

Rainbow Center Symposium 2021

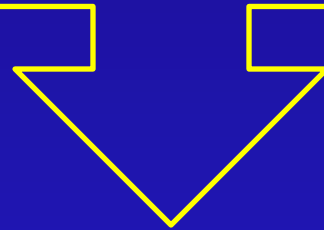
Drag Expression and How it Interfaces with Dragism, Coping, Resilience, and Generativity

**Brian Chapman, Laura Donorfio,
Debra Tomasino, & Nicole Hernandez
University of Connecticut**



Research Questions & Methods

1. Meaning of Drag Expression (DE).
2. Is DE a mechanism to a healthier state of self.
3. How DE is integrated with one's persona and how it interfaces with dragism (discrimination), coping, resilience, and generativity.



Paucity of Research	Drag Queens (DQ) 50+
Exploratory	Qualitative

Design

Phase 1

Spring 2021

Pilot



Phase 2

Fall/Winter 2021 & Spring 2022

Expanded
based on Pilot

- ✓ WebEx
- ✓ Semi-structured interview
- ✓ Online Surveys
 - Demographic
 - Psychosocial measures

Eligibility

1. Self-identified as a DQ
2. Experience in any capacity as a DQ
3. Self-identified as a gender or sexual minority
4. 50+
5. English primary language
6. Resident of U.S.

Participants Demographics

- ✓ N=7
- ✓ Gender - Male 6; Other 1
- ✓ Sexual orientation – Gay 7
- ✓ Age 50 – 90
- ✓ High school 3; Some College 2; Master's 1; Doctorate 1
- ✓ Latino 1; Black 2; White 4
- ✓ Married 1; Divorced 1; Other 1; Single 4
- ✓ Income: –25,000 3; 75-100,000 1
+100,000 1; No answer 2

Participants Demographics

Genre of Drag (12 options)

1. Art Drag
2. Black Drag
3. Butch Drag
4. Comedy Drag
5. Fierce Drag
6. Glamour Drag
7. Historical Drag
8. Movie Drag
9. Political Drag
10. Pop star Drag
11. Radical Drag
12. Tough Drag
13. Other

DRAG = “Dressed Resembling A Girl”

Participants Demographics

Multiplicity of Responses / Complexity

- 21 Genre Selections from 7 Participants
- Top 5
 1. Art
 2. Historical Drag
 3. Other
 - ✓ Illusion & Artistic
 - ✓ 4. Classic Drag
 - ✓ Icon, Legendary, One-of-a-kind
 5. Political

Semi-Structured Interview: 75-120 minutes

Sample Questions

1. How do you define drag?
2. How does Drag make you feel?
3. What percentage of your time is spent in drag?
4. What are your earliest memories of wanting to dress in drag? Parental Support? Sibling Support?
5. Did you come out as gay first or that you were a drag queen first? Is it a separate process?
6. What Role Does Gender play in Drag? Did you think you were being non-conforming or crossing gender boundaries when you had thoughts of dressing in drag (as a women)?
7. Drag & Community: Other types of Family, Generativity, Activism
8. Does drag expression help you in positive and/or ways?
9. Does drag expression serve as a healthy coping or resilience mechanism for you?
10. What types of misconceptions exist about what it means to be a drag queen?

Psychosocial Measures

1. TIPI (Ten-Item Personality Inventory)
2. Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)
3. Brief COPE (Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced)
4. CES-D (Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale)

Findings

Theme 1 Meaning of Drag Expression

- ✓ Drag vs. Trans
 - Do not Want to be Female
 - Emulate Strength of Women
 - Emulate Femininity
- ✓ Drag vs. Cross Dress
 - Private vs. Public

Findings: T1 Meaning of DE

Do Not Want to be Female:

“I don't want to be a woman, you know, I enjoy being gay and being a male.” 01

“Yeah, it has nothing to do, it that has nothing to do with me feeling like a female.” 02

“I never thought of myself as trying to emulate women.” 06

Findings: T1 Meaning of DE

Drag vs Cross Dress / Public vs. Private:

“LD: Yeah. Like, if you got dressed up, and just did it in your home, I am very curious...”

03: I would say that's not drag.

LD: Okay.

03: That, that's a cross dresser.

LD: Okay.

03: That's the businessman down at Lehman Brothers that wear their wife's underwear [laughingly]. No, I don't. I don't care. That's not drag to me.” 03

Findings

Theme 2 Performance

- ✓ Acting, Art, Music, Dance, Cabaret
- ✓ Prepared (rehearsal) vs. Natural
- ✓ “Contests”
- ✓ Identification with Female Vocalists

“Occupation”

Findings: T2 Performance

“Drag is gay men dressing up to perform as women” 02

“But for me, drag queen means performer. To me it equals performer. If you’re not on the stage, if you're doing this not for the stage, then I don't think you're a drag queen. You're a transperson or a cross dresser If you are just dressing up and you're not performing” 04

Findings

Theme 3 “Bringing” Us Into Their World

- ✓ Organically Happened
- ✓ House Tour
- ✓ Drag Objects
- ✓ Drag Wardrobe
- ✓ Art
- ✓ Books (self inside)
- ✓ Activism
- ✓ AIDS – Impact, Vaccine trials

Findings

Theme 4 Generativity

- ✓ Activism
- ✓ Bi-directional
- ✓ Not interested = 1

Generativity-legacy; making mark on the world

Findings

Theme 5

“Dragism” = Discrimination

- ✓ 60's Were Unkind, Closeted
- ✓ In-group / Intra-group Discrimination from gay community
- ✓ Physically Assaulted & Hospitalized
- ✓ Seeking Underground Medical Treatments

“Surviving the Plague”

Findings: T5 “Dragism” = Discrimination

“Who cares why is somebody walking in high heels scare you so much? Why would that somebody was carrying a gun to me would scare the s*** out of me. Somebody walking in or carrying a pair heel wouldn't scare me.” 05

Findings

Theme 6 Strength & Power

- ✓ Relationship with Mother
 - Strong
 - Idolization
- ✓ Role Models
 - Diana Ross
 - The Mud Flap Girl
 - Gracie Hansen
 - Totie Fields
- ✓ Female Power

Findings: T6 Strength & Power

“I was fortunate to flourish and bloom and become, whatever I wanted to become, you know, and I think even if, even if I wanted to go down the path of, say, if I wanted to be able to transition, I don't think they would have a problem with it in the least by me dresses.” 01

“In fact, I am married, I have 2 children. I've got 2 children. I've got 2 grandchildren and now I have 2 great grandchildren. A little boy, little girl, and they, they're wonderful and beautiful. And we see all the time. I'm so lucky. My family loves what I do. They're a part of it.” 04

“She protected me from, from she knew that I was different.” 02

Findings

Theme 7

DE Mechanism of Coping & Resilience

- ✓ Emulating Strength of Women/Femininity
 - ✓ Armor
 - ✓ Protective
 - ✓ Fierce
 - ✓ Fearless
 - ✓ Another Ego
 - ✓ Empowering
- ✓ Confidence Building over Time
 - ✓ Critical to Survival

Findings: T7 DE Mechanism of Coping & Resilience

“It's like you, it's like your armor, you know what I mean? It's like you're, you're, you're, you're shield like Wonder woman has it's like, I'm fierce, I'm fierce” 01

“To be honest with, you, 02 the boy, is not fierce, was not fierce. This is all new for me to be a 02 the boy. When I'm DQ, you can't come for me. I'm like, it's beyond it's like....I think I'm great.” 07

“It's another ego. And you have to have a big ego to get in.” 05

Findings

Theme 8

Continued Mix of Integrated Identity

Drag Persona + Cisgender Gay Male

Older  More Integrated

What do you want the world to know?

“I would love the world to know that we're not clowns.” 01

“Remember that behind all this glitz and glamor there's a pretty nice person. And maybe you should find out about who this person is first, and then worry about whether she's in drag or not. No, I, uh, I hope they know that I, I'm a nice guy and things are okay in my life, and I can deal with it. Now you deal with it.” 04

Contact Information

Laura Donorfio, laura.donorfio@uconn.edu

Brian Chapman, brian.chapman@uconn.edu

Q&A