can do backflips? Her teeth have been doing somersaults since she got here."

Table C.20: Appendix C - Explicit Meaning followed by Explicit Meaning

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
76	AS4	1	Latrice Royale	Trinity The Tuck	Trinity The Tuck. She's had so much plastic surgery, I went to her Instagram and it looks like somebody face-tuned a chicken.

Table C.21: Appendix C - Non Applicable

#	Season	Episode	Speaker	Directee	Dialogue
38	10	7	Eureka O'Hara	Kameron Michaels	"Kameron Michaels, I don't really have a read for you. Please, just fuck me. Please, just fuck me!"

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