

REPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ MEMBERS ON TELEVISION



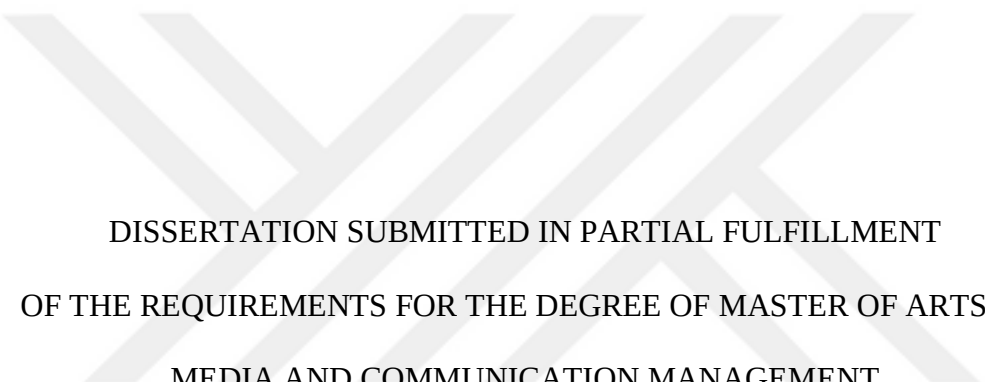
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REPRESENTATION OF LGBTQ MEMBERS ON TELEVISION

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PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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12.08.2021



Abstract

Increasing mainstream acceptance of LGBTQ identities in the western world gave way to increasing representations on television. This study adopts the idea that television allows society to communicate with its collective self. It recognizes that television can reinforce the symbolic existence of the groups it represents while providing opportunities for audiences to interact with them. Through this symbolic interaction, it can influence people's attitudes towards them. Because of that, the representations of marginalized identities carry the burden of being representative of the communities they represent. From this perspective, it is important to understand whether representations on television are stereotypical or progressive. Thus, adopting an intersectional approach, this thesis presents a semiotic analysis of the television series *Pose* (2018 – 2021) by applying John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method to the 9th episode of the second season. Taking into account the stereotypical representations of black women, transgender women and women as a general category, the textual analysis part of the thesis aims to uncover the ideological meanings within the representations of black transsexual women on *Pose*. However, taking a cultural studies approach, this thesis also acknowledges the polysemic nature of media texts and recognizes that mere textual analyses cannot predict the audiences' reception of them. In addition, from an intersectional perspective, it acknowledges that different dimensions of audiences' identities can have an impact on their readings and the meanings they produce. So, this thesis also investigates the meanings participants from different sexualities and ethnic groups make from these representations, by making use of survey, participant observation and in-depth interview methods. The results show that both the representations in the episode and the audiences' receptions of them contain contradictory meanings.

Key words: Pose, Representation, LGBTQ, Intersectionality, Quality Television

Özet

LGBTQ kimliklerin batı ülkelerinde giderek daha fazla kabul görmesi televizyondaki temsillerinin artmasını sağlamıştır. Bu çalışma, toplumun, televizyon aracılığıyla kolektif benliğiyle iletişime geçtiği görüşünü benimsemektedir. Televizyonun, izleyicilere, temsil edilen gruplarla etkileşime girme olanağı sağlarken aynı zamanda bu grupların sembolik varlıklarını pekiştirebildiğini kabul etmektedir. Bu sembolik etkileşim aracılığıyla izleyicilerin bu gruplara karşı görüşü üzerinde etki sahibi olabilmektedir. Bu nedenle, marjinalleştirilmiş kimliklerin temsillerinin, temsil ettikleri topluluğun vekili olma yükünü taşımaktadır. Bu çerçeveden, televizyondaki temsillerin stereotipik mi yoksa progresif mi olduğunu anlamak önemlidir. Bu nedenle, bu tez, kesişimsel bir tutum benimseyerek ve John Fiske'in (2009) "codes of television" yöntemini kullanarak *Pose* (2018 – 2021) dizisinin ikinci sezonunu 9. bölümünün göstergebilimsel analizini sunmaktadır. Siyahi kadınların, transgender kadınların ve genel bir kategori olarak kadınların stereotipik temsillerini de göz önünde bulundurarak, bu tezin metin analiz kısmı, *Pose* dizisindeki siyahi transseksüel kadınların temsillerindeki ideolojik anlamları açığa çıkarmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ancak, aynı zamanda kültürel çalışmalar yaklaşımı benimseyerek ve medya metinlerinin çokanlamlı doğasını tanıyarak, tek başına metin analizlerinin, izleyicilerin alımlamalarını tahmin edemeyeceğini kabul etmiştir. Ayrıca, kesişimsel bir perspektiften bakarak izleyicilerin kimliklerinin farklı boyutlarının okumaları üzerinde ve ürettikleri anlamlar üzerinde etkisi olabileceği fikrini benimsemiştir. Bu nedenle, bu tez, anket, katılımlı gözlem ve derinlemesine görüşme yöntemlerinden yararlanarak farklı cinsiyet kimliği, cinsel yönelim ve etnik gruplardan gelen bireylerin bu temsillerden çıkardıkları anlamları da incelemektedir. Bulgular hem bölümdeki temsillerin hem de izleyicilerin bu temsilleri alımlayışlarının çelişkili anlamlar içerdiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Pose, Temsil, LGBTQ, Kesişimsellik, Nitelikli Televizyon

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1. Introduction

It is an interesting question, a kind of thought experiment, to go back and think what I would feel today as an out trans person if I had never seen any representation of myself in the media. On the one hand, I might not have ever internalized that sense of – of being monstrous, of having fears around disclosure, of seeing myself as something abhorrent and as a – as a punchline and - and as a joke. I might be able to go on a date with a man without having the image of men vomiting. On the flip side, would I even know I am trans if I had never seen any kind of depiction of gender variance on screen?

- Jen Richards (in Feder, 2020)

Over the course of the two decades, from 2000s to 2020s, LGBTQ identities increasingly gained mainstream acceptance in the western world. Paralleling that, LGBTQ representations on television gained increasing representation and visibility (GLAAD, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018b, 2019d, 2020). This is a major step towards creating a more egalitarian society where marginalized sexual identities are not discriminated solely based on their identity. This is because television gives us information about “what things are but also about how they work, or should work, and why” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179); thus, the presence of such identities creates opportunities for audiences to symbolically interact with those groups, which can lead to them having more positive attitudes towards them (Garretson, 2015b, 2015a; GLAAD, 2019c; Levina et al., 2000; Schiappa et al., 2005, 2006; Tucker & Potocky-Tripodi, 2006) and signify their existence within society whereas their absence would signify their symbolic demise (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 182). Sadly, latter is the case for Turkey when it comes to LGBTQ identities and representations. While the LGBTQ rights and acceptance followed a progressive course in the western world from the 2000s to 2020s, the situation was the opposite when it comes to Turkey. During the second half of the 2010s

and later in 2020s, the government in power (the Justice and Development Party, a.k.a. AKP) adopted an increasingly hostile attitude towards LGBTQ identities (Barkawi, 2020; "İstanbul'da Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi," 2015; "Yasağa rağmen LGBTİ+ bireyler Onur Yürüyüşü için İstanbul'da bir araya geldi: '5 gözaltı,'" 2018; "İstanbul'da Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi sonrası gözaltılar," 2017; "İstanbul'daki Trans Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi," 2016; "İstanbul Taksim'deki Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi," 2021; "Onur Yürüyüşü: İstanbul'da LGBTİ+ Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi," 2019; "Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi: 20'den fazla gözaltı," 2021; "Turkey's Erdogan denounces LGBT youth as police arrest students," 2021; Savcı, 2018) and their representations on media decreased from few to almost none due to government restrictions (Gümüş, 2020). However, western media productions (mainly film, television and music) are highly consumed by the Turkish public, especially among younger generations. Thus, even though Turkish public may not have the chance to interact with the marginalized sexual identities of their own community through their local media productions, western productions may take on that role and help individuals in getting to know people from those oppressed groups and have an influence on their ideas about them.

Representations on media productions can play a guiding role on people's ideas about certain issues or groups of individuals. However, the mere representation of marginalized identities is not enough to come to the conclusion that they will have progressive effects on the people's perceptions of individuals from those subaltern groups. Stereotypical representations that perpetuate harmful notions about marginalized individuals can further and/or intensify their oppression. In addition and as a result, because marginalized people get limited opportunities for being represented, their representations, as Mercer (1990) points out, carry "the burden of being representative" (p. 63). In other words, the positive or negative qualities of these representations can be generalized to the group they represent as a whole.

Thus, the importance of uncovering the messages media productions convey to the audiences about marginalized and oppressed identities in society is apparent.

The media productions aim to convey certain messages to the audiences. While certain schools of thought see audiences as passive consumers that are incapable independent thought (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 100), some others argue that they are active agents within the process of meaning production (Fiske, 1989, p. 27) and they are capable of making polysemic readings and producing meanings that are different from one another's and from the intended meanings that the media productions are trying to convey. From the point of view of the latter approach, it is apparent that it is just as important to investigate what meanings actual audiences make from media productions as it is to uncover the intended meanings they are aiming to convey. However, drawing on Bourdieu's (1996) ideas on habitus, capitals and taste, one's social background and experiences, which interact with every dimension of their identity (such as gender identity, sexual identity, sexual/romantic orientation, racial identity and ethnic identity), will have an effect on how they decode the messages in the media texts they consume and the meanings they produce out of them. Thus, one cannot neglect the different dimensions of audiences' identities while investigating their receptions of media texts. However, this approach, for the most part, has been absent in the literature of audience reception studies (Martin, 2020, p. 73).

This study examines how black transsexual women are represented on television by analysing the 9th episode of the second season of the television series *Pose* (2018 – 2021) and looking at how the main characters, who are black transsexual women, are portrayed in it. However, as , Martin, (2020) notes, only asking “how” can bring along problematic implications and scholars should also ask “why” and investigate what actual audiences make from the images they see in media productions (pp. 71, 73). In line with Martin's suggestions, this thesis also investigates how audiences who come from similar backgrounds in terms of

their age, level of education and the monthly income of their households but belong to different identity groups when it comes to their gender identity, sexual/romantic orientation and their ethnic identity decode the messages the representations of black transsexual women in *Pose* convey and what meanings they make out of them.

Pose is a fictional drama series which aired its first season in 2018 on the television channel FX in the US and aired its third and final season in 2021. The series was not aired on FX in Turkey but is available for streaming on Netflix. It takes place in the 1980s and 1990s and the main ensemble of the series is made up of black trans and homosexual individuals. The story follows their relationships and struggles in Harlem, New York and within the ballroom culture they are a part of. The series takes much inspiration from and makes references to real life events and the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning* whose director, Jennie Livingston, acts as a consultant for the show among other prominent names who actually come from New York's ballroom circles, such as Hector Extravaganza. The series also has been praised for its inclusivity for employing a high number of LGBTQ individuals in its production team and the intersectional identities of its main characters.

The intersectionality of the main characters put them in a unique position. The characters have the ability to express the multi-dimensional nature of their identities while talking about the different issues they might face due to the multiple identity groups they belong to and how they can interact with each other. However, at first glance, the show seems to talk about the characters' struggles as transsexual women for the most part while not putting as big of an emphasis on their identity as people of colour. Whether including a minority group's struggles in their story is necessary or not is a different issue (for example, a trans character's sexual identity does not necessarily have to play a role in how they are represented); however, not reflecting their experiences as black people while talking about their struggles as transsexual women might give off the impression that the other dimensions

of their identity do not have that big of an impact in their lives. For example, when talking about the discrimination transgender people of colour face, only highlighting their sexual identity might give the unintentional message that they do not face discrimination based on their racial identity. Transsexual women of colour are not solely defined by their sexual identity. Their racial background is a part of their identity, as well, and it is important to represent that intersectional nature of their identity. As Dawson (2015) notes, gender is not a detached category; it converges with class, ethnicity and other identity categories (p. 209). However, narratives on television tend to fail in representing this intersectional nature, especially when it comes to trans women.

To investigate the representation of black trans women in the series, this study adopts an intersectional approach, focusing on three different dimensions of their identity as people of colour, as trans individuals and as women. Thus, while looking at their representations one has to separately take into account the literatures around representations of black women, representations of transgender women and representations of women as a general category. The reason representations of black women and women as a general category are handled under separate headings is because the category of cisgender women includes both white and black women in it and the representations of each group, both in quality and quantity, differ greatly from one another. However, the difference in representation based on racial identity cannot be found in the representations of transgender women. As it will be dealt in detail in the literature review of this thesis, television tends to fail representing the intersectional nature of its characters' identity and the representations of black and white transgender women tend to present them by taking only their sexual identity into account and representing them as so-called sexual deviants. Thus, the representations of transgender will be dealt under one heading in the following pages.

Looking at the literature around the representations of black women, representations of transgender women and women as a general category, one can observe that individuals from these groups have long been represented in numerous stereotypical ways, both in the US and Turkish media. In the US, women have stereotypically been represented in domestic roles as “virginal love interest[s], doting mother[s], spinster[s], coquettish minx[es] or plain old whore[s]” (Young, 2017, p. 319). These domestic roles contributed to the perpetuation of their oppression by creating an ideal image of women as domestic and submissive “good mothers” and they also have been defined by Eurocentric standards, as “white, heterosexual, self-sacrificing, middle-class, married (and) fertile” (Feasey, 2020, p. 1). To a certain extent, their representations do not stray far from these stereotypes in Turkey, either. In Turkish media, women have mostly played domestic roles and their representations presented them as individuals whose lives revolve around the men close to them (such as their fathers, brothers or husbands) and their children (Kaymal, 2020, p. 296).

When we look at the stereotypical representations of black women in the US, their representations have been used as “controlling images” (Collins, 2000, p. 72) that serve the interests of white individuals, to justify their oppressive actions against black people and maintain black peoples’ subordinated status. Namely, these stereotypes can be listed as the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare mother, the jezebel, the sapphire and the tragic mulatto (Collins, 2000; Keenan, 1975; Wooten, 2019). As a way to challenge these stereotypical representations, black people have created a positive stereotyped image, the “strong black woman” stereotype (Versluys, 2014, p. 13). However, because this image tied strength to masculinity and suppressing one’s own emotions, it contained some problematic messages in it (Versluys, 2014, p. 14). In Turkey, black people cannot find almost any representation in contemporary media productions (Ünür, 2013, pp. 35, 38) but, like in the US, their previous

representations were problematic. In old novels and movies, their representations usually consisted of characters that play a servant role (Akpınar, 2016, pp. 58, 59).

Lastly, looking at the representations of transgender women in the US, we can see that transgender women's representations centre around a few themes. These stereotypical representations include casting cisgender actors for transgender roles, presenting them as deceptive, violent and dangerous individuals, presenting them as pathetic victims, presenting them as objects of ridicule and presenting them as sex workers (Abbott, 2013; Funk & Funk, 2016; J. R. Miller, 2012; Reitz, 2017; Serano, 2004). What is common in all of these harmful practices is that they all look at transgender individuals from a "cisgender gaze" and present them as "curiosities" (Sandercock, 2015, p. 441). Representations of transgender people in Turkey are not much different than their representations in the US. Stereotypical representations of transgender women in Turkey also present them as deceptive and dangerous individuals, perpetuating the notion that they are actually men in essence and presents them as objects of ridicule and as sex workers (Yayla, 2019, pp. 69, 70, 77).

In light of these stereotypical representations and other theoretical discussions that will be presented in the "Literature Review" chapter, this thesis aims to find answers on whether if the representations of black transsexual women on *Pose* are stereotypical or progressive, what messages they convey to the audiences, how intersectional they are and what meanings can actual audiences make from them. To do that, John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method and Tzvetan Todorov's (1971) narrative theory will be used to analyse the 9th episode of the second season of *Pose* and to uncover the ideological messages within these representations. In addition, participant observation and in-depth analysis methods will be used to investigate the possible meanings actual audiences can produce out the representation in the episode. As mentioned, this study adopts an intersectional approach and intersectionality plays an important role in the audience reception study of this thesis. Thus,

the different dimensions of the participants (who will be taking part in the study on the basis of them being easily accessible and volunteering to be a part of it) will also be taken into account while exploring their reception of the characters' identities and the meanings they make out from the representations they see on the screen.

This thesis contributed to the literature in numerous different ways. Among studies conducted in Turkey, the number of studies looking at the representations of transgender women on television were very low. This thesis aims to contribute to television studies literature conducted within the Turkish context by conducting a representational analysis of the leading characters in *Pose*. In addition, it aims to contribute to the literature which analyses the representations of transgender women in productions produced within the western context. However, as Martin (2020, p. 73) notes, the concept of intersectionality has mostly been neglected and this thesis aims to contribute to the literature by presenting an analysis of representations of transgender women from an intersectional approach. In addition, intersectionality has not only been neglected when it comes to looking at the representations of transgender women but also in audience reception studies as well. Thus, this thesis also aims to contribute to the literature of audience reception studies by investigating the meanings audiences from different identity groups make from the representations of the black transsexual women they see on the screen. Also, while there are other studies that do take different dimensions of the audiences' identities while investigating their receptions of media content, they are predominantly conducted within the western context. As a result, the audience reception study in this thesis diverges from the previous studies in this matter and aims to explore the readings of a sample of audiences who are familiar with the western culture but do not fully belong to it. Thus, it aims to help keep the literature from being western-centric. Although the findings of this thesis do not claim to be representative of the representations in the series *Pose* as a whole or the receptions of the Turkish public, by doing

so, it is hoped that the findings will provide a multi-dimensional understanding on how intersectional identities are presented on television and how audiences perceive them. In addition, it is hoped that this thesis may help future studies looking at representations of transgender women on television or even more specifically, studies analysing the representations in *Pose*.

The following chapters will first deal with the theoretical and political discussions within the fields of gender studies and media studies. Under the “Literature Review” chapter, this thesis first discusses the distinctions between some fundamental concepts and provides fundamental definitions of certain terms. Then, it provides the context in which the television series *Pose* is produced in and the context which the audiences who take part in this study come from and provides brief histories of trans and LGBTQ movements in the US and in Turkey. After that, it goes on to provide information general information about the feminist and queer theories, discusses the struggles trans individuals face in society and within their own communities, explains Judith Butler’s concept of performativity which lays down the foundations of legitimization of queer identities and discusses the discourses around the concept of “passing” and being born into the wrong body. Later, moving onto the literature of media studies, it talks about the theoretical developments and discussions regarding television and media in general. It first lays out the mainstream communication theories which were mainly developed in the USA. Then, it moves onto the critical theory approach and discusses Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002) theory regarding their notion of culture industry. As another critical school which diverges greatly from Horkheimer and Adorno’s ideas, the prominent and fundamental ideas within the cultural studies approach are also discussed in regards to popular culture and audience reception studies. In relation to their ideas, John Fiske’s approach to understanding televisual content, the theoretical framework around that and his views on popular culture and television are discussed in detail. In addition, studies which take

a feminist point of view when looking at media productions and audience reception studies are also laid out in the following section. To understand the dynamics of meaning making processes of audiences and the effect of media content, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's praxis theory, his ideas on taste and his concept of symbolic violence was also explored. Also, the theoretical discussions around the concept of quality television were laid out to have a deeper understanding on the development of televisual content and the audience's relationship with them. As the last section of the "Literature Review" chapter, the "Representation on Television" section explores the stereotypical representations of women, black women and transgender women in both the US and Turkey in detail. In addition, it also looks at the representations of LGBTQ individuals in general and how their representations might have an effect on audiences and propagate social change.

The "Methodology" chapter first describes the subject, purpose, scope and limitations of this thesis in detail. Then, it lays out the research questions and the hypotheses this thesis will test depending on the research questions and its layout of the chapters of the thesis. After that, it describes the methods that will be used in the analysis part of the thesis and describes how the studies in the research have contributed to the literature in detail.

The analysis part of the thesis is made up of three sections. The first section will provide contextual and industrial information about *Pose* and provides a short summary of the series which only includes the key events that are relevant to the events in the episode analysed in this study. Then, it will analyse the 9th episode of the second season of *pose* by using John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method. After that, it will investigate the meanings audiences who belong to various identity groups make from the representations of black transsexual women in the episode and how they perceive their identities and relationships. The findings that were derived from the studies will be analysed and discussed under the "Discussion" chapter. This chapter will provide a more profound understanding of

the findings. Lastly, the conclusions derived from the studies will be presented under the “Conclusion” chapter.



2. Literature Review

The television show *Pose* takes the 1980s and 1990s' ball culture in New York as its focus. For the most part, it follows the stories of LGBTQ people of colour, and it particularly focuses on the stories of black transsexual women. Thus, by its nature, the topic locates this study, at the broadest level, at the intersection of cultural studies, gender studies, and ethnic and racial studies. Within these fields, it can most specifically be located at the intersection of television studies, trans studies, women's studies, and black studies. In a highly intersectional study like this one, there are many issues, concepts, theories and ideas one has to take into account. There are also many perspectives and paradigms one can approach the issue from. This review aims to show the extant literature on the topic and to establish a theoretical framework to be applied in this study.

The first section in this chapter explores the difference between the notions of sex and gender with insights from some key texts in the literature and presents definitions of some sexual identities. The second section aims to overview the historical context in both the U.S.A. and Turkey. The third section first provides a general overview of feminist and queer theory and talks about some issues trans people face in everyday life. Then it explains a number of main concepts and theories about gender and sexual identity. The fourth section takes a look at the development of television studies, first focusing on mainstream theories of communication and then moving on to the critical theories of Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools. After that, it investigates the position John Fiske takes within these schools of thought and how he looks at television as a medium. Then, before closing off with the section that talks about the concept of "quality television," the sections "Feminist Television Studies" and "Pierre Bourdieu and the Praxis Theory" discuss the studies around the literatures of film, television and audience reception studies which adopt a feminist perspective and talk about French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical ideas in relation to media and television.

Lastly, the fifth section examines the issue of representation on television, looking at how different gendered identities are represented on television.

2.1. Terminology

The terminology and general concepts surrounding gender identity and sexual/romantic orientation can sometimes be confusing not only for those whose knowledge is limited to traditional binary gender definitions but also for people who are familiar with the subject, due to the ambiguity and diversity involved in the definitions of some keywords. Although some of these words are now mainstream, such as “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual,” the definitions of words such as “non-binary,” “queer,” or even “transgender” are either not well-known, have different usages, or have some ambiguity to them. Thus, it is important to explain some of these keywords to build, at least, a basic understanding about the issue before getting into more complex discussions.

2.1.1. Sex and Gender

Although closely related and sometimes mistaken to be the same, sex and gender are different concepts. Sex refers to the biological aspects of a person’s sexual identity. They are accepted to be “invariant, anatomically distinct and factic aspects” (Butler, 1986, p. 35) of one’s body (such as female and male). On the other hand, gender is bodily appropriation of cultural meanings and forms, that is, of various ways by which body is accultured (such as a woman or man) (Butler, 1986, p. 35). According to Butler (2006), attempts at finding a universal and coherent definition of the category of “women” with the aim of establishing the subject of feminism have been exclusionary and denied multiplicity in terms of cultural, social, and political convergences “in which the concrete array of ‘women’ are constructed” (p. 19). Identity categories which are constructed from this perspective are “never merely descriptive, but always normative” (Butler, 1994, p. 166).

Besides, according to Butler (1986), gender is not passively determined but actively appropriated and interpreted, and fitting or not fitting into “unspoken normative requirements” (Butler, 2006, p. 8) does not determine a person’s gender. That is, a person’s gender is actively acquired, produced, and reproduced through appropriations and interpretations of certain actions and characteristics (Butler, 2006). It might come as safe to assume that gender would follow from sex due to the assumption that someone with a male body would acquire more “masculine” attributes and someone with a female body would acquire more “feminine” attributes; however, gender is neither the result of a causal relationship with sex nor is it “as seemingly fixed as sex” (Butler, 2006, p. 8). It is a “set of free-floating attributes” (Butler, 2006, p. 34) and its effect is “performatively produced” (p. 34); hence, gender is performative (which will be discussed in more detail in the section below about “gender performativity”). People have a certain gender not because they were born into a seemingly fixed body but they actively appropriate certain characteristics and produce and reproduce those through their actions.

While gender is understood to be free-floating and variant, sex is still perceived to be determined by intact and fixed biological factors. However, Fausto-Sterling (2000) points out, “chromosomes, hormones, the internal sex structures, the gonads and the external genitalia all vary more than most people realize” (p. 20). The presence of biological sexual characteristics and differences cannot be denied; still, it is important to realize that biological sex is more diverse than the traditional male and female categories and our understanding of biological sex and the way we conceptualize it are also socially constructed and shaped. For example, according to the conventional understanding, women have female reproductive organs and genitals, female secondary sex characteristic (such as bigger breasts, a smaller body and less body hair), XX chromosomes, and they produce more oestrogen than testosterone while men have male reproductive organs and genitals, male secondary sex characteristics (such as a

bigger and more muscular body, more body hair and a deeper voice), XY chromosomes, and they produce more testosterone than oestrogen. However, there are many instances in which (about 1.7% of the population according to Anne Fausto-Sterling [2000, p. 20]) people do not fit into these categorizations but still identify and are perceived to be male or female since birth; they are called *intersex*. Numerous studies document cases where women have distinct vaginas with penis-sized clitorises, have female genitalia but do not have ovaries (Carlson, 2013, p. 188; Fausto-Sterling, 1993, p. 22), show different secondary sex characteristics such as growing a beard or having a deeper voice (Carlson, 2013, p. 129; de Herder, 2020; Fausto-Sterling, 2000, p. 20) or have chromosomes other than XX such as XY or XXY (Carlson, 2013, p. 164; Fausto-Sterling, 2013 pp. 1-3). These variations show that traditional categories of male and female do not cover a whole variety of bodies and sometimes contradict with the bodies they try to define.

The fact that while some societies accept this binary sex system, some others, such as Native American (Vincent & Manzano, 2017, pp. 22-24; Woodsum, 1995) and Indian (Taggart, 1980; Vincent & Manzano, 2017, pp. 19, 20) cultures, include a third or even a fourth sex supports the idea that the way we perceive, understand and categorize sexes is socially or culturally constructed. Saying biological sex is social or cultural does not mean that those biological body parts do not exist, do not have any meaning, or do not matter at all. It is like saying “money is a social construct.” Money as a physical object (the paper) does exist and already has some value as a material, but it only has the value it has because society accepts its constructed meaning as an exchangeable currency for other material goods. The minute that it is collectively rejected, it is just a piece of paper. Similarly, when someone is born, they are just a material being, a human body. Biological differences do exist and people show different biological characteristics but how sexes are conceptualized (such as in the form

of a binary opposition) and which body is considered which sex and the gender and which roles are assigned to that body depend on culturally accepted norms.

Also, Butler (2006) says, categorizing gender within the binary system “implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it” (p. 9), which is not the case. Genitals, gonads, chromosomes, secondary sex characteristics and hormones can imply or suggest what the person’s sex and gender might be but cannot determine them for certain. For example, someone’s biological characteristics may suggest that they are male and will most likely identify as a man considering the social conditions they are born into but cannot indicate that with absolute certainty. Biological characteristics, at best, can only imply a person’s sex and gender, not define it; indeed, ideally speaking, it should not.

That might sound similar to but actually is different than Alison Stone’s ideas on sex where she comments on Butler’s insights. Basing her argument on Richard Boyd’s ideas on the classification of species which, according to Stone (2007), suggests that “having enough of a set of clustered properties makes something a member of a particular species” (p.43) Alison Stone (2007) first argues that male or female categories are two ends of a scale and being one or the other “is a matter of degree” (p. 43). To be female, one has to have all or most of the relevant properties and even if they do have many of these properties, “having them itself is a matter of degree” (Stone, 2007, p. 44). It is because, due to hormonal differences, male and female bodies have different degrees of secondary sex characteristics such as having more or less hair, bigger or smaller breasts and a deeper or higher voice; even genitals vary in size and shape. If we base our argument solely on this idea, a transsexual man would be male because, despite of having XX chromosomes, they have most of the relevant properties to be male. So, sex, like gender, is on a scale. She, then, through her interpretation of Butler’s ideas on sex and gender like “claims about sex are gender norms,” argues that

“claims about sex (...) imply gender norms” (Stone, 2007, p. 70). According to her, the binary classifications of sexes imply that men and women act or should act in certain ways, and if we change our classifications into one that recognizes that all females and males have different sex-properties and the extent to which they possess these properties differ greatly, then “this implication would not follow” (Stone, 2007, p. 71). Because everyone is male or female to differing degrees, there would be no concrete reason to expect all people who have the same sex to act alike (Stone, 2007, p. 71). This, again, supports the idea that gender does not follow from sex.

As mentioned above, biological characteristics can only imply a person’s sex and gender. People’s biological features may suggest that they have and/or will have certain sex characteristics and will acquire certain gender identity and characteristics as they grow up. Also, considering that the LGBTQ community makes up only 5.9% of European population (Deveaux, 2016) and 4.5% of American population (The Williams Institute, 2019), cis-normative and hetero-normative assumptions about someone’s sex and gender will most likely be prevailing. However, these are only assumptions which may or may not be true (but they are still harmful assumptions). Someone who is born with female genitals may also have XY chromosomes and/or develop more body hair than “usual,” and even grow a beard. Even if their biology completely fits into the traditional category of female, it can only imply that they are female. They might have all or most of the relevant properties and, because they fall under the category of female on the scale, be considered a female. However, this cannot indicate for certain that they will identify as a woman. If they identify as a man and wish to get a sex reassignment surgery, their relevant properties can be changed to the ones they desire and that would make them, on the scale, a male. That is, there is no clear distinction between male and female. For example, the sex of an intersex person may remain indefinable if they do not wish to have any surgery, or a transgender person may wish to have a blurred

sexual identity and an androgynous body. So, this would show that people's sex cannot be determined or assigned for certain but can only loosely be suggested or implied before their gender is determined. In other words, whatever biological features a person is born with, we can only guess what their sex and gender will be; however, this does not imply that we should. Sex is not invariant and binary, and gender does not mirror sex. In fact, in many or maybe all cases, sex mirrors gender or, perhaps, sex "was already gender" (Butler, 2006, p. 9).

To make these definitions clearer for the sake of understanding the discussions in this study, in a nutshell, we will use sex as referring to the biological sexual characteristics of a person (whatever they may be and whether they are innate or later acquired) and gender as referring to how people identify themselves.

2.1.2. LGBTQ

LGBTQ is the generally used abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and other queer sexual minority communities. Everyone with a different sexual/romantic orientation (such as gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual or asexual) and sexual identity (such as transgender, transsexual, non-binary or intersex) are a part of the LGBTQ community. There are many variations of this abbreviation. Some just use LGBT whereas some include other subcommunities and may use LGBTI, LGBTQA, LGBTQIA, LGBT+, LGBTQ+ or LGBTQIA+. The "+" in the last three abbreviations are used as a symbol to signify all other groups which are not individually included in the abbreviation but are just a valid part of the community.

The letter "Q" in the "LGBTQ" refers to the word "queer" which is a bit harder to define than others because it is "always ambiguous, always relational" (Jagose, 1996, p. 96). Queer (which originally means "odd" or "irregular") was used around 1920 as an insulting term for homosexual men (Cregan, 2012, p. 152). However, it was later reclaimed by the

homosexual community and in time became an all-inclusive term which embraces “all sexualities that are not hetero-normative” (Cregan, 2012, pp. 152-153). So, just like the “+” symbol, queer can be used as an “umbrella term” (Jagose, 1996, p. 1) that covers all groups of disadvantaged or marginal sexual identities and orientations. That is, anyone who is a part of the LGBTQ community can identify themselves as “queer” if they wish to do so. Queer can also be used as a “statement of identity” (Cregan, 2012, p. 153). People who identify as queer reject “any fixed gender categories (gender/sex) or stable notions of attraction (sexuality)” (Cregan, 2012, p. 153). It can be thought as an identity category with self-acclaimed ambiguity for people who do not want to label or limit themselves with any normative categories.

For practical purposes, in this study the “Q” in the “LGBTQ” will be used as an umbrella term which includes all sexually disadvantaged groups other than LGBT. If “queer” is ever used to signify a singular identity category, then it will be stated so.

2.1.3. Transgender

Transgender is an umbrella term which describes individuals who “defy societal expectations and assumptions” about female and male categories (Serano, 2007, p. 17). This includes transsexual people, intersex people, non-binary people and any other group that has a different gender expression than their anatomy or the way their sex is perceived by others, such as drag queens, crossdressers, masculine women, or feminine men (Serano, 2007, p. 17). However, many intersexed people have rejected this term because their issues differ greatly from the transgender community, and many transsexual people have rejected it because the term used to have transsexual exclusionary connotations or because, from their point of view, the transgender movement tends to favour certain identities and acts of self-presentation “that most visibly ‘transgress’ gender norms” (Serano, 2007, p. 17). Also, although drag queens, cross-dressers, masculine women, and feminine men are included within the category of

transgender by many, members of these groups do not necessarily have to identify as transgender. Cross-dressing, doing drag, and acting masculine or feminine can be considered within the boundaries of transgenderism, but transgender is also a sexual identity. Those who do drag, cross-dress, or act feminine or masculine can still identify themselves as what is expected of their sex assigned at birth. So, a cisgender male drag queen may identify himself as a man or a masculine acting cisgender female may identify herself as a woman; they would not be considered within the category of transgender. What they do is transgenderism but what they are is not transgender. If they identify as belonging to a group within the transgender category, then they can be categorised as transgender, though.

Along with transgender, the word “trans” can be shortly used to describe transgender people, as well. Just like transgender, it encompasses all groups that fall outside the gender binary or have transgressed it in some way. For the most part, in this study, the words “trans” or “trans women” are used to signify transsexual people, which will be discussed in the following section.

2.1.4. Transsexual

Transsexual people are one of the sub-groups of transgender people and it is a more specific group. While some transgender people (such as non-binary people) may be content with the body they were born in, transsexual people do not wish to live as the sex they were assigned at birth (Serano, 2007, p. 18). Going through certain medical operations, transsexual people make a transition from their assigned sex to the one that they identify as. However, that may not always be the case; some transsexual people may not be able to financially afford or wish to go through such operations (Serano, 2007, p. 19). Although, regardless of their medical procedure background and what stage of their transition they are at, everyone’s transsexual identity is just valid. However, because “transsexual individuals do not necessarily challenge gender roles or expectations” (Donatone & Rachlin, 2013, p. 202), some

(Jeffreys, 1997; Raymond, 1994) have argued that they are reinforcing stereotypical gender norms (which will be handled in more detail in the following discussion about the narrative of wrong body).

2.1.5. Non-binary

Non-binary is both a sub-category within the category of transgender and an umbrella term in itself. That is, within the category of transgender, many identities are classified as non-binary, too. However, some non-binary individuals do not identify themselves as being transgender. So, whether a non-binary person is transgender or not depends on how they identify themselves.

Non-binary refers to gender identities which do not fit the fixed, binary gender categories of the West (Webb et al., 2018, p. 1). So, it includes identity groups such as agender/genderqueer (identifying neither male nor female), bigender (identifying as both male and female) or genderfluid (moving freely between genders) (Serano, 2007, p. 18).

According to some, as an identity category, it does not include transsexual people since they still identify themselves within the binary system (either as men or women); however, some other argue that people who had sex reassignment surgery can still be considered within the boundaries of this category if their gender identity does not conform to the binary system.

2.1.6. Cisgender

Cisgender (sometimes abbreviated as “cis”) refers to people who identify as and do not experience dysmorphia regarding their gender and sex assigned at birth (Donatone & Rachlin, 2013, pp. 202, 203). As such, it is the opposite of transgender. Actually, it is independent of sexual/romantic orientation which means that a cisgender person can belong to any group or (in cases where an individual identifies within the asexual spectrum and with some degree of

sexual and/or romantic attraction, such as being demisexual, graysexual or homoromantic) multiple groups of sexual/romantic orientation such as homosexual/homoromantic, bisexual/biromantic, asexual/aromantic, or heterosexual/heteroromantic. However, cisgender identity is one of the dominant identities (Funk & Funk, 2016, p. 70) in the western society, along with the white, heterosexual and male identity. Although, there are points of view which argue that homosexual men cannot be considered cisgender due to them being “gender non-conforming by definition” (Murphy, 2020), the argument is problematic in that it assumes that gender presentation and sexual attraction are tied to or at least interact in some way with one’s gender identity, which is not the case, and manhood is defined and constricted by hetero and cisgender normative standards or ideals and anything outside of it cannot be considered within the category of “men.”

2.2. Transgender in Different Cultures

The cultural environment plays an important role in how media texts, including TV series, which are the main focus of concern in this thesis, are produced and how they are perceived by viewers. Therefore, this section will mainly focus on transgender histories in two different countries and their cultures. The first part will briefly touch upon certain events and especially the ballroom culture of New York and give some key information about the transgender history in the United States of America with the aim of putting the television show *Pose* in a certain cultural context. The second part will provide information about transgender issues in Turkey and the current cultural environment by which viewers in Turkey are affected while reading *Pose*.

2.2.1. A Brief History of Transgender in USA

In the 1800s, social conditions for trans people were far from tolerable. Starting in the 1850s, numerous cities in the US passed regulations that made it illegal to appear in public wearing clothes that belong to the opposite sex (Stryker, 2017, p. 46). The 1920s marked a

pivotal shift whereby urban population exceeded the rural population and women earned historically unprecedented political power (Stryker, 2017, p. 51). This also provided people who were assigned as male but identified as women greater opportunities (Stryker, 2017, p. 51). Scientific and surgical advancements, although made to protect the binary gender norms, enabled trans people to physically alter their bodies and change it into the ones that they desired (Stryker, 2017, p. 53).

Trans and gay liberation movements in the US date back to early the 1900s; however, the most influential of them was the Stonewall Riots of 1969 (Stryker, 2017, p. 97). The riots, although not being the first, were “recognised as the beginning of the modern gay liberation movement” (Harper & Schneider, 2003, p. 244). It is because Stonewall stands out among other similar events, which were starting to be a common phenomenon, as the biggest and most significant one (Stryker, 2017, pp. 96, 97). Transgender people were very prominent figures within these movements and riots. Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera were two of the most well-known veterans and integral parts of the movements (France, 2017; Stryker, 2017, p. 100). They were both transgender and, together, they fought for LGBTQ rights, led numerous protests and tried to help the LGBTQ members in need.

According to Stryker (2017, p. 104), years between the mid-1960s and the late 1970s represent the “Big Science” period of the transgender history. Reactionary government tactics, the consequences of gay liberation (since homosexuality was no longer seen as a mental disorder or illness, gays no longer shared a common interest with trans individuals in terms of how they were treated by mental health institutions) and the transphobic attitudes of trans-exclusionary radical feminists (TERFs) made these years troubling times for trans liberation movements (Stryker, 2017, pp. 104-112).

The years of the HIV epidemic (an immunodeficiency virus that spreads mainly through unprotected sexual activities and blood transfusion) in the 1980s and 1990s were hard

for all sexual minorities; however, transgender people, especially African American trans women, had one of the highest HIV rates in the world (Stryker, 2017, p. 123). This fuelled the stigma around trans people even more. Until the 1990s, “legislative and electoral victories were few and far in between;” however, a new wave of activism began in the 1990s (Stryker, 2017, p. 131).

Actually, historical events such as the HIV epidemic, development of the internet and adulating of the post-Baby Boomer generation played a revitalizing role in transgender politics (Stryker, 2017, p. 131). Among all, the HIV epidemic significantly influenced sexual identity politics (Stryker, 2017, p. 140) because those who were most affected by it were sexual minorities and especially transsexual women who relied on sex work to earn their lives.

One of the most effective ways sexual minorities formed their communities and supported each other was through the ballroom culture and houses. The history of the ballroom culture (or ball culture) dates back to the “Harlem drag balls of the 1930s,” which were revived by black drag queens in the 1960s (Herzog & Rollins, 2013, p. 9). In the balls, contestants would walk runway categories such as “realness” (the ability to pass in society with whatever gender- and status-coded outfit one chooses to wear) (Weems, 2008, p. 88), face, body, European, or Vegas showgirl. The categories started to proliferate even more as the “children” of the houses started adding new categories to be more inclusive of any kinds of bodies (Shapiro, 2018). Contestants would also perform competitive dance/posing, such as voguing, to get the top score (Herzog & Rollins, 2013, p. 10; Weems, 2008, p. 88). The categories were a way for these communities to live the experiences cis-heteronormative society deprived them of.

A big part of the ballroom scene and LGBTQ culture was “houses.” They were a way for sexual minorities to gather and support each other. The first house was founded in 1972 when Crystal LaBeija, a drag queen, co-promoted “the first annual House of LaBeija ball” as

the “mother,” along with Lottie LaBeija (Lawrence, 2011, p. 4). After that, other black drag queens were inspired to form their own houses, or families, which were run usually by a mother and sometimes a father (Lawrence, 2011, p. 4). Their members could have a place to socialise, take care of and support each other and, together, prepare for upcoming balls in these houses (Lawrence, 2011, p. 4). The formation of them paralleled the increasing number of gangs in New York in the early 1970s because black gay men who were rejected by their biological families and by the “ruling cadre of black nationalist leaders, whose increasingly macho ‘real man’ discourse was popularised by gangs,” had no choice but to form their own “self-supporting gangs” (Lawrence, 2011, p. 4), but they called them houses. Soon these houses began to function like “de facto orphanages” for young children who were kicked out of their homes or had no place to go (Lawrence, 2011, p. 4).

The 1990s were also a period which media’s attention to transgender themes was heightened (Stryker, 2017, p. 174). The ballroom culture entered the mainstream for a period of time in these years with productions such as *Paris is Burning* (1990) and Madonna’s popular song *Vogue* (1990) (Herzog & Rollins, 2013, p. 10; Lawrence, 2011, pp. 7, 8). After that, the ballroom culture continued to flourish, and the number of houses started to grow rapidly (Lawrence, 2011, p. 9). Transgender media representations grew and became more common. In the following decade, including trans actors and contestants in soap operas and reality shows became a common practice (Stryker, 2017, p. 184).

In the 2000s, trans people became more and more integrated into LGBTQ communities, and almost all organizations supporting LGBTQ rights supported trans inclusion in legislations about protection (Stryker, 2017, p. 160). After the election of Barack Obama, further steps were taken in favour of LGBTQ rights. His support for the LGBTQ community was evident toward the end of his first period as president, and “he has proven to be a reliable ally to the community” (Wesley et al., 2011, p. 164). During his presidency,

legislative actions were taken to provide healthcare for LGBTQ members, prevent bullying against LGBTQ members, ensure LGBTQ equality, prevent discrimination, and legalize same sex marriage (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016).

According to Stryker (2017, p. 170), Obama's election was a decisive moment which had, and still has, "significant consequences for transgender social justice movements." However, after the 2016 presidential elections, LGBTQ rights came under attack by the Trump administration in multiple areas such as healthcare, employment, housing, and education (Levin, 2019). The Trump administration evidently sought to reverse some of the advancements made in the past (Levin, 2019). GLAAD (n.d.) and National Center for Transgender Equality's (n.d.) lists Trump's actions taken against the LGBTQ community in a chronological order. To give a couple examples of the Trump administration's anti-LGBTQ actions: On June 12, 2020, the Trump administration rolled back health care protections for transgender patients, which were established during the Obama-era, by changing the interpretation of provision about sex discrimination from including discrimination on the basis of gender identity to "the plain meaning of the word 'sex' as male or female and as determined by biology" (Cohen, 2020; "Trump administration reverses health protections for transgender people," 2020); on July 1, 2020, The Department of Housing and Urban Development proposed modifications on a rule that would "better accommodate religious beliefs of shelter providers" by allowing "single-sex or sex-segregated facilities" to set up policies that discriminate applicants on the basis of their biological sex, the sex specified on their identification document (The Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020), which, in summary, means that these single-sex shelters cannot turn away transgender people but have the ability to accept admissions based on their biological sex assigned at birth (Lang, 2020). That is, these shelters have the ability to deny admissions to trans women since they are deemed "biologically male."

2.2.2. A Brief History of Transgender in Turkey

Transgenderism and cross-dressing are deeply rooted within the Turkish culture. In the Ottoman Empire, men called *köçeks* would dress in women's clothes and perform belly dancing (And, 2014, p. 29). Today, male belly dancers are more commonly known as *zennes* and are still a part of the Turkish culture although they are not as prominent as they used to be. Similarly, there were also women who wore men's clothes and performed dances such as *zeybek*, which was usually performed by male dancers, and these women are called *çengis* (And, 2014, p. 30). Both *köçeks* and *çengis* were regarded as so-called "sexual deviants" and expected to engage in homosexual intercourse (And, 2014, p. 30). In a way, they were the drag queens and drag kings of the time in the Ottoman Empire.

After the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, artists such as Zeki Müren, Seyfi Dursunoğlu (a.k.a. Huysuz Virjin) and Bülent Ersoy challenged the gender norms of their times in different ways. Seyfi Dursunoğlu performed in women's clothes as a drag queen, singer and an insult comic (she would make sexual innuendos and make light, sarcastic comments about people in the audience) whereas Zeki Müren's character on the stage was still a man but "his queer performance disrupt[ed] ordinary gender expectations" (Hawkins, 2018, p. 103). Also, an important aspect of Huysuz Virjin's performance was that the humour in her performance was not rooted in her looks or her being "a man in dress." The audience laughed at her jokes and not at her. As will be discussed in the following sections in detail, the representation of trans feminine images as laughable objects is a very harmful stereotype but Huysuz Virjin's performance did not fall into that category.

As another prominent queer figure, Bülent Ersoy became the first trans singer in Turkish history after she disclosed her true gender identity as a woman. However, although belonging to a sexual minority has never been illegal in Turkey, the government has largely

disregarded LGBTQ members in public spaces or has been openly hostile towards them (Erdoğan, 2014, 101).

The military coup in the 1980 was a turning point for LGBTQ members in Turkey because along with putting an end to all political activities, the military also took reshaping public decency upon itself and made it illegal for men to perform at bars in women's clothes in 1981 (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 102). Bülent Ersoy, who had a sex reassignment operation in 1981, was also affected by this law because her transsexuality was not recognized by the government until 1988 (Ertür & Lebow, 2014, pp. 12, 31).

The 1990s witnessed the institutionalization of the LGBTQ movement but also the “cleaning operations” where socially disadvantaged people, people with non-traditional sexual preferences or identities and people from ethnic minorities which were classified as “potentially dangerous,” were forced to move away from the city centre (Çetin, 2015). These minority groups, especially trans people whose image in the public eye was limited to being sex workers, were forced out of their homes through police raids and were made disreputable through media's smearing campaigns (+90, 2020).

In the 2000s, with Turkey's attempts to meet the EU accession criteria, LGBTQ organizations such as KaosGL and Lambdaİstanbul legally earned the right to become an association with the passing of a new law in 2004 (Çetin, 2015). However, as mentioned, this was a by-product of Turkey's attempts to meet the EU accession criteria not because the newly elected government was tolerant of the LGBTQ community (Çetin, 2015).

In 2013, Turkey witnessed one of the biggest protests in its recent history with the Gezi Park resistance and LGBTQ communities were especially active within the movement (Çetin, 2015). LGBTQ community in Istanbul has been organizing protests since 2003 and the first Pride Parade was organized in 2013 (Duygu Yayla, 2019, p. 76); however, two years

after Gezi Park resistance, Istanbul Governor's Office banned the 2015 Pride Parade due to its falling within the Ramadan month and possible "threats to public safety" ("İstanbul'da Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi", 2015); it was banned for four more consecutive years for similar reasons ("İstanbul'da Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi sonrası gözaltılar", 2017; "İstanbul'daki Trans Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi, 2016"; "Onur Yürüyüşü: İstanbul'da LGBTİ+ Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi", 2019; "Yasağa rağmen LGBTİ+ bireyler Onur Yürüyüşü için İstanbul'da bir araya geldi: '5 gözaltı,'" 2018; Savcı, 2018). 2020 Istanbul Pride Parade, however, was not technically officially banned; due to the measures taken in Turkey against the Covid-19 pandemic, which gradually increased starting from March 12 (TÜBA, 2020), everyone had to follow social distancing restrictions, and the parade was turned into an online event instead (Gul, 2020). In 2021, Istanbul Pride events were again held in public spaces with the decrease in the number of Covid-19 cases and the events, including a picnic and the Pride Parade itself, were again met with police violence and protesters, journalists, individuals sitting at nearby cafés and even people in their own homes have been taken into custody for any kind of opposition. What is important to note here is that the individuals who have been taken into custody were taken regardless of their involvement in the 2021 Pride Parade and their support (or the lack thereof) for the LGBTQ individuals ("İstanbul'daki Onur Yürüyüşü'ne müdahale: AFP foto muhabiri Bülent Kılıç boğazına bastırılarak gözaltına alındı," 2021; "İstanbul Taksim'deki Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi," 2021; "Onur Yürüyüşü'nde ses bombasına "Çocuk uyuyor" diye tepki gösteren yurttaş evinden gözaltına alındı," 2021; "Onur Yürüyüşü'ne polis müdahalesi: 20'den fazla gözaltı," 2021; Özer, 2021). In other words, any kind of opposition towards police violence was deemed as a reason to take citizens into police custody.

Turkey had the highest number of hate crimes committed against trans people among European countries in 2016 (Transrespect Versus Transphobia, 2016). Hande Kader, a trans

woman who became a symbol for the LGBTQ community in Turkey after being photographed while resisting the police forces and reproaching the journalists by saying "*Çekiyorsunuz ama yayınlamıyorsunuz, sesimizi kimse duymuyor.*" (You [all] are recording but [none of you are] broadcasting [the recordings], nobody hears our voice.) during the 2015 Istanbul Pride Parade (Arslan, 2016), fell victim to hate crime and was murdered in 2016. There were also trans people who committed suicide due to hate and discrimination they face every day such as Eylül Cansın, who left a video before committing suicide and summarised her experience by saying "*Yapamadım, çünkü insanlar bana izin vermedi, çalışamadım, bir şeyler yapmak istedim ama yapamadım, bana çok engel oldular ve beni çok mağdur ettiler.*" (I could not do it because people did not let me. I could not work. I wanted to do something but could not. They hindered and victimized me a lot.) ("Eylül Cansın neden intihar etti?" 2015).

Trans visibility in Turkey is not as high as it is in the US; however, trans celebrities such as Bülent Ersoy (a trans woman and a respected singer who is dubbed as the "Diva" of Turkish classical music but have been made fun of at the same time for her gender identity), Rüzgar Erkoçlar (a trans man who was a relatively famous actor before his transition but gained much of his popularity after), Selin Cığerci (a trans woman who is a social media influencer) and Ayta Sözeri (a trans woman who is a singer, an actor, and an LGBTQ rights activist) are very present in the media and have varying levels of positive or negative publicity in the eyes of the Turkish people; they all have the power to draw the public's attention to trans and LGBTQ issues although some of these celebrities have chosen not to use this power and some of them do. Bülent Ersoy, who is relatively respected by the majority, has been criticized even by conservative LGBTQ members for remaining idle when it comes to actively showing support for the LGBTQ community ("AKP'li eşcinsellerden Bülent Ersoy'a tepki," 2017); similarly, Rüzgar Erkoçlar has reportedly wished not to be associated with the LGBTQ community in the media (Akgün, 2017). However, in 2020, he shared and criticised one of the

hate messages he received for his transsexual identity on his Instagram stories and stated that, by sharing them, he wants to raise awareness (“Rüzgar Erkoçlar çirkin yorumu ifşa etti,” 2020; “Rüzgar Erkoçlar da o mesajları ifşa etti,” 2020). Ayta Sözeri is also vocal about her trans identity; she tries to be a voice for the LGBTQ community and to raise awareness through her speeches, interviews and concerts (“AYTA SÖZERİ İLK KEZ ANLATTI! Ünlü Olma Sürecinde Ne zorluklar Yaşadı?” 2020).

2.3. Transgender Studies

To examine how trans women are represented on television, we have to look at some key works in queer and trans studies and have an overview of theoretical ideas and arguments on issues trans people face every day. In order to do this, this section explains Butler’s ideas on performativity, gives brief information about feminist and queer theories from a historical perspective, and talks about some major trans issues and concepts regarding transgenderism and transsexuality such as “passing.”

2.3.1. Feminist and Queer Theory

Feminism, at its core, advocates equality. In the earlier movements of feminism, it was for equality of men and women, but, in time, although there are some exceptions within certain movements, it has evolved into including queer identities, as well. Lesbian women have played an integral role within feminism “to push against the boundaries of heterosexism to create spaces where women, all women, irrespective of their sexual identity and/or preference, could and can be as free as they want to be,” as bell hooks (2014, p. 99) writes. Even though feminism has started advocating sexual minorities relatively recently, discrimination based on sexual/romantic orientation has been and will always be a notion feminist movement fights against (hooks, 2014, pp. 98,99).

Earlier feminist activists fought for women's rights and equality in political and social life. Today's feminist movements still fight for equality in these areas, as well; however, while earlier movements focused solely on women, today we can define feminist activities roughly as a struggle against patriarchy and a struggle for equality for all who are oppressed by it; or, at least, this is how feminism is understood in this study. bell hooks (2014) suggests that, as the feminist movement progressed, feminists realised that men, individually, were not the cause of the problem; it was "patriarchy, sexism, and male domination" (p. 67). Feminism's focus is still mostly on women's issues, but now it also supports and advocates the rights of any gender or sexual groups oppressed by patriarchy, including men and queer members.

Oppression of LGBTQ members and specifically of trans women will be discussed in detail in the next section, so, for now, let's briefly focus on men's oppression under patriarchy and how it is related to women's oppression. According to the critical masculinity literature, patriarchy oppresses men in more discrete ways than it oppresses women. It strips them of some their most natural rights such as their emotions or their self-expression, "imposing on them a sexist masculine identity" (hooks, 2014, p. 68). Toxic masculinity within the western society restricts men from affirming their true selves. It restricts their ability to show emotions, to act paternally as they wish or to show any feminine traits. This also affects them in their professional lives. Men are expected to be the breadwinners of the family and this causes certain problems such as companies not providing them paternal leave or society judging and shaming them when they earn less than their partners or if they decide to be stay at home dads.

Examples of how men are oppressed by the patriarchal system can multiply. In a nutshell, all these issues are connected to society's expectations from men for performing financial duties and from women for performing domestic ones, and they are also the related

causes of women's discrimination in professional life. Feminism, today, realises that the liberation of women is tied to the liberation of men and other genders from the oppression of patriarchy. Thus, feminist movements share a strong affinity with queer movements, and the feminist and queer theories are strongly connected. Now, let's get into more details about how the feminist movement and theory have changed over the years and how they have been related to queer theory.

Feminist movements in the western world are usually categorized into progressive waves. However, this wave model is considered to be problematic because it implies and creates the misconception that the struggles before the "waves," which can be considered as part of the feminist movement against male oppression, did not exist at all. Also, it does not take into account feminist movements outside the United States and Europe and ignores the feminist activities that occurred between these waves (McAfee, 2018). Still, to some, it was useful to see feminist movements as progressing in waves (McAfee, 2018). The wave model could be useful in categorizing and highlighting the general ideas and themes surrounding the feminist thought of a certain period in the western world and creating a simple outline of the development of feminism, but it is important to keep in mind that there were on-going feminist activities between and outside these waves.

The first wave of feminism fought for women's basic political rights, particularly their suffrage (Johnson, 2017, p. 3; McAfee, 2018). The second wave feminism's motto was "the personal is political" and argued that gender inequality cannot be thought without taking into account women's everyday experiences (Munro, 2013, p. 22). They focused on issues such as sexism, inequality in areas like education, workplace, and home, gender stereotypes within society and women's reduction to sexuality as passive objects (Johnson, 2017, pp. 7, 8; McAfee, 2018; Munro, 2013, p. 23). A book that is considered to have heavily influenced, if not triggered, the second wave is Betty Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* (1963), where she

argued that women were victimized by a “problem that has no name,” a “mystique,” which restricted them to being submissive, sexually passive and domestic (Johnson, 2017, p. 8). Although the second wave is considered to have started in the early 1960s, Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex* (1949) can loosely be considered within the second wave feminism in terms of the ideas she talks about there. In her book, Beauvoir shows that gender roles within society are not natural but imposed, “not only on the level of legislation, but in literature, morality, and everyday custom” (Patu & Schrupp, 2017, p. 43).

The second wave feminism tried to define a collective womanhood and “treated women as a homogenous group” (Munro, 2013, p. 23), and, while doing so, failed to be inclusive. bell hooks (2015, p. 216) points out that although white women held leading positions in every feminist movement in the USA, black women have been a big part of those movements, too, and they have contributed to them greatly. However white female feminist scholars have ignored their contributions (hooks, 2015, p. 216). Black feminist activists started to underline the fact that black women are discriminated not only for being a woman but also for their skin colour and for their social class, and, in the context of this debate, in the 1980s, Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” (Patu & Schrupp, 2017, p. 67). Intersectionality means that a people’s identities have divergent dimensions and they simultaneously belong to different and sometimes conflicting identity groups; thus, they can be discriminated for multiple dimensions of their identity such as sexual/romantic orientation, race, social class, age or physical ability.

If the second wave’s motto was “the personal is political” then the third wave’s motto would be “intersectionality.” The third wave feminists questioned the idea of absolute “antagonism between women and men” (Patu & Schrupp, 2017, p. 79) and criticised the second wave feminism on many issues such as its conception of women’s sexuality and not taking the intersectional nature of people’s identities into account (McAfee, 2018). For

example, while the second wave saw sexualized images of women or women sex workers as the objectification of women, the third wave feminists have a more positive approach towards women's sexuality and argue that women should be able to experience their sexuality as they desire and do whatever they want with their bodies. Some argue that with the emergence of the internet and with being able to detect and organize against sexist behaviours immediately within the digital space, there has emerged a new wave of feminism, a fourth wave. However, some others argued that the sheer emergence of the internet is not enough to claim that a fourth wave exists (Munro, 2013, p. 23).

The emergence of queer theory paralleled the third wave feminism and have greatly influenced it (Munro, 2013, p. 23). Queer theory emerged with feminists questioning the categories of male and female (Munro, 2013, p. 23). The most prominent one of those feminist thinkers was Judith Butler. In fact, most of the time, she is considered to have founded the queer theory. Her ideas on performativity, sex, and gender have established the foundations of queer theory. Her ideas will be discussed in detail in the section below about gender performativity. Briefly speaking, she challenges the idea that for bodies to make sense, their sex should cohere both to their gender and to their sexual/romantic orientation; according to her, the grid that naturalizes bodies and makes them culturally intelligible is called the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 2006, p. 208). However, these are all culturally coded, learnt behaviours and essentially are only performative (Butler, 2006). In other words, she challenges the notion which accepts that for a body to be culturally intelligible it needs to be cisgender and heterosexual and only these bodies are considered natural. This argument creates the basis for the legitimization of the category of trans and contributes greatly to queer and trans theory. However, certain trans scholars have taken issue with some of Butler's ideas. Both Jay Prosser and Viviane Namaste criticize Butler's essay on *Paris is Burning* (1990), specifically her ideas on Venus Xtravaganza and drag (Bettcher, 2020). They argue that she

allegorizes Venus's life and death for her theoretical purposes and fails to consider that Venus is a person who lived her life as a transsexual woman (Bettcher, 2020). Prosser also criticises her views on identity and body and her misreading of Freud (Bettcher, 2020). Butler states that gender identity is formed by either accepting or rejecting certain bodily pleasures, but Prosser argues for a relationship based on a more "inner-experience" between identity and body (Bettcher, 2020). On the other hand, Namaste argues that while taking drag as subversive, Butler fails to take the social conditions into account (Bettcher, 2020). Namaste notes that when she gives drag as an example to "theorize all gender relations," she fails to take into account the "multiple concrete ways in which gender is regulated in everyday life" (quoted by Bettcher, 2020).

2.3.2. Discrimination and Oppression

LGBTQ members have historically been victims of oppression, harassment, and violence and have faced discrimination in many areas such as employment, housing, education, and social services (Harper & Schneider, 2003, p. 246). In the USA, police raids on homosexual bars were not unusual in the 1960s and the raid of Stonewall Inn, which triggered the Stonewall Riots, was just one of many (Armstrong et al., 2000, p. 724). Although there were no more raids in 2020, trans people and LGBTQ people, especially trans people of colour, still experience high levels of violence and live in fear for falling victim to a hate crime. This has been and still is a prominent fear among LGBTQ members in many countries across the world. There are studies that show that trans people are repeatedly victimized over the course of their lives (Stotzer, 2009, p. 171) and the rate of physical assault and murder is much higher for trans people when compared to the general population (Rose, 2016). Also, there have been many incidents of violence and hate crimes against LGBTQ members in the past and the recent years (France, 2017; GLAAD, 2019b; Matthew Shepard Foundation, n.d.).

In Turkey, the situation is not much different. Trans people have been and still are victims of violence and discrimination in early and later stages of their lives (Kocabıyık, 2019). Hate crimes against trans people in Turkey are the highest in Europe (Transrespect Versus Transphobia, 2016), and there have been numerous studies about transgender deaths and violence against trans people in Turkey (Çetinbaş, 2019; Cingöz et al., 2016; Dünşen, 2010; Karimova, 2019). Recent studies, such as the one that Çetinbaş (2019) conducted, demonstrates the prevalence of transphobia not only within society but also within media discourses.

2.3.3. The “T” in the LGBT

LGBTQ communities have all experienced discrimination, oppression and harassment; however, transgender people have experienced discrimination even within the LGBTQ community as well. Despite the fact that trans people played an integral role within the gay rights and liberation movement (Vitulli, 2010, p. 156), trans people experienced exclusion and were not welcomed by the LGB communities at all (Stryker, 2017, p. 100). Although transgender people received a new acceptance by the LGB communities in the 1990s, lesbian bars had frequently excluded trans women, and gay bars had “no drag” rules even though they featured female impersonators as entertainers (Denny, 2006). As a consequence, transgender people came together to form their own organisations such as STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries), which was co-founded by Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera to help street kids who are in need of shelter, food, and clothing (France, 2017; Stryker, 2017, p. 100).

LGBTQ members still face discrimination and are victims of violence and hate crimes, but it is more likely for trans people and especially trans women of colour fall victim to violence, unemployment, homelessness, and experience mental health problems (Clark, 2014). According to a report of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, a very big

portion of the victims of these hate crimes are made up of trans women and queer, bi or gay cisgender men (Waters et al., 2017, p. 7). Out of 52 recorded anti-LGBTQ crimes in the U.S. in 2017, 27 were against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals; 24 of which were trans women or transfeminine people, and 22 were trans women of colour (Waters et al., 2017, p. 9). Trans women and transfeminine people made more than half of the victims in 2017. The number of victims demonstrates the severity of transphobia in the USA. However, as (GLAAD, 2018a) “More Than A Number” report notes, presenting these homicides just as numbers is problematic because it enables media outlets to ignore these murders until the numbers go up; besides, the numbers are inaccurate since murders of transgender people usually go under-reported. Instead, stories of these people should be presented in the media in a more nuanced manner (p. 4).

Also, trans people are separate from LGB and some Q members (such as cis-passing queer people) in terms of visual aspects. Being trans usually means embodying characteristics which are visible in nature. While LGBQ people can act within the binary codes and “pass” (which will be mentioned in more detail in the discussion about gender passing) when needed, trans people may not have that privilege. In her interview she gave along with Indya Moore (the trans actress who portrays Angel in *Pose*) for *E! News Australia*, Dominique Jackson (the trans actress who portrays Elektra in *Pose*) explains this situation:

...And when the police raided the place [The Stonewall Inn] the lesbians would dance with the gay men and vice versa. When you are a... you know... a trans woman and you may not have cis-possibility who are you going to dance with? You are targeted. ("The Stars of 'Pose' Talk Trans Representation & Ballroom Culture," 2018)

2.3.4. Judith Butler's Concept of Performativity

In her book *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir (1956, p. 273) says “One is not born but rather becomes a woman,” meaning that one is culturally moulded to act a certain way that is expected from their assigned sex.

Although being accepted as one of the pioneering works of the second wave feminism, Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* was later subjected to many criticisms from different feminist currents. For example, in her book *Speculum of the Other* (1974) Luce Irigaray criticises Beauvoir for having a male centric view in terms of social norms she expects women to adopt and argues that “masculinity does not merely structure culture: rather, it undergirds the very ‘symbolic order’ and language itself;” women should find their own language to create their own subjectivity instead of incorporating the masculine language, says Irigaray (Patu & Schrapp, 2017, p. 45). Also, Judith Butler (2006,) argues against the distinction between sex and gender Beauvoir makes (p. 151). Butler and Irigaray's criticisms, differ in one fundamental point, however, while Irigaray argues that there is an inherently determinate self or gender, Butler argues both there is no sex before gender and both are culturally constructed.

Admittedly, Butler accepts Beauvoir's idea that sex and gender are two separate categories; however, she argues that, although sex is accepted as being fixed, real, natural, and the “material or corporeal ground upon which gender operates” (Butler, 2006, p. 199), these ideals about sex are nothing but “phantasmatic constructions” (p. 199) that can never be achieved. According to Butler (2006), sex does not come before gender. Instead, sex “is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender” (Butler, 2006, p. 9). Although some coherence between these two is expected by society, it is just an illusion whose disclosure threatens the structure of the gender binary system (Butler, 2006).

Also, Butler (2006) argues that gender is performative, meaning that it is conveyed through one's acts, gestures, and enactments, which over time produces “the appearance of

substance, of a natural sort of being” (p. 45). In other words, we acquire, produce, and convey our gender through habitual acts and embodiments which have the appearance of being natural and innate but actually are acts we acquire as we grow up. Butler also touches on this point when she argues that “the ‘doer’ is variably constructed in and through the deed” (Butler, 2006, p. 195), which implies that one is produced and reproduced through one’s acts, and, thus, one’s sex is not a fixed reality but a product of one’s own gender, of the ways one acts and presents one’s self. This acting and presenting one’s own self can have various different manifestations. It can be the way one moves their body in a more masculine or feminine way, having long or short hair, dressing with more masculine or feminine coded clothing, growing or shaving body hair, or adorning, altering or changing one’s body parts such as getting a breast enhancement operation, doing regular exercise to look slimmer or more muscular, getting piercings or tattoos (for example, having an ear piercing is still a taboo for men in some cultures) or having a sex reassignment surgery. These are all culturally coded ways people present (or produce) their own gender and sex. All of these have the illusion that they come innately and naturally, but they are all learned behaviours, reflections of people’s culturally produced gender on their bodies. To simply put it in Beasley’s (2005) terms: “Gender does not ‘express’ a self, a way of being, or a bodily difference, but rather is a performance or enactment of power. One is a woman or man as an effect of power” (p. 101).

However, as Serano (2007) points out, a lot of feminists have misinterpreted Butler’s ideas as “one’s gender is merely a ‘performance’” (p. 177). For example, Probyn (1995) interpreted Butler’s ideas as “we can have whatever type of gender we want, and that there are as many genders as there are people” (p. 79). This misunderstanding resulted in unintentional and unfounded support for theories which took gender as a mere performance, which was not what Butler was doing. Serano (2007) finds this kind of interpretation of Butler’s ideas, along with other “performance-centric models of gender” (p. 107), problematic. She argues that, as

many people who had a sex reassignment operation would understand, transgender individuals' perceived gender usually is not a result of their performance (how they express their gender) but their "physical appearance (in particular, [their] secondary sex characteristics)" (Serano, 2007, p. 107). It is because no matter how masculine or feminine one presents themselves, if that person's physical appearance fits one of the binary normative gender codes, they will be misgendered by others (Serano, 2007, p. 108). The way people "do" their gender plays a role in whether people perceive them as queer or straight and may have an influence if they have an androgynous or ambiguous appearance, but in many cases, they are gendered according to their appearance (Serano, 2007, p. 108). She states her argument as follows:

I would argue that social gender is not produced and propagated because of the way we as individuals "perform" or "do" our genders; it lies in the perceptions and interpretations of others. I can modify my own gender all I want, but it won't change the fact that other people will continue to compulsively assign a gender to me and to view me through the distorted lenses of cissexual and heterosexual assumption. (Serano, 2007, p. 108)

2.3.5. Passing?

"Passing" has been defined by multiple scholars in different ways and can be used for numerous groups of people who have different ethnic backgrounds, sexualities, genders, abilities or other characteristics. The concept of "passing" can broadly be defined as Moriel (2005) puts it here: "a person from group A simply self-identifies as belonging to group B (and vice versa), is accepted as a member of the other group, and occupies that identity position without detection" (p.177). In the case of transgender people, for example, when they pass, they would be perceived by others as being what their internal gender identity is without any detection of their trans identity, or simply put, they would be perceived as being

cisgender. Being able to pass and perceived as cisgender implies that, for trans people, passing is “fundamentally visual in nature” which requires the adoption or appropriation of “cisgender aesthetics” (Billard, 2019, p. 467).

However, Billard (2019) argues in one of their studies that journalists judge the legitimacy of trans people by using heteronormative aesthetic evaluations and basing trans people’s legitimacy on how successfully they pass, which “sustains the assumption that cisgender identity is normatively ‘better’” (p. 468) and reproduces problematic cis-normative standards. Also, while some trans people may wish or strive to pass and achieve stereotypical female aesthetics or adopt a hyperfeminine look, Searano (2004) notes that not all trans women wish to present themselves as “pretty, pink and passive as possible” and “there is more to being a woman than simply putting on a dress” (p.41).

According to Goffman (as cited in Moriel, 2005, p. 175) passing is a strategy that people use to escape the social stigma they might face if their true identity is known to others. It is used by trans people and other members of the LGBTQ community to be perceived as heterosexual and/or cisgender to avoid discrimination and falling victim to hate crimes (Dawson, 2015, p. 206). Still, passing disrupts stable social systems and blurs the constructed borders of racial, sexual and class categories (Schlossberg, 2001, p. 2). Also, an individual’s ability to successfully pass “calls into question the very notion of authenticity itself” (Schlossberg, 2001, p. 2), and, thus, threatens the convictions held by society. This often causes trans passing characters in narratives to be devalued for being inauthentic (Abbott, 2013, p. 34) or deceitful (Serano, 2004).

2.3.6. Wrong Body?

As mentioned in the previous discussions, TERFs have always been present within LGBTQ and feminist communities, and some feminists have seen transsexuality and

transitioning as problematic. According to Raymond (1979), transsexual women reinforce stereotypical binary sex roles by conforming to “man-made femininity” (p. XIX), and, by doing so, they contribute to sustaining the patriarchal system. Supporting Raymond’s ideas, Jeffreys (1997) argues that transsexuality perpetuates the dichotomous understanding of gender and notes that transsexual people can get counselling to “relate to their own sex in their native bodies” to “rebel against the constraints of a prescribed gender role” (p. 70). Although her ideas about not conforming to the constraints of stereotypical gender roles can be valid from a certain perspective, in general, they condemn transsexual people who wish to go through a sex reassignment operation to remain inside a body they do not feel they belong to, and, consequently, perpetuate transphobic discourses.

Within the gender binary system, it is stipulated that “only one body per gendered subject is ‘right’” and “all other bodies are wrong” (Stone, 2013, p. 167) or abnormal. This “wrong body” narrative has virtually become the default narrative when it comes to explaining transsexuality (Stone, 2013, p. 166). While some transsexual people might feel that transitioning did and will make them feel like they finally have a body they feel comfortable with and belong to, this narrative fails to apply to some transsexual individuals “for whom gender identity is something different from and perhaps irrelevant to physical genitalia” and whose gender identities spread across a large pallet (Stone, 2013, p. 167) and rules out the possibilities for more ambiguous or fluid gender identifications (McQueen, 2014, p. 538).

In addition, although the “wrong body” narrative may promise individuals a sense of completeness and fulfilment, this may not be the case for everyone (McQueen, 2014, p. 538). That is not to say that someone who decides to go through a sex reassignment surgery will not feel complete or fulfilled, but a successful surgery is not always guaranteed and there may be unwanted consequences, so it is important to resist the urge to see surgery as an ultimate and guaranteed solution (McQueen, 2014, p. 538).

Actually, as Serano (2007) states, “there is no one right way to be trans” (p. 18). Anyone’s trans identity is equally valid regardless of opting for transitioning or blurring the binary gender boundaries (Serano, 2007, p. 18). In fact, with the acceptance of LGBTQ within mainstream relatively being at its infancy, it is important to articulate in every possible area of life that every trans identity, as well as other sexual identities, is valid. Media with its ability to reach millions of people, especially television as one of the most popular media, have the best opportunities to spread that message. Therefore, in the following section of the literature review, television’s role in gendered representations particularly regarding trans women of colour will be discussed in detail.

2.4. Development of Television Studies

This section follows the historical development of theories on mass communication and television and explores major thoughts of schools they belong to. It starts from the empiricist effects theories, which were mostly developed within the American tradition and moving onto the critical theory of Frankfurt School and British Cultural Studies. After that, it explores John Fiske’s position within the backdrop of the previous discussions, and drawing on his book *Reading Television*, co-authored by John Hartley, it discusses how television as a medium conveys symbolic messages and explains how it functions within the modern society. Lastly, it explores the concept of “quality television” which came into being with programmes on cable television such as *Sopranos* and is becoming more common of a phenomenon by the day with the proliferation and growth of digital streaming services.

2.4.1. Television Studies within Mass Communication Theories

Historically, there have been various ways of looking at and understanding media and mass communication. These different approaches to mass communication can be categorised into four models: transmission model, ritual or expressive model, publicity model and reception model (McQuail, 2010).

The transmission model in its simplistic form sees mass communication as a linear process (McQuail, 2010, p. 64). In this model, communicators transfer a certain amount of information to receivers (McQuail, 2010, p. 63). Although Westley and MacLean's model broke the linearity of this approach by suggesting that communicators of mass media give voice to diverse messages so that they may reach to a wider audience, many of the earlier theories, which were mostly part of what we can call the mainstream, empirical, American approach, were categorised within the first model (McQuail, 2010, p. 64).

For the publicity model, mass communication is a tool for catching and maintaining people's attention with the aim of creating interaction that will lead to financial gains and profit (McQuail, 2010, p. 65). Although this model adopts a rather critical paradigm, it shares with the transmission model a linear approach to communication. However, the other two models put more emphasis on culture and people's involvement with mass media.

The ritual model sees mass communication as a means of sharing values and beliefs and expressing emotions and celebrations rather than a means of sending and receiving information like in the first two models (McQuail, 2010, p. 65). It focuses on the pleasures derived from the text rather than its usefulness (McQuail, 2010, p. 65).

Similarly, the reception model locates the audience as the source of meaning construction because, according to it, messages on media are polysemic (McQuail, 2010, p. 66). It focuses on the meaning making process of audiences and asks how different people from different cultures and contexts interpret media messages (McQuail, 2010, p. 66).

Effects theories, which were developed mainly within the classical transmission model, argue that media has the power to affect people's beliefs, attitudes and behaviours on certain issues. The ideas about how much power media has over people has fluctuated over certain periods of time, though. During the interwar years, as in the hypodermic needle theory

(also known as the magic bullet theory), it was believed that the media had a strong influence over people (McQuail, 2010, p. 61). In that period, mass communication was mainly considered a means of propaganda both in the United States and Europe (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 51). This strong effects paradigm was challenged after the emergence of studies on effects of media products, mainly films, on children and general public, some of which, for example, indicated a two-step flow, with opinion leaders as intermediaries between the media and audiences (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 96). The results indicated weaker effects and theories such as the two-step flow supported this notion (Erdoğan, 2014, p. 96; Neuman & Guggenheim, 2011, p. 172). The era of minimal effects paradigm lasted until the early 1960s when it was also challenged simultaneously by the strong influence and negotiated influence paradigms (McQuail, 2010, pp. 181, 182). Theories such as agenda setting, spiral of silence, uses and gratifications and cultivation were all developed during that era (Erdoğan, 2014, pp. 148, 153, 157, 170).

As Gauntlett (2008) points out, there are some fundamental problems concerning these effects theories; the central issue being that the source of the effect they are aiming to evaluate cannot be isolated into one variable such as television consumption (p. 33). Although the cultivation theory is categorised under the effects theories, a similar critique can be found in George Gerbner's studies as well. He too, admits that "belief structures and concrete practices of daily life can also influence subsequent viewing" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180).

Indeed, Gerbner's cultivation theory diverges from other mainstream American theories in terms of its critical perspective towards television. According to Gerbner, television is one of the mediums which contribute to maintenance of the established order and its "function is to spread and stabilize social patterns, to cultivate not change but resistance to change" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 175). Rather than instilling certain attitudes and opinions, what television does through "repetitive and ritualized symbol systems" (Gerbner & Gross,

1976, p. 174) is cultivation of “‘facts’ of life and standards of judgment” (p. 175) on which individuals base their worldviews. In other words, through the repetitive use of myths, in the long run, television teaches us “what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176), thereby drawing the line for what is acceptable and what is not in society.

This repetition is significantly more prominent on television because it has made its contents more available and preferable than any other medium before, which enables it to convey its messages to viewers more frequently and repeatedly. Also, television offers cheaper content than movie theatres, provides visual content which radio is unable to provide and does not require its audiences to be literate which, unlike the press, enables it to reach every segment of the population, even children as young as three (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176). Thus, being a common medium that can reach across all different groups in a society, television creates a “large and heterogeneous national community” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176) which receives knowledge about its own reality and creates its “background of assumptions not only about what things are but also about how they work, or should work, and why” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179) through television.

This nature of television lends a great deal of authority to it over what is real and what is not, to a point where no “achievement, celebration, or mourning” is only legitimized and confirmed unless it is broadcast on television (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 176). This is an important point in cultivation theory because it means that what is represented on television has implications in real life. Considering that fictional programmes makes up a great portion of televisual broadcasts, this also implies that “representation in the fictional world signifies social existence [whereas] absence means symbolic annihilation” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 182). Besides, representations television presents to its viewers are full of contradictions and distortions; therefore, as Fiske and Hartley (2003) argue, the world of television is a reality

separate from our own (p. 48). However, in one sense, television's reality is an extension of our reality and "the standardized images which we have been taught since childhood" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179) are repeatedly conveyed and cultivated over time, solidifying them and making them seem as though they are "natural."

To briefly explain, cultivation theory investigates how television, through repetitive exposure over an extended period of time, influences the way people understand and make sense of the world around them. However, it is important to note that cultivation is not a synonym for "effects" and it does not "necessarily imply a one-way, monolithic process" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180) but is a very important part of a dynamic or even a paradoxical one.

Media institutions' goal of profit making leads them to appeal and fit into the audiences' needs, values and general tastes through any means possible (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180). Then, the audiences, partly through the messages they receive, shape and develop their own identities (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180). However, as Gerbner (1998) points out, it is irrelevant to ask "which one comes first" because there is no outside of this televised world (p. 191); we are born into a world with television which has already helped us shape our identity and is also being shaped by our own needs, values and desires.

As already suggested above, what the cultivation theory aims to show is the reproduction of certain sets of beliefs and outlooks related to cumulative exposure to television messages (Gerbner, 1998, p. 180). It is more about repetitive televisual messages' influence over people's understanding of reality they live in rather than changes in their actions and attitudes. This cumulative exposure can lead to a decline in the divergence of opinions in society and this process of consensus building among people from different backgrounds is called "mainstreaming" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 183). However, it is important to point out that this process is not inherently "good" or "bad," according to the theory. It just indicates a decline in diversity of opinions related to the widespread adoption of television's

messages. In fact, the mainstreaming of previously marginalized gender identities and sexual/romantic orientations might be a progressive step towards equality and justice but the mainstreaming of homophobia or transphobia would increase discrimination towards these groups instead.

As stated before, George Gerbner's cultivation theory stands out among other mainstream theories of mass communication as being a more critical theory with fundamental similarities to the cultural studies' approach, which will be discussed below (Bailey & Park, 2006). While the other effects theories focus on the effects of media consumption with such objectives like overcoming misunderstandings in communication flows, creating stronger effects, and achieving higher profits (which is exactly what the critical school objects to), the cultivation theory tries to understand the dynamics of the effects of media on the values and norms of a given society through a focus on the uses of media (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 6). So, in this sense, too, it can be distinguished from other effects theories.

Besides, while effects theories see television as a variable that can directly affect people's behaviours and attitudes, Gerbner sees television as the narrator of a symbolic reality where the norms and values of a given society are demonstrated through myths and rituals, a position which used to be occupied by religion in earlier times (Gerbner, 1998, p. 178; Gerbner & Gross, 1976, pp. 173, 177). This understanding of television as a medium through which society "communicate(s) with its collective self" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 64) is shared by the critical television studies, as well. In addition, although the terminology is not the same with the cultivation theory, both are concerned with how media helps the dominant classes establish and sustain their hegemony and what ideologies are conveyed to the audiences through media (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 7). Basically, both the cultural studies and cultivation theory agree that media has the power to construct our social reality and does so through repetition and is controlled by a dominant group or groups, and this constructed

reality can have an influence on people's perceptions (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 4). The main difference between them is the methodology they use, on the other hand. While the cultural studies school often employs a qualitative methodology, the cultivation theory benefits from quantitative research methods like content analysis and surveys. Qualitative studies are usually criticised for not being "scientific" enough in the conventional sense of the word, while empirical studies, like those within the scope of cultivation theory, are criticised for being too restrictive and simply endorsing the status quo (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 10).

However, the cultural studies and cultivation theory's complementary nature lies exactly in this difference in their methodology. While the cultural studies approach can provide an ideological critique of the media from an interpretative-critical paradigm, the cultivation analysis helps to put the theoretical perspective of the cultural studies on a firmer empirical ground (Bailey & Park, 2006, p. 11). It is hoped that how we can blend these two approaches so as to compensate for one's weakness with the other's strength will become much clearer after the following discussion about the critical theory and its understanding of media as a culture industry.

2.4.2. Critical Theory and the Notion of Culture Industry

Critical schools of thought can be separated into two distinct groups: the political economy school and the cultural studies school, whose theoretical foundations have been laid down by the Frankfurt School and Birmingham School. The political economy school mainly focuses on ownership structures and relations within the media and presents a criticism of white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal dominance over the media, in general. The cultural studies school, on the other hand, primarily focuses on issues like ideology, hegemony, culture, and usually analyses media products as cultural texts while keeping in mind the influence of media ownership patterns in their production and reception. In the pages below, first the main ideas of scholars who are affiliated with the political economy school will be

summarized. Then, the arguments put forward by the Frankfurt School and criticisms raised against it will be dealt in more detail, which will be followed by a discussion on the Birmingham School.

When we look at behind-the-scenes of our contemporary television production, its executive positions, and its on-screen and off-screen staff from the political economy perspective with a feminist touch, we observe that people working in the entertainment and news media in the US is dominantly comprised of cisgender white men (Bielby & Bielby, 1996; Lauzen, 2017, 2019; Women's Media Center, 2019). Turkish media is not very different from that of the US in that it is also dominated by men (Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, 2008, pp. 59-61; Tahaoğlu, 2014; Tufan-Tanrıöver, 2000). While women do take part in various positions of media production, they are mostly employed as anchor-women and make up a minority of executive positions (Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, 2008, p. 60).

To quote Marx and Engels (2006):

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are on the whole subject to it. (p. 9)

In other words, people who control the means of production also control dominant ideas and narratives that circulate in society. The film industry in the US is primarily controlled by six large companies: Disney, Time Warner, Sony-owned Columbia-TriStar, 21st Century Fox, Comcast's Universal Studios and Viacom (Herman & Chomsky, 2008, p. 3; Noam, 2015, p. 3), which are mostly governed by white cisgender (and most likely heterosexual) men (with the exception of Viacom 50% of whose board was occupied by

women) (Women's Media Center, 2019, p. 78). In addition, the content they disseminate are also produced mostly by white cisgender men (Women's Media Center, 2019, p. 77). On the other hand, it is important to note that when a film production has at least one woman working as one of its directors, the number of women writers, editors, and cinematographers increase compared to productions with exclusively male directors (Women's Media Center, 2019, p. 83).

This perspective holds that when the production of media content is mostly controlled by white cisgender men, they will be disseminating narratives and discourses that will benefit and represent their own interest. Besides all, they will be able to influence viewers' attitudes towards certain issues: that is, in a media environment where white cis-heteronormativity is the dominant ideology, it will be more likely for alternative identities to be perceived as "bad," "unnatural," or "non-existent" at all because these mediated messages will give the message that they do not have a place within their culture and society.

In other words, as Adorno (2005), one of the major thinkers of the Frankfurt School, would say, ideas represented on the media "are always those of the status quo" (p. 104). Indeed, relationships and structures of power and ownership within media industries are also a main focus of concern for the Frankfurt School. But, unlike the political economy school, scholars associated with it put a heavier emphasis on what media produce and present to audiences than media production processes behind the scenes.

Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, also known as the Frankfurt School was established in 1923 by a group of German scholars of Jewish origin. The name Frankfurt School has been used to refer both to a group of intellectuals and a specific social theory thereafter (Slater, 1998, p. 9). At the intersection of these philosophers' studies lies a criticism of capitalist modernity at large (Kirel, 2012, p. 262).

According to Max Horkheimer (2002), critical theories are indispensable “in the historical effort to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of” popular classes (p. 246). He states that the goal of critical theories is not the accumulation of knowledge but the emancipation of people from slavery (Horkheimer, 2002, p. 246). Members of the Frankfurt School aimed to emancipate people from domination and oppression mainly of capitalism (Bohman, 2019). They presented a critique of capitalism to challenge its prevailing norms and change it for the benefit of the people, thereby freeing them.

Members of the Frankfurt School were greatly influenced by the works of Italian neo-Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci. According to Marxism, society consists of two distinct structures: superstructure and base. Base refers to the “mode of production and the social order enforcing it” while superstructure refers to anything which “emerge from the material conditions and circumstances of production and support it” (Katz, 2010, p. 443), such as ideology, culture, education, or religion. Classical Marxism suggests that the base determines the superstructure in general.

In his collection of essays called *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci argues that superstructure itself is split into two levels: the state and the civil society. According to Gramsci, “between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society” (quoted by Katz, 2010, p. 443); however, the distinctions he makes are only theoretical and analytical because all of these are intrinsically intertwined.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci also talks about the concept of “hegemony”. This concept refers to the “process by which general consent is actively sought for the interpretations of the ruling class” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 24); it is the “alignment of the superstructure (the dominant ideology) with the base (class divisions and the economic and political practices that support them)” (Katz, 2010, p. 444). What is important here is that hegemony is not solely imposed upon the public by force but also discretely achieved by

acquiring people's consent. That is, they are made to willingly accept the ideology of the dominant class. In this way, the dominant ideology becomes invisible and appears to be natural, and ideological institutions such as education, religion or media contribute to this process (Zoonen, 1999, p. 24). Thus, in short, hegemony is established mainly in the "sphere of civil society" by utilizing institutions "controlled by hegemonic elites" (Katz, 2010, p. 444) and having subordinate class to willingly accept their ideology.

The theory developed by Louis Althusser, another prominent member of the Frankfurt School, is closely related to Gramsci's ideas and concept of "hegemony." Althusser (2006, p. 85) argues that ideology interpellates people into becoming subjects. What this means is as follows: As humans, we can make sense of ourselves, our identities and our experiences only within the "limits and possibilities" of the available "language and [...] meaning systems" allow us (Zoonen, 1999, p. 24). Language is not a transparent medium which we can innocently use to share our experiences or transfer information but one of the mechanisms that constructs both us as subjects and our reality (Zoonen, 1999, p. 24).

Drawing on Gramsci's insights, Althusser coins two terms: ideological state apparatuses and repressive state apparatuses. Repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) ultimately function by the use of violence such as the police or the army (Althusser, 2006, p. 79). Ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), on the other hand, have the appearance that they are relatively autonomous from the state but, ultimately, they function by the use of ideology and in favour of the ruling class (Althusser, 2006, p. 81; Zoonen, 1999, p. 24). Some examples for the ISAs could be the education system, politics, religion and, of course, the media.

Similarly, building their ideas around the Marxist theories of their time, two members of the Frankfurt School, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, saw media as a major tool to exploit the working-class in capitalism. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), culture is "infecting everything with sameness" (p. 94). In their view, today's culture

functions like an industrial factory, creating standardised, mass produced, formulaic products which are essentially identical at their core and are produced for profit (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 95). The culture industry emphasizes the materialistic value of works of art; it sees them as mass manufactured, profitable products without trying to be discrete about it and “rejects anything untried as a risk” of profit loss (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 106). Thus, it produces products that are the same in essence. In other words, it is a profit-oriented industry that relies on standardized consumption of cultural goods. Differences between the products of the culture industry are only cosmetic or illusory and they do not reflect real differences (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 97). They only assist in categorizing and identifying consumers to find the “right” product for them “so that no one can escape” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 97) the urge to consume, which triggers the motivation to work in turn.

Cultural products like films or television shows do not even try to convey themselves as art anymore, and they are blatantly calling themselves industries (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 95). These industries operate on the belief that standardized and reproduced forms are a product of people’s demands because they are designed to satisfy customers’ needs, hence the reason they are embraced easily (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 95). However, these products are produced by people holding strong economic power (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 96). Besides, broadcasting and film companies depend on industries such as electronics or finance, and all of these industries are economically intertwined (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 96). This enables capital class to have control over what is produced and to allow or not to allow it depending on whether it aligns with their interests or not (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 96). Thus, they produce the content that will further spread, support, and amplify their ideology, “which is [presumed to be] given and unchangeable” (Adorno, 2005,

p. 99). In the end, the ideas which culture industry imposes upon people are “always those of the status quo” (Adorno, 2005, p. 104).

The formulaic structure of films or television programmes enable audiences to easily follow them through familiar themes and scenes without paying too much attention (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 100). Having been tired after the laboursome work hours, people turn to the products of culture industry for entertainment and to let off some steam. The cultural products they consume also mimic the world outside and appear to be a continuation of the real world (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 99). The consumption of these products of entertainment turns leisure time into a continuation of work time within capitalism as, through repetition and presenting itself as an extension of the real world, the culture industry instils its desired ideas in audiences (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 100). While the proletariat is physically working and producing for the benefit of the capital to consume their desired items (which reproduces the existing relations of production), they are also doing ideological work in their leisure time by learning and appropriating the ideology of the status quo.

Contrary to what actors of the culture industry argue, within the culture industry, audiences do not play an active role, according to Adorno and Horkheimer. Cultural products do not provide audiences any room for independent thought they say (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002, p. 100). Thus, people are doomed to passively consume what they are given by the culture industry. In a nutshell, in their view, the audience, or customer, is not the culture industry’s “subject but its object” (Adorno, 2005, p. 99). Though, Adorno and Horkheimer’s ideas have been criticised by different scholars and academics from different schools of thought.

It is important to point out that, contrary to what Adorno and Horkheimer argues, as Tania Modleski (2008) states, standardized formulas used in products of the culture industry

cannot simply be thought as mere repetition (p. 9). It is also important to ask why, for example, women writers chose to use or repeat certain formulas rather than others (Modleski, 2008, p. 9). As Elaine Showalter notes, when we look at what happens behind the conventional plot, "another plot, hitherto submerged in the anonymity of the background, stands out" (as cited in Modleski, 2008, p. 16), meaning that, under the formulated exterior of mass-produced cultural products, which appears to serve the dominant order, there may lie hidden meanings of opposition. For example, as Modleski (2008) argues, the culture industry's female targeted, mass-produced stories do embody "elements of protest and resistance underneath highly 'orthodox' plots" (p. 16).

Also, while Adorno and Horkheimer argue that standardization turns works of art into commodities which we consume and, as a result, shapes our understanding of the world in accordance with the dominant ideology and only high art with its "autonomous, critical spirit" (Modleski, 2008, p. 17) can resist that, Fredric Jameson points out that high art is subject to this same commodification process, as well. By trying to avoid the standardized formulas used in the mass culture, high art always needs to find new ways to be original and "must stress 'innovation and novelty'" (Modleski, 2008, p. 17). Thus, high art finds itself trapped even tighter in the clutches of the "consumer society, with its yearly or quarterly style and fashion changes" (Jameson cited in Modleski, 2008, p. 17) than the mass culture, since it needs to constantly reinvent itself to sell.

2.4.3. Birmingham School and Television Studies

As an interdisciplinary field, the cultural studies school adopts a rather different perspective than the previously discussed Marxist thinkers. According to Turner (2003), the field of cultural studies involves the convergence of certain methods and interests and "enable[s] us to understand phenomena and relationships" that previous disciplines largely disregarded (p. 9). It was influenced by structuralist ideas (namely semiotics) in its

methodology and Marxist ideas in its ideological critiques. However, the Marxist ideas they were influenced by were not of orthodox Marxism but of “neo” or “critical” Marxism (Turner, 2003, p. 17). They did not think of culture as a part of the superstructure; instead, drawing on the ideas of Althusser and Gramsci, they argued that it is separate from but also affected by “economic relationships” (Turner, 2003, p. 18).

Scholars from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) focused on “cultural forms, practices and institutions” (Turner, 2003, p. 62), explaining their relationship with society as a whole and with social status quo and change. They borrowed approaches mainly from history, English literature, and sociology in their studies (Turner, 2003, p. 62). The school’s interest in mass media quickly replaced the interest in cultures of certain classes, which had been the longest-running focus within the field (Turner, 2003, p. 63). Rather than studying the effects of media, though, they focused on its relationship with ideology by analysing signifying systems of media texts (Turner, 2003, p. 64). However, other kinds of work were not completely abandoned by the school: For example, they conducted historical studies about daily cultural structures and practices and examined urban youth subcultures in modern societies, from which feminist research benefited greatly (Turner, 2003, p. 64). Most particularly, the fruitful dialogue between studies on women subcultures and audience reception studies about popular television provided the grounds for rethinking “our understanding of ‘the feminine’ and of television,” as Turner states (2003, p. 64).

2.4.3.1. Popular Culture and Audience Reception Studies

Industrialization gave way to mass production and distribution of cultural products, which meant the rapid spread of mass culture (or popular culture) and decline in organic communal or folk cultures (Turner, 2003, p. 34). Early perspectives on culture (namely Leavisism, which was a part of the culture and civilization tradition), which had a partial influence on what would become the British Cultural Studies, had a “high culture” approach;

that is, they put more value on aesthetics than “social pleasures and meanings” (Turner, 2003, p. 37). They undervalued popular culture. They believed that popular culture lacked “‘moral seriousness’ or aesthetic value” (Turner, 2003, p. 35).

This approach was not completely abandoned by Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams, the founding figures of the British Cultural Studies School, but they both separated themselves from it in different ways. Richard Hoggart was the first director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which was established in 1964. In his first book *The Uses of Literacy* (1958), Hoggart argued for a similar “good past/bad present” binary which was present in the Leavisite approach, but his “good past” was not the organic culture of Leavisism but the working-class culture of the 1930s (Storey, 2009, p. 38).

Williams, on the other hand, shares a similar pessimism about popular culture (more specifically about the media) with Leavisism; however, his focus is not solely on aesthetics (Turner, 2003, p. 44). In his book *The Long Revolution* (1963), Williams offers three categories for the definition of culture: ideal, documentary, and social. *Ideal* refers to the “state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values” (Williams, 1963, p. 57), which was the definition used by Leavisism (Storey, 2009, p. 44). *Documentary* refers to the collection of “intellectual and imaginative work, in which [...] human thought and experience are variously recorded” (Williams, 1963, p. 57). Lastly, the social definition of culture notes “a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values” in art, education, institutions and our regular and daily behaviours (Williams, 1963, p. 57). It is with his pressing on this definition of culture being “a way of life” and “lived experience” of ordinary people Williams distinctively separates himself from Leavisism (Storey, 2009, p. 47).

In their book *The Popular Arts* (1964), Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel take a step further and reject the previous arguments against popular culture. Instead, they argue that the struggle should not be against popular culture but for separating the good from the bad within it (Hall & Whannel quoted in Storey, 2009, p. 51). In this way, they detect a category of art within popular culture which they call “popular art” (Storey, 2009, p. 53). However, they still make a distinction between popular art and mass art, which is thought to be “a ‘corrupt’ version of popular art” (Storey, 2009, p. 54). Regarding popular art, they state that, for example, Fleetwood Mac or Pink Floyd is no lesser in value than Beethoven because they are “not unequal but of different value,” and they argue for evaluating cultural texts and practices within their own terms (Storey, 2009, p. 53). According to them, within popular arts, certain “folk” elements of previous organic cultures are carried through and, although an identifiable artist (or a group of artists) has replaced the anonymous folk artist, the audience interacts the same way and establishes similar relationships with them (Hall & Whannel quoted in Storey, 2009, p. 53). They also make the point that the intended use of a particular style and the way it is actually used by the audience “never wholly coincide, and frequently conflict” (Hall & Whannel, 2018, pp. 169, 170). Indeed, this sentence can be considered an early conceptualization of Hall’s reception theory, which will be explained in detail below.

According to Hall's (2006) encoding/decoding model, “moments of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ [...] are determinate moments” (p. 164) but have relative autonomy because media messages are produced and reproduced within complex and sometimes conflicting meaning structures. Media messages are encoded within certain production codes and conventions (Hall, 2006, p. 164). For those messages to have an “effect,” they first need to be conveyed as a “meaningful discourse” such as a television program and then to be “meaningfully decoded” (Hall, 2006, p. 165). However, media messages are decoded within the audiences’ own meaning structures and cultural codes, and “codes of encoding and decoding may not be

perfectly symmetrical” (Hall, 2006, p. 166). Admittedly, encoding constructs the “limits and parameters” of how the audiences will decode media messages (Hall, 2006, p. 170), but it cannot guarantee the outcome of the decoding process. Hall (2006) says that the audience can read media texts within three different hypothetical positions or codes: dominant/hegemonic, negotiated and oppositional. When the viewer operates within the dominant code, they decode the messages in accordance with the preferred meaning (Hall, 2006, p. 171). The viewer understands and accepts the messages the way they are encoded and intended. On the other hand, the negotiated code contains both dominant and oppositional elements in it (Hall, 2006, p. 172). While the audience partially operates within the dominant code and adopts the preferred meaning, they do not completely accept it and operate “with exceptions to the rule” (Hall, 2006, p. 172). For example, a viewer who is watching a comedy movie or a TV show with some edgy jokes in it would understand the jokes and find them funny but also can think that the jokes are inappropriate or even offensive and, thus, operate within the negotiated code. Lastly, when a viewer operates within the oppositional code, they perfectly understand the dominant or preferred meaning of a text but decode it “in a globally contrary way” (Hall, 2006, p. 172). For example, in a cleaning product commercial, viewers could read the choice of using exclusively female actors as sexist, stereotypical and contributing to the perpetuation of the patriarchal system.

2.4.3.2. John Fiske’s Approach to “Reading Television”

British media scholar John Fiske was and continues to be an influential scholar in the field of media and television studies. Fiske’s works had an emphasis on popular culture and can be positioned within the cultural studies approach. He, like others, challenge the idea that audiences are passive consumers and argued that they are actually active agents in the process meaning production; they are the producers of meaning (Fiske, 1989, p. 27). In this context,

John Fiske's position within the previous "folk culture versus mass culture" debate can be summarized with one of his own sentences:

In capitalist societies there is no so-called authentic folk culture against which to measure the "inauthenticity" of mass culture, so bemoaning the loss of the authentic is a fruitless exercise in romantic nostalgia. (Fiske, 1989, p. 27)

Fiske admits that "our popular culture is an industrialized culture" but so is every resource we have, both cultural and material, because we live in an industrialized society (Fiske, 1989, p. 27). However, cultural commodities are not the same as material ones (Fiske, 1989, p. 26). Fiske (1989) defines two different economies: financial economy and cultural economy (p. 26). Within the financial economy, a program is produced by a production studio and then sold as a commodity to the distributor (Fiske, 1989, p. 26). Then, this program produces an audience which then is sold to advertisers as a commodity (Fiske, 1989, p. 26). However, within the cultural economy, the audience is the one who produces "meanings and pleasures" (Fiske, 1989, p. 27). In this economy, audience is not the consumer but an active agent in meaning circulation and the original product becomes the foundation for audience to deduce numerous possible meanings and pleasures from it (Fiske, 1989, p. 27). Fiske (1989) argues that popular culture is culture, and "culture is a living, active process" (p.23). Culture can only be established from the inside and cannot be forced upon groups by third agents because culture is of people's making (Fiske, 1989, p. 24). Popular culture (especially film, television and music) may be an industrialized culture and have no choice but to operate within the dominant capitalist system; however, it "is a site of struggle" (Fiske, 1989, p. 20) and people form their culture with whatever "resources and commodities" they have access to, which are given to them by the dominant system" (p.15).

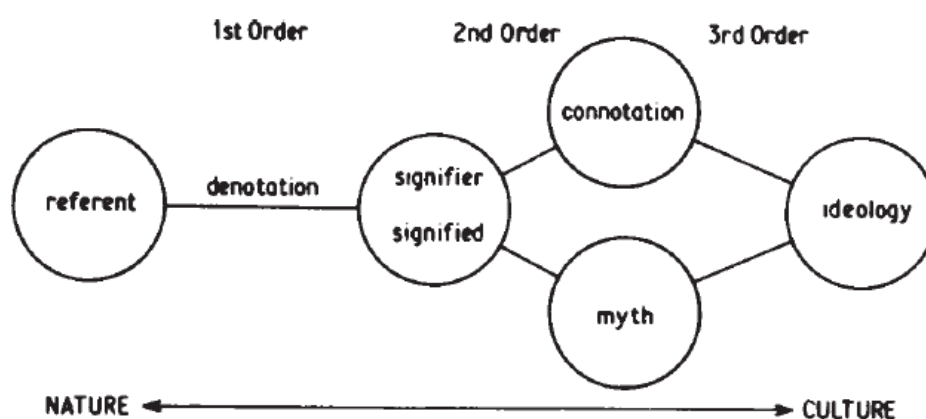
Among the mass media, through which we access popular culture, television is the one we interact the most. Television, just like every other medium, conveys messages through the

use of signs. Signs are made up of two elements: signifier (the sound-image) and signified (the concept) (Saussure, 2011, p. 67). John Fiske and John Hartley (2003) categorize the overall semiotic system into three orders of signification. In the first order, the meaning is denotative or self-contained (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 25). For example, the word “dog” signifies the animal itself. The second level of signification carries cultural meanings rather than literally representational ones (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 26). In this order, the sign takes the place of a signifier. Following Roland Barthes’ ideas on semiotics, Fiske and Hartley (2003) divide the second order into two: connotation and myth. Connotation is a way for people to encode “their feelings or judgements about the subject of the message” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 29). It implies another culturally coded meaning such as the association between “dog” and “loyalty” or “red rose” and “love.” Myths, on the other hand, are “stolen language;” they “transform a meaning into form” which repeatedly circulates across the cultural space” (Barthes, 1991, p. 131).

Anything can become a myth (Barthes, 1991, p. 107). From “dogs are humans’ best friend” to “being a mother is the greatest thing that can happen to a woman,” we are surrounded by them. Through myths, one naturalizes something that is in the interest of dominant classes (Barthes, 1991, p. 131). For example, through the motherhood myth, the patriarchal system naturalizes the domestication and oppression of women. This is also related to the third order of signification. In this order, myths themselves are arranged to create another meaningful whole and they become “a mythology or an ideology” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 30). Myths and connotations are “the manifest expressions” of a fundamental organizing belief system: “the dominant ideology” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 78). The figure below shows all orders of signification together in a connected model and can be helpful to visualise the connections between them:

Figure 1.

Orders of Signification (O'Sullivan et al., 2006, p. 288)



These signs we use to convey meanings are organized into meaningful systems with the use of certain conventions which are called "codes" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 41). Most codes are dynamic, and their use needs to be agreed upon by its users (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 41). To avoid misunderstandings or prevent the decoding process from occurring in different codes than the intended ones (which is called aberrant decoding), the communicator has to use codes that are widely available and their messages have to be a part of "the central meaning systems of the culture" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 61). The more a certain sign is coded in a certain way the more likely it will be decoded in a similar way by different users (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 45).

Identifying the smallest signifying unit of codes (such as the letters of a word) is important because it helps us draw the line between the codes of a medium and our reality (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 47). This is especially important for television because the codes of television are in close relationship with the "normal codes of perception" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 47). That is, because the line between the codes of television and real life are blurred, each can affect the other (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 47). This makes television another kind of reality than our own but both televisual reality and our own are perceived by us quite

similarly, and, thus, our reality and televisual reality are in reciprocal interaction (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 48).

In televised communication neither party personally knows who the other one is (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 60). Thus, Fiske and Hartley (2003) identify “three simultaneous levels in the presentation” (p. 61) of the televisual message: the image on the screen, the broadcasting institution with their workers and professional codes and the culture itself. So, in Fiske and Hartley's (2003) own words, the process can be outlined as follows: “[the] culture communicates with itself via the mediation of the (second level) professional communicators [which] are manifested as the (first level) encoded messages on the screen” (p. 62).

It is widely presumed that television represents or should represent the reality we live in as truthfully and accurately as possible (Zoonen, 1999, p. 36). However, reality is not made up of autonomous “objects, relations and processes” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 38) but is shaped and defined by our social processes. Mediums like film and television do not just represent the reality we live in and experience as such. They reproduce our “collective memories, desires, hopes and fears” and also add to them, and, thus, resemble ancient myths in their function (Zoonen, 1999, p. 37). Thus, Fiske and Hartley (2003) argue that television plays a ritualistic role where abstract ideas are projected into material forms (such as sound and image) and it creates an environment for a culture to “communicate with its collective self” (p. 64). Therefore, it has a bardic function within our society (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 64); it functions in our contemporary society like what a bard in the earlier centuries would do.

In the earlier times, bards would take up a central position in their culture as a “mediator of language” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 65), one that would create compositions out of the available linguistic resources they had. Bards were commissioned by their rulers as a mediator to establish communication between them and the common folk (Zoonen, 1999). Although they were commissioned by their rulers to spread their messages, bards did not

necessarily stay completely loyal to them, though. They still conveyed the concerns of the ordinary people of their time through oral communication, but they did not simply reflect them; rather they reworked them into a narrative (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 65; Zoonen, 1999, p. 38). Bards concerned themselves with organizing their messages in accordance with the needs of their culture while playing a positive and dynamic role (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 65). In their performances, they drew or “clawed back” the audience into central focus of their performance (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 65). All of these features are also present in televisual narratives. For example, as Fiske and Hartley (2003) illustrate, nature programmes on television regularly refer to the “like us-ness” (p. 65) of a certain animal species by finding similarities between their behaviours and ours as humans. The same can also be seen in shows about aliens: clawing us back even in contexts which we would not expect any similarities. Television constantly pulls us to the centre of its narratives, and as a “bard” it renders the “unfamiliar into the already known” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 38).

Although television communicates mostly through oral means, its mode of communication carries elements which are both oral and literate. While the oral modes have dramatic, episodic, mosaic, dynamic, active, concrete, ephemeral, social, metaphorical, rhetorical and dialectical, characteristics, the literate modes’ characteristics are narrative, sequential, linear, static, artifact, abstract, permanent, individual, metonymic, logical and univocal/consistent (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 99). According to Fiske and Hartley (2003) “its final form results from the active tension between these modes” (p. 99).

Indeed, television is a complex medium, one that embodies many contradictions and contradictory ways of seeing (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, pp. 91, 92). On one hand, as a bard, it functions within the oral codes of the common people, talking about their issues and concerns, and, on the other hand, content broadcasted on it is commissioned by “television institutions [which] are deeply committed to literate modes of perception” (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 99)

and is subject to their systematic intervention, limiting and transforming its output. Another reason for the self-contradictory nature of televisual discourse is that it both challenges and reproduces conventional values, behaviours, and attitudes (Modleski, 2008, p. 105).

In short, Fiske and Hartley (2003) suggest that television's function, in its bardic role, can be summarized in seven points: the articulation of the conclusions culture draws about the nature of reality; the incorporation of individuals into their culture's dominant value-systems; celebration, explanation, interpretation and justification of actions within culture; assurance of culture's adequacy through affirmations of its ideologies and mythologies or, conversely, displaying any inadequacies within culture's sense of itself; convincing individuals that their status and identity are guaranteed by the culture; and transmission of a sense of belonging or a cultural membership through these means (p. 66, 67).

As discussed above, critical thinkers generally build their perspective on the premise that within the capitalistic economy, the main goal of the culture industry, including television, is to create more capital and profits. John Fiske shares a similar perspective with others on this subject. Fiske (1989) points out that media institutions seek profit by selling their audiences to advertisers (p. 26). Admittedly, in our age of streaming services, they charge their customers a certain amount. However, in either case, they have to grab and keep their potential audience/commodity/costumer's attention so that they can profit. If people do not enjoy their time while watching television, find the content they see riveting and/or constantly see messages they object to, they may not watch it. In order to keep audiences' interest alive, alternative and oppositional positions and ideologies are routinely incorporated into the television's discourse, providing them with a bigger platform to be heard (Gitlin, 1979). Those that are "too indigestible," however, are "excluded from the media discourse and returned to the cultural margins from which [they] came," but parts of it are domesticated and absorbed by the "dominant forms" (Gitlin, 1979, p. 264). Even so, although it may be

limited, this creates a space for oppositional ideas to take up within the televisual discourse and creates an environment for television to operate within its bardic function.

Furthermore, as Fiske (1989) points out, while the media texts are produced by commercial conglomerates, how people connect with them and what meanings they make of them will not be perfectly reflective of their intended messages (p. 23). What we now consider as successful and influential pieces of popular culture are actually the ones that people feel connected to and have been influenced by in some way. In other words, as John Fiske (1989) states, while it might be an industrialized culture, “it is of the people, and people’s interests are not those of the industry – as is evidenced by number of films, records and other products” (p. 23).

The Harry Potter series is a good example of that. J.K. Rowling’s fantasy children’s book series had many adaptations and spin-offs from movies to video games. However, it achieved its popularity due to the emotional bonds the readers of the series and the viewers of the films developed with it, especially when we consider that a very large group of children grew up with the series for years. The series was surely appropriated by big commercial companies for profit-making through marketing various related commodities from movie tickets, Harry Potter products, toys, tickets to theme parks or special edition copies of the books. However, it became a part of popular culture because of the very fact that people made it a part of popular culture. In the year when the first Harry Potter movie, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001), came out, there were many other movies that were just released or had a sequel. While many people around the world are least familiar with the Harry Potter series today, not a lot people would be able to remember what *Osmosis Jones* (2001) was. *Osmosis Jones* did not become a part of our popular culture because people did not make it so. On the other hand, the Harry Potter series resonated with the younger generation because of its characters’ struggles and the themes it tackles such as questioning the authority and

supporting equality. Also, for young people who grew up in late 1990s/early 2000s, which were characterized by terrorist attacks, economic crises, and deepening socio-economic inequalities, the unceasingly approaching Dark Lord, who wanted to create a system of witch/mage supremacy rather than a peaceful co-existence with muggles, addressed their concerns and anxieties and provided them with a platform to “learn to respond and cope with their own trauma” (Simpson, 2017, pp. 53, 54).

All these imply that it is the people who form their popular culture by reading cultural texts they are given in their own, unique way, making their own meanings out of and developing personal bonds with them. In fact, younger generations have created such strong bonds and identified so much with the series that even after J.K. Rowling’s numerous trans exclusionary statements (which a majority of fans did not approve), fans could not abandon their liking of the series since it became such a big part of their own culture. However, as a response, they started making memes (internet jokes) where they denied J.K. Rowling as the writer of the series and claimed that they were written by famous pop stars they liked such as Britney Spears or Mariah Carey (Haasch, 2020). In a way, it can be said that the series, as a non-material being, no longer belongs to J.K. Rowling but to Harry Potter fans who made it a part of their culture.

2.4.4. Feminist Television Studies

As mentioned earlier, feminist cultural studies benefited greatly from research about feminine subcultures and audience reception studies. Family as a unit of analysis increasingly gained more attention, in time, and studies investigating the how a family’s interaction with media was affected by the “power and gender relations within the family” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 114) have emerged. Ann Gray, Dorothy Hobson and David Morley have all taken this stance in their respective studies (Zoonen, 1999, p. 114). In traditional families, men are usually the dominant figure in the family. This power dynamic is also visible in the family’s viewing

habits and preferences (Morley, 2005). Remote control is usually in the possession of the men in the family (either father or the son when the father is not present), and they decide on the program that is going to be watched (Morley, 2005, p. 141). According to the answers in the interviews Morley (2005) conducted, men expressed that they like watching factual programmes like news, documentaries, and debates (p. 156); when they watch fiction at all, it is realist fiction like “realistic” sitcoms (p. 160). On the other hand, women stated that they enjoy watching fictional programmes like soap operas and watch non-fictional programmes, like news, just to learn about what is going on (Morley, 2005, p. 156). Morley (2005) draws attention to an answer one of the men he interviewed gave: he “did not realise the library was so good— [he] thought it was all just fiction” (p. 159). Morley (2005) points out that this person thinks that fiction cannot be good (p. 159). Also, the men’s preference for non-fictional, factual programmes was accompanied by a sense of guilt because, for them, even watching television as a leisure activity was a second choice because it was not actually a “real” leisure activity (Morley, 2005, p. 159). Morley, then, comes to two conclusions from these observations. Firstly, there is a “masculine/feminine relationship to television” (Morley, 2005, p. 160): while activities, factual programmes, and realist fiction are perceived as masculine, television, fiction and romance are seen as feminine. When we consider that our patriarchal society sees everything feminine as easy, trivial, and futile and, overall, attributes a lesser value to it, it is no surprise that people feel guilty when they enjoy their favourite television programmes associated with femininity. Secondly, Morley (2005, p. 160) suggests, what determine their programme choices might not be their gender identity. Instead, their program preferences inform their gender definitions.

Similar differences in programme preferences between men and women were also present in Hobson (2005) and Gray’s (1987, 1992) studies, as well (Zoonen, 1999, p. 114). They all point out that, in an environment in which male dominance is highly prominent, the

men's right to decide what to watch on TV is accepted without question (Zoonen, 1999, p. 115). Here, it is also important to make a distinction of "viewing" and "viewing attentively and with enjoyment" (Morley, 2005, p. 160). Men state that they prefer to watch television with their full attention without talking and interrupting the programme in any way while women describe it as a "fundamentally social activity, involving ongoing conversation" and engage in other domestic activities at the same time (Morley, 2005, p. 143). For men, home is a site of leisure, a space where they can distance themselves from responsibilities of the workplace (Zoonen, 1999, p. 114). However, for women, it is a place of constant work and domestic charges, such as taking care of other family members' physical and emotional needs (Zoonen, 1999, p. 114). Indeed, for women to enjoy their favourite shows, their family members have to be absent (Zoonen, 1999, p. 116). They might watch it on Saturday mornings while everyone in the house is asleep, gather with their friends and watch it together or record and share them among each other to watch it later (Zoonen, 1999, p. 116). Even when they manage to create the conditions in which they can enjoy watching television, their enjoyment is accompanied by a feelings of guilt and shame because they feel as if they were not fulfilling their responsibilities as "good mothers and wives," and they are worried that their husbands will judge them for watching silly, badly acted, low quality programmes (Zoonen, 1999, p. 116).

Feminist studies have also turned their focus on the "politics of pleasure" and studied the enjoyment and pleasure women get from shows like soap operas (Zoonen, 1999, p. 117). Actually, many feminists scholars who looked at soap operas highlighted how stereotypical and sexist these shows are in their representations of women (Ang, 1985). However, Ien Ang (1985) suggests that this is a result of doing content analyses of the elements on the surface; besides, building on the conception that these representations will affect women's attitudes, they assign no role to women other than being "passive victims of the deceptive message of

soap operas” (p. 119). On the other hand, the pleasures women get from these shows, the meanings they make of and the ways they interact with them are completely disregarded (Ang, 1985, p. 119). In this vein, in her study, she finds that female viewers experienced the show *Dallas* as a realistic drama but not in terms of the events that are going on in it (Zoonen, 1999, p. 117). They thought that the realism of the show came from its “tragic sequence of rows, intrigues, happiness and misery” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118) mostly like in a family. So, they related to the show at a more emotional level and found a kind of “emotional realism” (Ang, 1985, p. 45) in it. In other words, they did not find the sexist and stereotypical representations realistic and did not think that it represents the reality. What they found to be realistic was the emotional aspects of the show.

In fact, many studies following Ang’s research found that women approach these texts from two different positions, either from a critical point of view or an involved point of view (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118). In her studies *Soap operas at work* (1989) and *Women, audiences and the workplace* (1990), Dorothy Hobson saw that women approached soap operas from two different positions: a “detached way” and “emotional and involved way,” which Katz and Liebes called “referential mode” in their study *The Export of Meaning: Cross-Cultural Readings of Dallas* (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118). The women who approached the soap operas in a detached way acknowledged the “constructedness of the story” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118). In a way, they tried to co-author the story, finding the plot holes, inconsistencies, and a better way for the progression of the story or trying to predict where it will go by taking into account the articles they read about the show (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118). In the emotional and involved way, however, viewers used soap operas to make sense of their own experiences (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118). They related the show to their personal lives and used them to talk about their own problems which are “too painful to talk about in any other way” (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118).

Hobson also pointed out that her participants could easily talk about the show from either of these positions (Zoonen, 1999, p. 118).

To admit, these feminist audience reception studies are criticized on many grounds. First of all, they solely focus on female or women subjectivities. How men construct their subjectivities through watching popular entertainment programmes and products such as sports programmes, video games, soap operas, television series or movies are left unexplored, on the other hand (Zoonen, 1999, p. 125). Secondly, these studies usually ignores the intersectional nature of television audiences by only focusing on female audiences without taking their ethnicities or sexual orientation into consideration and assumes that women should enjoy soap operas due to the simple fact that they are women (Zoonen, 1999, p. 122). This perspective risks being one dimensional in its analysis of gender and power dynamics and reproduces heteronormative discourses (Zoonen, 1999, pp. 122, 123). Although there have been studies which take participants' sexual orientation and sexual identity into consideration (Choyke, 2012; Dhaenens et al., 2008; Dhoest, 2015; Haslop, 2009), studies which adopt an intersectional approach, especially in terms of racial and queer identities, are still needed in the field (Martin, 2020, p. 73). Lastly, these studies have confined their focus on women to their domestic roles and to so-called "feminine" genres at the expense of women's reception of more "serious" programmes such as news (Zoonen, 1999, p. 124).

In addition to audience reception patterns, a major focus of concern in feminist media studies is the display of women in media products such as films, television programmes, and pornography. John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972), in which he mainly discusses gendered images depicted in European oil paintings and advertisements, was one of the works which highly influenced these feminist studies. Berger (1972) argues that a man's presence is determined by the power he possesses, by "what he is capable of doing to you or for you" (p. 46). The nature of his power may differ (such as physical, financial or sexual) but the object

“is always exterior to the man” (Berger, 1972, p. 45), and one of the objects of his power are women. Women are born into a “confined space” under the oppression of men; they are both being watched and condemned to continually watch themselves (Berger, 1972, p. 46). So, they internalize this self-objectifying outlook about their appearance. The “surveyor” and the “surveyed” becomes two distinct and conflicting parts of their identity because their success is built upon how others perceive them and how they appear to others, or namely to men (Berger, 1972, p. 46). Berger (1972) summarizes it as follows:

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (p. 47)

Just as Berger points out the gendered display of men and women in European oil paintings and advertisements, so does Laura Mulvey (1975) for Hollywood films, from a psychoanalytic perspective, in her article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” Building her theoretical framework on Freud’s concepts of scopophilia (that is, the sexual instinct which drives people to gaze at other people) and self-identification (which is related to narcissism and ego), Mulvey argues that cinema takes these contradictory systems of pleasure and satisfies them at the same time by creating the “illusion of looking in on a private world” and triggering an effect similar to what Jaques Lacan describes as mirror phase, the phase in which a child recognizes themselves in a mirror and feels joy due to finding the image to be “more complete, more perfect than” their experience of their bodies (Mulvey, 1975, p. 9).

Paralelling Berger’s ideas, Mulvey (1975) also notes that “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (p. 11). While women in films become sexual objects for men to be looked at, men in films become the centre of the narrative, and

spectators, regardless of their gender, watch the story from the male protagonist's eyes (Mulvey, 1975). Because cinema mirrors, highlights or distorts the "straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference," says Mulvey (1975, p. 6), and, in our patriarchal society, "a reversal of the structure of looking (...) is out of the question" (Zoonen, 1999, p. 90). Thus, images on the screen are always projected through and address the male gaze with the use of certain technical codes such as camera angles or framing. Even if the roles are switched and a male body is objectified for female enjoyment, it is still projected from the male gaze because the male character is objectified in the same way that men objectify women. It is projected from a male point of view and not a female one. If a female gaze were ever possible, it would only be "masochistic adaptation of the male spectator position" because an independent female viewing experience is unthinkable according to the psychoanalytic framework Mulvey has put forward (Zoonen, 1999, p. 92).

Some other feminist media scholars who adopt the psychoanalytic perspective also argue that the intimate connection between the female child and her mother before the Oedipal phase is what stimulates homosexual attraction in women and leads to their appreciation of mainstream cinema (Zoonen, 1999, p. 93) because, according to Freud, their attachment to their mother goes unresolved and exists side by side with their heterosexual relationships in the following phases of their life (Modleski, 2016, p. 6).

As mentioned above, Mulvey mainly based her ideas about narrative cinema on the theoretical framework established by another highly influential psychoanalytical thinker of the 20th century, Jacques Lacan. In the Lacanian discourse, the image of woman, whose "lack" constructs the fear of castration, is what gives "order and meaning to the patriarchal world" (Lurie, 1981, p. 52). According to his framework, while the "visible and erected" phallus is an object to identify with, female genital signifies "absence" (Borch-Jacobsen & Brick, 1994, p. 278). Thus, woman is a "man without a penis" (Lurie, 1981, p. 54). The male Oedipal

complex, in which the male child realizes that the ever-powerful mother has also a “lack,” and, while looking for ways to negate this lack, starts to identify with the father who seems to hold the phallus that compensates for it, reflects itself onto cinematic narratives in the form of female images that are “disfigured, dead, or at the very least, domesticated” (Modleski, 2008, p. 2).

However, Lurie (1981) argues this psychoanalytical perspective’s idea that the woman image instills a fear of castration in men is actually a “comforting” one since it dismisses “the real terror the sight of woman inspires” (p. 53). Instead, she argues, the woman image is terrorizing because, even though it does not possess a penis, it “appears to possess everything the penis signifies for the male” (Lurie, 1981, p. 53). Thus, unlike Mulvey, she argues that women in film are purposefully castrated to negate the fear their wholeness awakens in men (Lurie, 1981, p. 53).

Another criticism about Mulvey’s theory comes from, Tania Modleski, who contests the impossibility of female spectatorship and pleasure. She argues that romance novels and soap operas are evidences of feminine spectatorsip; they appeal to women’s interests and reflect their angers, anxieties, conflits and desires even though they may belie them at the same time (Modleski, 2008, p. 101). Soap operas, for example, present an “alternate kind of narrative pleasure experienced by women,” in her words (Modleski, 2008, p. 100). This pleasure partly comes from seeing women as protagonists engaging in rational courses of actions and from their malicious attitude towards masculine domination (Zoonen, 1999, p. 121). Besides, Modleski (2008) says, while the narrative style Mulvey draws attention to (which is structured around a male hero figure whom the audiences identify with) does appeal to male spectatorship and pleasure, soap operas give viewers a chance for identifying themselves with multiple and even conflicting characters (p. 83), which, as a result, divests the spectator of power. Actually, this multiple identification puts viewers in the position of

sort of [an] ideal mother: a person who possesses greater wisdom than all her children, whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family (she identifies with them all), and who has no demands or claims of her own (she identifies with no one character exclusively). (Modleski, 2008, p. 84)

Mothers at home usually have to care for numerous tasks (sometimes at the same time) which also can be interrupted by other unexpected tasks or situations. So, a mother's life at home is full of multi-tasking, distraction, and interruption. Other than her domestic duties, she also tends to care for the emotional needs of the family. According to Modleski (2008, p. 93), television's structure, with its regular interruptions such as advertisements, closely accords to women's life and work patterns at home. Also, close and intimate camera shootings in soap operas enable viewers to read the emotions of the characters on the screen and enhance their positioning as ideal mothers (Modleski, 2008, p. 92). So, unlike the Hollywood narrative cinema with a central male character whom the story revolves around, soap operas contrast male-centered visual pleasure taken from such forms of popular culture (Modleski, 2008, p. 92) Instead, they offer a distinct sense of female pleasure whereby viewers can identify with almost every character, thereby creating a decentralized spectatorship position.

As the above discussions suggest, while questioning the gendered positioning of viewers against the screen can enhance our understanding of the interaction between audiences and media, this assumption about gendered spectatorship may sound problematic in itself since it entails "the risk of falling into the trap of (biological) essentialism," as Zoonen claims (1999, p. 93). The only way to escape such a risk is to completely break up with a dichotomous understanding of gender, which brings us back to the discussion about heteronormativity (Zoonen, 1999, p. 93).

Overall, while psychoanalytic studies presupposes an ideal audience with whom in mind the media text is produced and provides an analysis of the text's relation to the unconscious, cultural studies' focus on audience reception gives us insight about how actual audiences, under diverse social influences, understand these media texts and what meanings they make of them. This quality of reception studies can be valuable, with audiences who have varying and fluid gender identities, for it can compensate for the binary understanding of gender inherent in psychoanalytic studies.

2.4.5. Pierre Bourdieu and Praxis Theory

So far, as discussed in the previous sections, we have seen that culture and society play a role in shaping people's identities (such as gender) and sense-making practices, but, reflexively, people have agency in shaping and creating their culture and society, as well. This point is at the centre of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's studies. He argues against dualist oppositions such as the one between objectivism and subjectivism (Dursun, 2018, p. 72). According to Bourdieu, neither of them "can adequately grasp social life" on their own (Postone et al., 1993, p. 3). To do that, a middle-ground theory which combines both approaches should be adopted; both "objective material, social cultural structures" and "constituting practices and experiences of individuals and groups" should be taken into consideration (Postone et al., 1993, p. 3), and he calls it "praxis theory". His theory is especially significant for this study because it provides the framework from which we can understand how television audiences' individual tastes are shaped and how their personal experiences and identities are tied to their enjoyment of a certain program and the meanings they make from it.

Among the most important elements of Bourdieu's social theory are his concepts of habitus, capital (economic, social and cultural) and field. Bourdieu conceptualizes fields mainly as a methodological tool for sociological research. According to him, fields are

“structured social space[s], a field of forces[s]” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40), which identify and construct certain groups of “social practices” (Shilling, 2003, p. 121). The nature of power dynamics between individual agents, which are determined by their habitus and the weight of relevant capital(s) they possess, determine their position within these fields (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40; Postone et al., 1993, p. 5). Society, in this picture, is a macro-cosmos and fields are micro-cosmoses within it with varying degrees of autonomy (Dursun, 2018, p. 76). Besides, there is a constant conflict “for the transformation or preservation” of fields (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 40). Education, art, medicine, media and politics are a few, broad examples of fields.

In their struggle within these social spaces, individual agents accumulate and use certain capitals. Bourdieu defines capital as “accumulated labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241) and it can be explained as the “capacity to exercise control over one’s own future and that of others” and “is a form of power” (Postone et al., 1993, p. 4). Capitals’ distribution in society is not homogenous; individuals as social agents try to expand their capitals as much as possible because the amount of capital they hold shapes their opportunities and determines their social position (Postone et al., 1993, p. 5). According to Bourdieu, capital is accumulated in three different forms: cultural, social and economic.

Cultural capital can broadly be defined as knowledge and can be categorised into three different states: embodied, objectified and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1986). In its embodied state, cultural capital is one’s acquired knowledge that is cumulated in one’s body and it can be acquired unconsciously within family and society in general (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). The acquisition of this type of capital is through the “work on oneself (self-improvement)” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). It is an “investment” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244) of time, physical energy and economic capital, which is turned into an “integral part of the person, into habitus” (p. 245). In this state, cultural capital cannot be transferred as easily as other forms capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245).

In its objectified state, however, cultural capital is materialized in “objects and media” such as paintings, writings or monuments which can be passed on or transferred as material possessions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). However, consumption of such cultural capital relies on one’s embodied cultural capital or having access to it through the mediation of someone else (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247). In its objectified state, cultural capital is separate from the body of the person; this is also the case for the institutionalised state. In this third state, cultural capital takes the form of academic qualifications and transcends the “biological limits” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 247) of its bearer and becomes semi-autonomous in the form of certificates and diplomas, which gives institutional recognition and provides a proof of competence for its holder. This institutionalization of cultural capital is an enabling factor which makes the comparison of “qualification of holders” possible and determines the “monetary value of a given academic capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 248).

Social capital simply refers to one’s social network and who or which group they are related to. This network provides them with the backing of its members to various degrees and “a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). This privilege social capital provides can be acquired and maintained through “material and/or symbolic exchanges” such as gift giving, or through a “common name” such as of a family, class, tribe, school or party (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249). These relationships can, then, be used for “material or symbolic profits” such as opportunities for acquiring economic capital or emotional and material benefits of a friendship (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 249).

Economic capital is the most practical one among the three forms because it can easily be transferred from one person to another or through generations and it is “more easily and efficiently converted into symbolic (that is, social and cultural) capital than vice versa” (Postone et al., 1993, p. 5). While all forms of capital can be transformed (some explicitly and some in a disguised manner) into one another, Bourdieu argues that all forms of capital are

connected to economic capital in some way (Dursun, 2018, pp. 93, 94). As regards the capital conversion process, however, one must keep in mind that acquiring social and/or cultural capital by the means of economic capital (or vice versa) is not a process without labour; it requires physical ability or physical capital (Shilling, 2003, p. 111).

Bourdieu does not specifically categorize physical competency as a separate form of capital; however, it is always implicitly at play in the conversion, maintenance and accumulation of all forms of capital. This type of capital can be turned into any other form of capital (Shilling, 2003, p. 111) through labour such as working (economic capital), studying (cultural capital), going on a date (social capital) or exercising (physical capital). However, it cannot be purchased, “transmitted or inherited directly” (Shilling, 2003, p. 124), for the most part. Some physical traits can be inherited, such as height or good eyesight, and in some cases, it can be purchased or acquired to a limited extent which medical advancements allow, such as through organ transplants, plastic surgery, hearing aid devices or glasses.

Bourdieu gives importance to bodily practices in his theory; he sees bodies as “bearer[s] of value in contemporary society” and is concerned with how bodies “become commodified in modern societies” (Shilling, 2003, p. 111). In many societies, this value is tied to one’s body’s productivity, attractiveness and legitimacy. Productivity is of key importance for economic ends, and attractiveness can be used for accumulation of both economic and social capital. However, the legitimacy of one’s body or bodily practices refers to judgements about whether if their body should exist in the first place (Shilling, 2003, p. 126). This is especially important for dominated or subaltern identities such as people from different races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities or bodies with varying abledness. Besides, “the value attached to particular bodies changes over time” (Shilling, 2003, p. 121) and so, legitimacy of bodies are subject to change as well.

Physical capital is also indicative of one's social class (Shilling, 2003, p. 114). Just like in other aspects of their life (such as their eating habits), bodies are marked by necessity for lower classes, while it is more of a project for upper classes (Shilling, 2003, p. 115). The way one moves or uses their body is formed within the social position they are located, which is also strongly related to the formation of their habitus. Bourdieu (2013) describes habitus as follows:

the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, (...) a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks. (pp. 78, 82-83)

These improvisations are, in fact, strategies for accumulating capital in certain fields (Postone et al., 1993, p. 4). Habitus enables individuals to make improvised decisions and is formed by their accumulated knowledge about how the world around them works (embodied cultural capital) and around which they shape their actions, behaviours, mannerisms, points of view and values. However, while shaping “practices and the perception of practices” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170), it is also shaped by them because the practices it generates is the generator of the conditions of production in a society which, cyclically, generates habitus. That is, it is both a “structuring structure” and a “structured structure” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 170). It is “the dynamic intersection of structure and action, society and the individual” (Postone et al., 1993, p. 4).

As Bourdieu (1996) notes, all cultural practices and one's cultural tastes have a strong relationship with the level of education they receive and their “social origin” (p. 1), which are tightly connected to their habitus. Habitus, both as “the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgements and the system of classification [...] of these practices” (Bourdieu,

1996, p. 170), acts as the determining system for the perceptions of the practices it generates and, thus, forms individual's cultural tastes. Different practices are judged to have different values or prestige because the practices of different classes diverge from one another due to their varying capital configurations, and people's relation to those practices corresponds to their position within society (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 5, 6). Thus, tastes "function as markers of 'class'" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 2). Taste, in this case, relies on an individual's implicitly acquired capacity to read (or decode) and classify the practices they encounter, which is indicative of their social class (Bourdieu, 1996). In Bourdieu's (1996) words:

Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. (p. 6)

The difference in taste means that people from different social backgrounds will enjoy, if they do at all, and decode media messages differently. In other words, audiences' reception of a media product will differ depending on their accumulated capitals, social class, personal experience and various other dimensions of their identity. Thus, it is important to keep in mind the experiences and demographic qualities of television audiences while looking into their receptions of televisual content and the representations in them.

Lastly, it is important to touch upon Bourdieu's concept of "symbolic violence." Symbolic violence refers to the implicit imposition of certain values, perspectives and ideas onto groups of people, which they perceive and accept to be "legitimate" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 66). It is a "gentle violence" which, in effect, results in "submission" (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 1), and what individuals are submitting to is "behaving in conformity with dominant power structures" (Colaguori, 2010, p. 395). To put it simply, it creates and maintains "an unequal relationship, a power imbalance" (Colaguori, 2010, p. 392). Symbolic violence is mainly

exercised through three modes of “pedagogic action” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 66): diffuse education (interacting with the members of a society), family education and institutionalized education (such as school education).

One of the most obvious examples where we can see symbolic violence in action is gender inequalities or, as a more specific example, the oppressed or secondary status of women in a patriarchal society, a topic which Bourdieu wrote about in his book *Masculine Domination* (1998). On one hand, Bourdieu’s ideas have been the target of feminist criticism almost for reducing the notions of sex, sexual orientation, and gender into one another (Lovell, 2000, p. 18), for not presenting enough room to “adapt or change the self” (p. 15) and rarely considering women as “subjects with capital-accumulating strategies” (p. 21); however, his “analysis of the sexual division of labour in the maintenance and augmentation of cultural and symbolic capital” (p. 25) provides valuable insights, and his ideas (especially regarding symbolic violence from a media studies perspective) can be very useful tools for feminist critical analyses.

Symbolic violence does not refer to representation of violence on television (Colaguori, 2010, p. 389); however, television can certainly play a role in the exertion of this kind of violence through its representations. For example, representing gay men (or any oppressed group) in a stereotypical and harmful manner, such as effeminate comic relief characters or “objects of ridicule” (Hart, 2000, p. 63), would reinforce negative perceptions about them while also implicitly reinforcing heteronormative ideals and misogyny. These representations are dangerous not only because they perpetuate discrimination towards gay men but they can also affect gay men themselves. Seeing these images, they might start believing them. Gay men who believe and internalize the messages of these stereotypical images may start exerting symbolic violence upon themselves, which is directly connected to internalized homophobia (one that operates subconsciously and without the person being

aware of doing it). For example, gay man who sees representations of effeminate men as objects to be laughed at might start to believe that their effeminacy is a quality they should be ashamed of because it is ridiculed by others. As social animals, humans want to belong in their community; they want to be accepted. So, seeing these images, gay men will suppress their effeminacy not to be an outcast and follow patriarchal, heteronormative gender norms instead, exerting symbolic violence unto themselves in the process. This is also true for other oppressed groups, as well, such as women, people of colour or sexual minorities, and it can be traumatizing for the individual.

Overall, as Bourdieu argues, tastes of individuals vary depending on the social conditions of their environment. However, people also have the power to change these conditions. This means that while their tastes are shaped by their habitus, they also play an important role in shaping it, which also suggest that people are not passive victims of symbolic violence. This can be observed in the transformation television went (and still goes) through and the changing cultural tastes of audiences in regards to television content and television viewing.

2.4.6. Quality Television

Compared to cinema, television has long been neglected as a subject of scholarly attention due to its consideration as a “lesser” medium because of its appeal to find the least common denominator among large and diverse groups of people in order to grab their attention (Ateşalp, 2016, p. 14). Television’s reputation of being a less artistic and vulgar medium of mass culture has only contributed to this stigma (Petro, 1986, p. 5). In fact, attributes such as “passivity, consumption, and distraction” (Petro, 1986, p. 7), which are conventionally associated with femininity, are also assigned to television, which makes television “a feminized medium,” so to speak. On the other hand, within this dichotomous understanding, cinema, being regarded as a more “serious and artistic medium,” becomes the

masculine one. However, neither one of these mediums is inherently masculine or feminine but the values attributed to them lead to the misleading conclusion that they are. Starting from the late 1970s, the idea of holding one medium superior to another and attributing more quality to it, with certain gendered implications, began to be challenged, however, and today many critical scholars tend to refrain from making such judgements since it would accompany the risk of reproducing cultural hierarchies especially about gender (Akkaya, 2018, p. 137; Ateşalp, 2016, p. 15).

Actually, in the US, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of a more artistic and complex programming in televisual content with the productions of MTM Enterprises (McCabe & Akass, 2007a, p. 8). The decade was the beginning or the first phase of “quality television,” a category or “super-genre, a formula unto itself” (Thompson, 2007, p. XVII), which spread rapidly during and after the 1990s. This was partly a result of technological improvements in programme production and television viewers’ home devices such as better-quality television displays. The new technologies allowed television producers to shoot images which resemble in quality to those of cinema (Nelson, 2007, p. 43). Taking advantage of this, quality television occupied a place within televisual programmes as a more serious type of content, targeting “high-income, educated, niche audiences” (Wayne, 2012, p. 76), having “high production values, naturalistic performance styles, (...) a sense of visual style created through careful, even innovative camerawork and editing,” and exploring “‘serious’ themes” (Cardwell, 2007, p. 26).

Admittedly, characteristics such as high production value, qualified performances, or new ways of shooting and producing a show can easily be mimicked by network television; thus, the way how quality television positions and distinguishes itself can best be described as “not ‘regular’ TV,” according to Thompson (2007, p. XVII). That is, it presents itself as what network television is not. Besides, quality television can be distinguished from regular

television not necessarily in terms of its aesthetic concerns but more in terms of the limitations (such as artistic, financial and/or ideological limitations) it operates within or the relative lack of them, which allows quality television to explore whatever it wants relatively more freely. Quality television is different in this particular sense because an aesthetically similar style or quality can be achieved with the right production team and equipment, but certain themes, events or scenes may be deemed too risky by network television.

Another important issue regarding quality television is the distinction between “good” and “quality” television, as its very name suggests. Cardwell (2007) argues that our understanding of high quality depends on the aesthetic features it possesses and is not based on our personal connection with or judgement of it (pp. 20, 21) and, admittedly, calling something “quality” does not necessarily mean that we like or endorse it. While quality television can be “morally or educationally edifying,” it can also be very “dull, conventional or pretentious” (Cardwell, 2007, p. 21). Whether if a television program is good or not depends more on how we experience it. In Sarah Cardwell's (2007) own words: “Good television is rich, riveting, moving, provocative and frequently contemporary (in some sense); it is relevant to and valued by us” (p. 21). That is, having certain characteristics or not does not necessarily make quality television good and network television bad.

As Thompson (2007, p. XIX) notes in his example about *The West Wing* (1999 – 2007), restrictions imposed by a network against the use of forbidden language or themes may lead a show to explore other ways to tell a story that might actually enrich it. Also, as Thompson (2007, pp. XVII, XVIII) notes, after the 1980s more and more shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997 – 2003) or *X-Files* (1993 – 2018) (which were network programmes) started to embody characteristics of quality television to a point where regular television programmes as the “other” of quality apparently started to disappear. Of course, generally, quality television shows embody the attributes of “quality television” more often

than network television, and regular TV programmes are still present in network television. However, the boundaries between them are highly blurred; each borrows from the other, and both can produce “good” and “bad” programmes. One quality they do not share is the extent of (artistic, financial and/or ideological) limitations imposed upon them, as mentioned above.

Quality television is, thus, a category where one has more freedom (or is less restricted than network programmes) to explore different artistic styles, themes and narratives and use elements which can be deemed not suitable for network television. It is about “doing things differently, setting itself against what is prohibited on network television,” as McCabe and Akass (2007b, p. 66) put it. In fact, a part of the pleasure derived from quality television comes from seeing that restrictions and prohibitions of network television are defied (McCabe & Akass, 2007b, p. 66). All of this brings quality television closer to cinema and also grants television those values that are conventionally associated with cinema (Fuller, 2013, p. 6), thereby legitimizing television as an artistically valued medium while reproducing the privileged status of other established artistic forms like cinema (Wayne, 2012, p. 76).

As Newman and Levine argue in their book *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (2011), doing so creates two categories within television rather than allowing it to grow and improve: quality television is characterized by its active and assumedly “masculine” viewing practices that demand attention and promise a deeper satisfaction with high production values and deep narratives, on one hand, and regular or network television with its passive and so-called “feminine” viewing practices that do not necessarily require attentive viewing and offer superficial entertainment, on the other (Wayne, 2012, p. 76). Indeed, prime time series of quality television acquire their legitimate status by self-positioning themselves in opposition to soap operas while masculinizing, managing, or containing feminized elements and narrative structures of soap operas or sometimes completely rejecting them (Wayne, 2012, p. 77). The perpetuation of “hierarchies of taste,

value, and cultural and social worth,” especially within a binary gender opposition whereby the “masculine” mode is attached to higher value, only reproduces the gender ideology, though (Newman & Levine quoted in Wayne, 2012, p. 78).

The mainstreaming of quality television standards started with HBO and then were adopted by other cable channels such as FX, TNT and AMC (Lotz, 2014, p. 31). Two of the most prominent examples which embody these “masculine” codes of production and viewing were HBO’s crime drama about a mafia boss, *The Sopranos* (1999 – 2007), and AMC’s crime drama about a chemistry teacher who is also a drug maker, *Breaking Bad* (2008 - 2013). *The Sopranos* and *Breaking Bad*, with their high production values, artistic freedom, complex characters and intricate narrative and storytelling, distinguished themselves from conventional standards of network television channels (Fuller, 2013, pp. 10, 33). In the case of *Breaking Bad*, the theories about how Walter White’s specific preferences (such as sandwiches with no crust) can be an early sign of his sociopathy, which cannot be noticed on the first viewing, is a good example of the narrative complexity these shows have, as Fuller (2013, p. 33) notes.

These shows, along with others, have told stories which challenged previous hegemonic masculinities; a term which can be defined as the “currently most acclaimed way of being a man” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 332) even though only a minority of men might actually exercise it; it is the “answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy” (Connell, 2005, p. 77) whereby the ideal masculinity is adapted according to the changing social conditions to maintain the patriarchal power relations. The shows explored contemporary masculinities through male characters (usually straight and white) who try to navigate in their professional and domestic lives (Lotz, 2014, pp. 16, 58, 59). Lotz (2014) calls them “male-centred serials” and although HBO and other similar cable channels have never set out to air programmes which target one specific gender, many of their programmes are male-centred (p. 62). *The Sopranos* played an exceptionally important role in developing

the blueprint of these shows with its anti-hero protagonist which did not necessarily encourage the audience to identify with the character but provided its niche audience with certain ethical dilemmas which led them to question their own moral values (Lotz, 2014, pp. 63, 80). These shows not only diverged from network shows with their high quality, cinematic production values and complex characters and stories that demand attentive viewing (which are associated with masculinity, as mentioned above) but they also further reinforced their masculine characteristics with their male-centric narratives.

Although quality television is usually associated with a sort of masculine spectatorship and pleasure, unlike in soap operas, some quality series (not necessarily of cable channels) are also known to defy established gender norms by appropriating discourses of feminist and queer movements (Miller, 2017). For example, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend* (2015 – 2019) as a network program that embodies many quality television characteristics, such as genre hybridity, complex characters and a “trainwreck” (Tully, 2020, p. 2) anti-heroine as its main character, included feminist critiques of the patriarchal and heteronormative society throughout its four seasons (Brannman, 2020). One of the most prominent ones was the series’ ending which emphasized, to borrow Modleski’s (2008) words, “the need of women to find meaning and pleasure in activities which are not wholly male-centred such as work or artistic creation” (p. 106).

One of the reasons for the appropriation of feminist discourses and also the proliferation of quality television standards, in general, can be linked to changing audience profiles and preferences. When HBO provided niche programmes for their targeted college educated (Nelson, 2007, p. 46), upscale audiences who looked for a “narratively challenging” and “cinematic” television (Fuller, 2013, p. 1), they also set the standards for the audiences’ future expectations and shaped their tastes. Contrary to network television, which relied on

mass audiences, cable channels relied on niche groups of subscribers who tuned in for edgier programming that they feel connected to (Lotz, 2014, p. 61).

This is a clear example of Bourdieu's ideas on cultural taste. Educated, niche audiences whose habitus and tastes are shaped by their environments, accumulated symbolically more powerful capitals and experiences, contribute to shaping the world around them, which then shapes their habitus and tastes in return, creating a kind of perpetual cycle.

As mentioned earlier, the transformation and stratification of television into quality and network has also gendered implications whereby quality television is legitimized for its "masculine" attributes and rejection of elements of "feminine" network programmes (Wayne, 2012, pp. 76, 77). Similarly, the stratification of audiences through cultural taste into categories of "niche" and "mass" not only acts as a "[marker] of social class" (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 2) but it also is a gendered classification whereby television viewing becomes an attentive activity for niche audiences of quality television and a passive activity, a distraction, for mass audiences of network television.

This change in standards and audience preferences has affected how established network channels produce their programmes and it has also affected how newcomers such as Netflix produce their shows. Netflix positioned its own productions as quality television, just like cable TV; however, Netflix's significance lied more in the kind of service it provided (Lotz, 2018, p. 120).

If cable TV has been responsible for the change in what people watch, Netflix is responsible for the change in the way they watch them (Lotz, 2018, p. 120). Netflix enabled its subscribers to watch television whenever, wherever, and as much as they wanted (Lotz, 2018, pp. 120, 122). Its convenience and affordability attracted audiences to the platform, especially younger audiences who are more used to streaming videos from websites such as

YouTube (Lotz, 2018, p. 137), and the ability to binge-watch seasons on the platform made Netflix productions a good fit for the use of serialized storytelling rather than network television's traditional episodic style (Matrix, 2014, p. 131).

Since the majority of Netflix's subscribers consist of Gen-Y (Millennials) and Gen-Z, Netflix needs to take the preferences of those generations into account. For example, Netflix sacrificed 2.000 titles for the fourth season of *Arrested Development* (2003 - 2019) (a show with a Gen-Y majority fanbase) to appeal to its Gen-Y subscribers, who made up 67% of Netflix's subscriber base at the time (Matrix, 2014, p. 131). This need for appealing to young people's tastes also affects the content Netflix produces.

In the US, compared to older generations, Gen-Y and Gen-Z are the most educated generations and they share similar values when it comes to gender equality, LGBTQ rights and racial equality (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). They are more accepting of different identities and supporting of equality and, demographically, they are the two most diverse generations (Parker & Igielnik, 2020). Even solely from a marketing standpoint, this is something streaming services such as Netflix need to keep in mind when they are producing their content. Thus, their productions appropriate feminist (Brown, 2020; Özkan & Hardt, 2020; Tully, 2020) and queer (Cook, 2018; Wold, 2017) themes and discourses to appeal to their subscribers. Still, young generations are not the only determining factor of changing representations, which are interconnected with other factors. Public debates around equality and permissiveness and high export rates of US television programmes in the international market, especially after the emergence of streaming services, have opened up new possibilities for representations of divergent marginalised groups (Jenner, 2018, pp. 173-175). These marginalised groups are mostly described in terms of American or Western standards, however (Jenner, 2018, p. 177). That is, minority groups in these shows are usually minorities in the US and or are represented within a Western context.. For example, while black people

or Muslims may be a minority in the in the US, they are not a minority in African or Middle-Eastern countries. Yet, their representation as a minority group is a widespread theme in many Netflix productions.

Before Netflix, cable channels had already been trying to include feminist themes and racially diverse casts and characters with different sexual orientations (Jenner, 2018, p. 173). What Netflix did and still does is building on what quality television started in the late 1990s and 2000s (Jenner, 2018 , p. 173). More and more, they include characters who are excluded by normative cisgender, heterosexual, white, male, able bodied, middle class and middle aged standards (Jenner, 2018, p. 174). Diverse ensembles as such increase the visibility of minority groups, positively affirm and solidify their existence and contribute to increasingly positive attitudes towards members of those groups, as will be discussed below.

2.5. Representation on Television

As previously mentioned, this study examines how transsexual women are represented on digital television through the analysis of *Pose*, looking at of portrayals of its main characters, who are black transsexual women. This locates the study at the intersection of media studies, transgender studies, women's studies and racial studies. Because the leading characters in the show relate to being queer, being women and being people of colour, it is important to present an overview about how each of these socially disadvantaged groups are represented on television and to ask whether these representations defy or reproduce stereotypical conventions about queer people or women. So, the following chapters will review studies in the extant literature about how women, women of colour and transgender women are represented on television.

In the West, media studies looking at the representations of women as a general category, for the most part, focus more on white women and their narratives. Indeed, the

prominence of white women's representation in media can be observed in Lauzen's (2019) report. In the USA, from 2010 to 2019, the presence of black women on television was less than one third of white women and the presence of women of colour from other racial identities than black have been less than one third of black women (Lauzen, 2019, p. 7). That is why the representation of women and of women of colour will be discussed under separate headings in the following pages.

A similar pattern can be found in televised representations of transgender women, too. Both white transgender women and transgender women of colour are usually presented in a likewise manner on television as "sexual deviants," and their narratives mainly focus on their sexual identity rather than racial identity. For example, the narratives of Sophia Burset (*Orange is the New Black*), Blanca Evangelista (*Pose*), or Elektra Wintour (*Pose*) mainly focus on their trans identity although they are also black characters.

In Netflix's original series about a group of inmate women, *Orange is the New Black* (2013 – 2019), Sophia's trans identity is one of the key themes of her story and the character is successful in bringing trans issues unto the television screen and giving trans people a voice. However, that voice does not find an echo when it comes to reflecting the "realities of racist and transphobic oppression," Caputi (2015, p. 1140) argues. While elaborating on Sophia's mono-dimensionality as a character, Özkan and Hardt (2020) also note that "she is portrayed in a limited manner with her character revolving around her status as transgender" (p. 171). Admittedly, there were scenes in *Orange is the New Black* in which the racial identity of the characters came to the forefront. For example, in the events and aftermath of Poussey Washington's murder (despite being a lesbian, the character is a cisgender woman who was suffocated by one of the officers when he pressed his knee on her too hard for a long period of time), her racial identity plays a major role and the storyline is definitely a nod to the unjust murders of black people in the hands of the law enforcement in the USA ("George

Floyd: Timeline of black deaths caused by police," 2020; Sinyangwe & McKesson, 2020). It has been evident in many occasions that the police in the USA discriminate against black people even to the extreme point of killing them. It is evident in these examples that these TV shows, for the most part, tend to fail to present the intersectional nature of their characters.

The same can be observed in *Pose*: Elektra loses her “sugar daddy” (a rich man who financially supports a younger person in exchange of romantic company and/or sexual relationship) because she decides to have a sex reassignment operation and, thus, loses all her income; Angel loses her modelling job because of her transsexual identity; Blanca’s nail salon gets burned down by the owner who wants to kick her out because she is transsexual, and Candy gets murdered possibly by one of her “customers” (a nod to the murder of Venus Xtravaganza, who was one of the people interviewed in *Paris is Burning*), most likely due to her transsexual identity. Also, in the fourth episode of the second season, after getting the news about Candy’s murder, Elektra reacts with the words “NYPD does not care about a murdered transsexual” (Murphy, 2019) and, whether unintentionally or not, she dismisses Candy’s blackness. Still, at times the characters do give messages over their racial identity, such as when Blanca says “[People at the New York City Commission of Human Rights] are in charge of making sure people like you do not discriminate against people of colour when renting to us” to Frederica when the latter tries to evict Blanca from her nail salon in the second episode of the second season or when Candy says to Blanca and Elektra “Call the popos and you are definitely going to jail because there ain’t no way that your broke asses beating the best lawyers that white money can buy” after a man dies at Elektra’s dungeon in the third episode of the second season. However, their racial identity is not as prominent in their stories as their transsexual identity and the discriminations they face are usually for their trans rather than their racial identity. To illustrate with a further example, Frederica rents her shop to Blanca knowing that she is black and Dominican; she only tries to evict Blanca after

she finds out that she is transsexual. In addition, in *Pose*, four out of the five leading trans characters are in some way involved in sex work, which is one of the most common and stereotypical ways trans women are represented. So, while their trans identity is a very prominent element in their story, their racial identity is not as prominent at first glance.

Although the representation of trans gender women of colour will not be handled under a separate heading in the following section, it is hoped that discussing how women as a general category and women of colour as an intersectional category are represented on television will add valuable insights to the discussion and help us better understand how these transsexual women of colour in *Pose* are represented and how the audiences perceive these characters and what meanings they derive from these representations.

2.5.1. Representation of Women

This section mainly deals with representations of women in the US television. However, before that, it is important to briefly talk about how women are represented in Turkish television since they might have an influence on the receptions of the participants in this study.

In the early stereotypical representations of Yeşilçam movies, heroines were depicted as undebauched and pure because becoming a spinster was every young woman's nightmare (Kaymal, 2020, p. 296). They remained obedient either to their husbands or fathers and if they were bachelorettes, didn't have a father and/or had to work, they would dream of a man who would come and save them (Kaymal, 2020, p. 296). For married women, their purpose in life was to be a good partner, a good mother and a good house-wife (Kaymal, 2020, p. 296). On the other hand, villainesses were usually depicted as assertive, confident, self-assured in their sexual desires and cunning and they would smoke, drink alcohol and laugh loudly (Kaymal, 2020, p. 290). More recent mainstream representations of women also remain patriarchal and

do not necessarily break the mould. While some representations challenge these patriarchal representations, especially with more women starting to take administrative positions, , representations in mainstream cinema only change form and women are usually presented as weak characters who are dependent on their husbands/male partners and are mostly confined to domestic roles (Aslan, 2019, p. 200). Television series represent women in a similar light as well. Numerous studies show that women on television are usually depicted in domestic and maternal roles and have slim and conventionally beautiful physical attributes (Aytekin, 2018; İnceoğlu et al., 2008; Varlı Gürer & Gürer, 2020).

Male violence towards women is a very serious and prominent issue in Turkey. In 2020 alone, 300 women were murdered and 171 women were found dead of suspicious causes (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, 2021). Most of these murders were committed by the victim's spouse, boyfriend, ex-partner or other close relatives (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, 2021). Also, it is important to highlight that these statistics only reflect the number of murders and do not include the reported cases of violence in which the victims survived. In addition, there are also cases of male violence that were not reported to the authorities. In a social environment like this, women's representations on any media outlet (especially on television and in its fictional programs) should be mindful about how they portray women since they might be triggering and contribute to the normalization of these violent behaviours. However, the representation of women on television, or more specifically in fictional television series, is very problematic in many cases.

In Turkish television, roughly 50-70 series are broadcast in every broadcasting season (Çağlar, 2020, p. 135). To demonstrate how women are represented in these series, Taşcıer's (2019, p. 3) report observes eight Turkish television series broadcast on national channels and by using the content analysis method, analyses one episode from each series and finds that, in these particular episodes, 14 scenes depicted violence and use of force against women and 67

scenes included a depiction of a woman crying or begging and pleading. The number of academic studies regarding the representation of women and violent images in Turkish television series is not particularly vast; however, many do point out the prevalence of violence towards women on these programs and their adverse effects such as reproducing established, harmful gender norms (Aytekin, 2018, p. 462) (like male aggression and female submission), contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequality (İnceoğlu et al., 2008, p. 40) and legitimization of violence against women (Namlı, 2019, pp. 61, 62). Overall, representations of women in Turkey are problematic in this respect.

In the US, from the 1950s to the 1980s, men occupied a larger space on television and only 25 to 30 per cent of TV characters were played by women (Gauntlett, 2008, p. 47). In the 1980s, more women were portrayed in having jobs outside of the domestic sphere than in the 1960s and 1970s (Elasmar et al., 1999, p. 23). However, women still were under-represented and were of lower status compared to men (Elasmar et al., 1999, p. 23). Stereotypically, women's representations consisted and, to a certain degree still consists of, "virginal love interest, doting mother, spinster, coquettish minx or plain old whore" (Young, 2017, p. 319). While the sexualized images of women contributed to their objectification, their domestic roles perpetuated their oppression by presenting the ideal image of women as domestic and submissive "good mothers" who are "white, heterosexual, self-sacrificing, middle-class, married (and) fertile" (Feasey, 2020, p. 1). These domestic roles have been a prevailing one among old and new portrayals of women on television (Feasey, 2020, p. 3). However, the images of the ideal, good mother have been gradually challenged by later representations of "good enough" (Feasey, 2020, p. 3) mothers who can be best described as "chaotic depictions of working mothers" (Feasey, 2020, p. 3).

From the 1990s onward strong "female protagonists who broke the mould" (Hohenstein & Thalmann, 2019, p. 117) started to take a centre stage in women's

representation on television with characters such as Buffy Summers (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*), Xena (*Xena: Warrior Princess*), Kara “Starbuck” Thrace (*Battlestar Galactica*), Dana Scully (*The X-Files*), Veronica Mars (*Veronica Mars*) and Katara (*Avatar: The Last Air Bender*), who are “complex, challenging, multifaceted and powerful” characters (Young, 2017, p. 319). Over time, with the popularization of quality television standards, these characters became more and more “morally ambivalent” (Hohenstein & Thalmann, 2019, p. 117) because as Margret Tally points out in her book *The Rise of the Anti-Heroine in TV’s Third Golden Age* (2016), television, now, is able to present “flawed female characters that exhibit a degree of complexity” (Tally cited in Young, 2017, p. 319). In the end, this gave way to the emergence of female anti-heroines, which exist simultaneously with other types of strong female heroines. All of these advancements resulted in the “deeply flawed, yet sympathetic female characters” (Young, 2017, p. 319), such as Eleanor Shellstrop (*The Good Place*), Rebecca Bunch (*Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*), Annalise Keating (*How to Get Away with Murder*), Helena (*Orphan Black*), Fiona Goode (*American Horror Story*) and Jessica Jones (*Jessica Jones*). Still, the limits of an anti-heroine are a bit ambiguous. While Eleanor and Rebecca, for example, are characters the audiences can still identify with to a certain extent, Fiona’s position throughout the season fluctuates (she is a character the audiences can sometimes empathize, but also, some of her actions are quite villainous) and remains open for interpretation. The characters can be uncomfortable for the audiences to root for due to their flawed traits or because they are plainly murderous. However, according to Margaret Tally, the most prominent feature of anti-heroine characters is their complete awareness of “their (self) destructive behaviour, often without guilt or remorse” (Young, 2017, p. 320). For example, Eleanor Shellstrop is quite mean to people around her and is very selfish; Rebecca Bunch, due to her borderline personality disorder, feels no self-worth and is a manipulative

stalker (although, both Eleanor and Rebecca change in different ways throughout their series), and Fiona Goode is a narcissistic, power-hungry murderess.

As a commentary on the representation of the character Jessica Jones, while Özkan and Hardt (2020) recognize that seeing “flawed and at the same time strong representations of women doing all the things men can” is refreshing (p. 174), on the other hand, they also criticise this representation in *Jessica Jones* (2015 – 2019) by arguing that the leading character is reproducing messages of “strap-on shows that validate and idealize socially recognized characteristics of masculinity as strength” but not challenge the conception that sees femininity as a weakness (p. 174). As a counter argument to Stephanie Green’s claim in her article *Fantasy, gender and power in Jessica Jones* (2019) where states that the character resists a “patriarchal representation” (Green cited in Özkan & Hardt, 2020, p. 174) by not wearing a generically feminine super-hero costume, they also argue that the character is conventionally feminine and has a pleasing look with her “bright red lipstick, [...] thin and tall physique, long hair and porcelain white skin” (p. 174). Although they are correct in pointing out that the series would still work with pretty much the same dialogues and storyline if it were a “story of a male detective” (Özkan & Hardt, 2020, p. 174), this perspective, while presenting a valid critique, puts women in a situation where they are damned if they do and damned if they do not; that is, they are both criticised for being feminine and for being masculine. A physically and emotionally strong woman with a feminine physique and masculine attitude who beats up men can as likely be read as a feminist message which empowers audiences and presents an alternative representation of female identity. From a different perspective, it could also be read as an explicit manifestation of female anger, similar to but also a mirror image of what Tania Modleski (2008) notes. Instead of punishing men covertly through “self-mutilation” (Modleski, 2008, p. 15), these women are directly and physically punishing men. Furthermore, it could also be argued that Jessica Jones’ masculine

traits (such as her tough, rude and dismissive attitude and punching her way through her problems) are not a part of her strengths but her weaknesses and what makes her unlikable or flawed. As long as these “strap-on” representations are not the only or prominently dominant representations and embodying conventionally valued masculine characteristics is not the only way for women on television to be strong, these multi-dimensional characters can add variety to televised representations of women and challenge the perceptions about what is considered acceptable for women on the screen.

2.5.2. Representation of Black Women

Television’s ability to influence people’s perceptions can become problematic and even harmful if the representations perpetuate stereotypes and/or present stereotypical images about certain groups of people. LGBTQ community and people of colour have all experienced and are still experiencing the effects of these stereotypical representations in their daily lives. While women as a general category have struggled for more and progressive representations, black women in the US, belonging to two different but interconnected oppressed groups, have had to deal with both sexual objectification of their bodies and discrimination based on their racial identity. Furthermore, this objectification and discrimination have been perpetuated by their stereotypical representations on the screen.

The stereotyped images of black people in the US are rooted in slavery and white supremacy and they are created to maintain black people’s oppression while justifying the actions of white people; they serve as “controlling images” (Collins, 2000, p. 72). These stereotypical images are, namely, the mammy, the matriarch, the welfare mother, the jezebel, the sapphire and the tragic mulatto (Collins, 2000; Keenan, 1975; Wooten, 2019). Popular cultural products such as television shows, films, songs, music videos or internet memes are potential means for these images to circulate (Collins, 2000, p. 85).

The first of these controlling images, the mammy, represents the ideal black mother in the eyes of white people and the desired relationship between the two (Collins, 2000, p. 72). Being overweight and sexually unattractive (Salisu & Dacus, 2021, p. 4), mammies are “faithful, obedient domestic servant(s)” who accept their subordinate status, love and nurture the white children of the family with great compassion and serves the family and the children better than her own (Collins, 2000, pp. 72, 73). Being loved by the white family, mammy stereotype normalizes the economic exploitation of black women and perpetuates racial and gender hierarchies (Collins, 2000, p. 73). Also, people’s expectation from black women to act like mammies negatively affects them in their workplace (Collins, 2000, p. 73) as well as in their social lives.

If the mammy is the perfect black mother in the eyes of white people, the matriarch is the other side of the coin; she “symbolizes the ‘bad’ black mother” (Collins, 2000, p. 75). Matriarchs are “aggressive” and “unfeminine” working mothers (Collins, 2000, p. 75). Because they work, they are not able to spend much time at home and cannot take care of their children (Collins, 2000, p. 75). As a result, they become one of the agents responsible of their children’s failure in school and they are condemned for emasculating their male partners with their unfeminine ways (Collins, 2000, p. 75). This stereotype takes the blame away from the structural injustices that confines black people to a disadvantaged position and blames black children’s delay in their academic achievements on the mother’s negligence (Collins, 2000, p. 76). Besides, matriarch stereotype serves as a warning for all women of “what can go wrong if white patriarchal power is challenged” (Collins, 2000, p. 77).

The welfare mother is an extension of the “breeder woman” stereotype, another derogatory image which, again, is rooted in times of slavery when black women’s fertility was seen equal to animals and slave owners wanted them to “breed” as much as possible for more labour force (Collins, 2000, p. 78). Along with the increasing political rights of black women

(such as voting, children welfare and unemployment compensations) and growing number of unemployed black citizens within inner cities after the World War II and until the mid-1990s, the breeder woman image contributed to the image of welfare mother, who is a single, working class mother who reaps and exploits the benefits of welfare programmes (Collins, 2000, pp. 78, 79). Similar to matriarchs, welfare mothers are seen as bad mothers, as well. However, while it is the absence of matriarchs that creates problems for their children, for welfare mothers, it is their presence (Collins, 2000, p. 79). Because, as a lazy mother who lives off decent, white, tax paying citizens' money, she passes on "her bad values to her offspring" (Collins, 2000, p. 79). In the 1980s under the administration of Ronald Reagan, this image was radicalized and became emblematic of "welfare queens" who are "highly materialistic, domineering, and manless working-class black woman" (Collins, 2000, p. 80). Both images of welfare mothers and welfare queens signify an economic burden on the state and with their low morals, they are thought to raise children who do not contribute to society.

The Jezebel stereotype refers to black women characters who are promiscuous, slutty and overall hyper-sexual man-eaters (Collins, 2000, p. 81; Versluys, 2014, p. 11). This image, like the previous ones, has its roots in times of slavery when women worked half naked in cotton fields "with their skirts hiked up" (Versluys, 2014, p. 11). This stereotype, along with sexually objectifying black women, justifies white men's sexual assault towards black women, taking the blame off white men and putting it on black women while framing the situation as black women seducing white men (Collins, 2000, p. 81; Versluys, 2014, p. 11). This image also contrasts the ideal image of white woman as a virtuous figure (Versluys, 2014, p. 11) and creates a dichotomy between white and black women. Contemporary reproductions of this stereotype can especially be found in the hip-hop and rap culture where black women are frequently presented as "hoochies," "bitches" and "hoes" in songs and music videos (Versluys, 2014, p. 12). This stereotype also leaves the promiscuous images and lyrics

of contemporary female rappers such as Nicki Minaj, Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion open for questioning. For example, is Cardi B's hit song *WAP* (2020), also featuring Megan Thee Stallion, sex positive because it highlights and prioritizes black women's sexuality and their sexual pleasure (Kayembe, 2020) or is it stereotypical and harmful because it reproduces the hyper-sexual jezebel stereotype and further objectifies black women (TheoBlack, 2020)?

The sapphire is the equivalent of the contemporary image of angry black woman (Versluys, 2014, p. 12). The sapphire takes its name from the character "Sapphire Stevens" from the TV show *Amos 'n' Andy* (1951-1953) because the name stuck with the stereotype due to the popularity of the show (Versluys, 2014, p. 13; Wooten, 2019, p. 5). Sapphires are sassy, loud, rude, assertive and aggressive (Henderson, 2019, p. 66; Versluys, 2014, p. 12; Wooten, 2019, p. 5). The term "hands-on-hips" (Versluys, 2014, p. 13) is thought to express the characteristics of this caricature figure as well as the prominence and frequent use of the stereotype and its embeddedness in the minds of the audiences. Similar to calling all women "too emotional," stereotyping black women as loud and angry implies that they may react aggressively to situations which may be relatively minor and because they are always loud, their anger can be brushed off as an overreaction. This, as a result, justifies the oppressive and silencing actions of white people when black women try to make their voices heard. Also, it pushes black women to be more self-aware of their actions. They perform symbolic violence over themselves in order not to appear as the angry black woman (Wooten, 2019, p. 8).

The tragic mulatto is a stereotype based on one's physical appearance (Wooten, 2019, p. 5). As Donald Bogle explains in his book *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (1973), tragic mulattoes are black women who are light skinned enough to pass as white (Keenan, 1975, p. 377). Being torn by their "divided racial inheritance," their attempts at passing end up in "humiliation and despair" (Keenan, 1975, p. 377), though. This is a stereotypical image which, again, reaffirms white

supremacy and warns anyone who attempts to break it of the devastating faith that awaits them.

Lastly, the stereotype of the strong black woman has been created by black women themselves as a way to combat these negative stereotypical images (Versluys, 2014, p. 13). They created this image as something they can look up to, as a role model (Versluys, 2014, p. 13). To do that they took the positive traits of some of the negative images (such as selflessness, unlimited support, financial and physical independence and extreme dedication) and put them together (Versluys, 2014, p. 13). However, this image ties strength to masculinity in the sense that it encourages them to suppress their emotions (Versluys, 2014, p. 14). In this sense, it can be thought as a good example of strap-on representations Özkan and Hardt (2020) note in their study. Though, as mentioned earlier, these strap-on representations, which may also present the characters as being flawed and from a critical perspective, can add variety to the representations of black women as long as they are not the conventional standard when it comes to representing strong black women.

2.5.3. Representation of LGBTQ Members

Today, in the US, LGBTQ visibility and representation on television is much better than its earlier days. Since the 1960s, the number of LGBTQ characters increased; however, until the 2000s, they were still considerably low. According to an online database last updated on September 10, 2016 by David A. Wyatt (n.d.), one character from 1961 to 1970, 59 characters from 1971 to 1980, 89 characters from 1981 to 1990 and 338 characters from 1991 to 2000 were identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender on television. Only between 2001 and 2016, the number of LGBT characters reached a three-digit number and went up to 1048 (Wyatt, n.d.).

As can be seen, the televised representations of LGBTQ characters in the US have been on the rise and is at an all-time high. According to the annual *Where We Are on TV* report of Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD), in the USA, 75 (8.8%) of the 857 regular characters in the 2018-2019 season and 90 (10.2%) of the 879 regular characters in broadcast networks in the 2019-2020 season were identified as a member of the LGBTQ community, and the number of LGBTQ members on scripted primetime programmes of cable and streaming networks were respectively 120 and 75 in the 2018-2019 season and 215 and 153 in the 2019-2020 season (GLAAD, 2018b, 2019d). This increase is also assumed to have a positive effect on people's attitudes towards LGBTQ members (GLAAD, 2019c).

As already quoted from Gerbner and Gross (1976), "Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation" (p.182). In addition to affirming the social existence of otherwise neglected and marginalized groups, representation offers opportunities of exposure and contact. In their studies, Schiappa et al. (2006) combined Allport's (1954) "contact theory" with Horton and Wohl's (1956) "parasocial interaction theory" and hypothesized that exposure to positive images of marginalized or minority groups "that produce parasocial interaction" will lead to a decrease in "prejudicial attitudes" (p. 22) towards them. By reviewing various studies on the topic, they reached the conclusion that exposure to positive representations of sexual minorities led to a decrease in prejudices towards them (Schiappa et al., 2005, 2006). Also, there are a number of studies which suggest that exposure to minority groups through media results in more positive attitudes and higher levels of tolerance towards them (Garretson, 2015a, 2015b; GLAAD, 2019c; Levina et al., 2000; Tucker & Potocky-Tripodi, 2006). However, one of the most important points is, as Gerbner and Gross point out (1976) and Schiappa et al. (2006, p. 24) agree, that television's influence will be most effective on people's attitudes when they do not have the opportunity to get exposed to people from those groups in real life, do not have first-hand experience with

them and when their attitudes are not “strongly anchored in other established beliefs and ideologies” (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 191).

As mentioned in an earlier discussion, John Fiske (1989) argues that “popular culture is a site of struggle” (p. 20) and people make their own meaning out of it with the resources they have at hand, which are usually supplied by the dominant social structures (p.15). To give an example, Fiske (1989) cites the case of urban Aborigines who are marginalised by the white racist ideology. The Aborigine people identify themselves with the American black characters (also marginalised by the white racist ideology) on television, thereby creating an allegiance that enables them to empathize with the other group and “make their sense out of their experience of being non-white in a white society” (Fiske, 1989, p. 25). The same can be said for LGBTQ members, as well. Members of the LGBTQ community can ally themselves with other queer characters on television, such as trans people, and vice versa. That is because they share similar experiences of being discriminated due to their sexual/romantic orientation and sexual identity in a cis-normative, heteronormative and patriarchal society. Because LGBTQ members know that the representations they see of themselves on television do not necessarily reflect who they are, they can be more critical when it comes to reading the representations of other disadvantaged people. This enables members of the LGBTQ community to be akin to oppositional readings of negatively stereotypical representations.

For example, while talking about *Dressed to Kill* (1980) (a horror/thriller about a male serial killer in women’s clothing [Doctor Robert Elliott] going after the one eye-witness, a prostitute [Liz Blake], of his latest murder of a housewife while she was leaving the hotel where she had a one-night-stand with a stranger she met), Bianca Leigh (a trans actress) says: “When you are this queer kid in the suburbs and you are dying for glamour and you are watching *Dressed to Kill*, you do not see the misogyny. You just see beauty in motion and suspense” (Feder, 2020).

However, again, as Gerbner and Gross point out (1976), when viewers lack sufficient knowledge or first-hand experience about groups of people or do not have some established beliefs or ideologies about them, television's effect becomes more prominent, which means that they are more likely to accept television's representations (whether negative or positive) as true and build their understanding on them. For example, heterosexual men do not have a similar allegiance with LGBTQ members like the LGBTQ members have with each other. If they do not have first-hand meaningful contact with LGBTQ members (such as talking and trying to get to know them) or do not have some established positive beliefs about them, they are more likely to accept television's representations as being true. However, it is important to note that, just like LGBTQ people who are critical of negative images of themselves on television due to their established beliefs, if someone has any established negative beliefs about a certain group of people, negative images on television would only reinforce them.

The same can also be suggested for women to a certain extent. Because they are also oppressed by the patriarchal system, similar to LGBTQ members, they are more likely to ally themselves with gay men. Actually, a number of studies show that, compared to heterosexual men, women have less prejudice towards gay men; however, their tolerance is limited to gay men and does not include lesbians (Kite & Whitley, 1996; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Levina et al., 2000; Riggle et al., 1996). In the documentary *Disclosure* (Feder, 2020), Laverne Cox (a trans actress) shares some of her experiences about transgender representations. She talks about the character of Geraldine in *The Flip Wilson Show* (1970 - 1974), who was played by Flip Wilson (a cisgender heterosexual actor) himself and was basically him in a wig and a dress, and discusses how her mother "loved Geraldine and would laugh at that character" (Feder, 2020). In this case, although belonging to a disadvantaged group, her mother's lack of knowledge and established negative beliefs about trans people made it easier for her to read the transgender images she saw on television within the dominant-hegemonic code.

Cox also talks about how these kinds of representations affected her as a trans woman:

I cannot even tell you how many times I have been in public space, particularly early in my transition, in New York City, where — when I would walk into a subway car, people would just burst into laughter. As if my existence on that subway car was just a joke. And I think people are — have been trained to have that reaction. (Feder, 2020)

Portraying trans women on television (which will be discussed in detail below) as humorous characters is one of the common stereotypical ways to represent them. This type of representation sometimes makes even trans women believe they are “pathetic, hyper feminine caricatures of cis-women or good for a laugh” (Clark, 2014) and gives viewers the message that trans women are something to be laughed at. According to a GLAAD (2019a) survey, only 18% of respondents reported to know a transgender person, which means, in the US, for the majority of people, television representations are the only way they get to see trans people. When the only contact people have with trans women are these images on television, it leads them to see trans women only from that particular frame.

To summarize, although viewers have the ability to derive their own meanings and develop their own cultural understandings from what they are given, television can also take the role of a guide and lead people to produce certain meanings without them realizing that their knowledge about certain issues is not sufficient or misguided, or it can reinforce their already established beliefs. That is why representations on television, especially positive representations, are very important. Not everyone has the opportunity to make a personal and meaningful contact with members of disadvantaged groups. Representations on television give people the opportunity to meet those from various marginalized social groups. When there is no representation on television or any available representations are simply

stereotypical or negative, they might further perpetuate the discrimination towards the members of these disadvantaged groups.

Besides, these characters in narratives can signify and (intentionally or unintentionally) represent the larger group(s) they belong to and give the readers/audiences an idea about what that larger group is like. This can become problematic when it comes to the representation of minority groups because even one characteristic of a negative representation can be generalized to the whole group that representation signifies. As Mercer (1990) points out, when a certain group has limited access to spaces where they can present themselves to the general public, their representation also carries “the burden of being representative” (p. 63). To reiterate that with an example, representations of gay men as flamboyant, hypersexual best friends or trans women as deceitful murderers can be generalized to the entirety of those groups by others. When social representations of these groups are so scarce, the very few representations that get a chance to reach a large number of people cannot afford not being representative of that group’s so-called essence and what they “stand for” (Mercer, 1990, p. 62). One solution to that, as Jen Richards (a trans actress) points out, is having more representations of marginalized groups (in Feder, 2020). In her own words, she notes: “There is a one-word solution to almost all the problems in trans media. We just need more. And that way, the occasional clumsy representation would not matter as much because it would not be all that there is” (in Feder, 2020).

It is evident that in order to prevent the symbolic annihilation of LGBTQ individuals, first, there needs to be more representation on media. Yet, the increasing the frequency of representations is not sufficient. As mentioned in the “Quality Television” section above, media representations of white heterosexual characters, whether male or female, are changing towards being more complex and flawed. However, in the US, the same cannot be said for LGBTQ characters. They do not have the luxury of being flawed because, due to their already

limited number of representations, their flaws have the risk of turning into real life stereotypes.

In terms of the amount of representation, the situation in Turkey is a bit different than the one in the US, though. LGBTQ representations in Turkish media have taken a turn for the worse and gone from being few and problematic to being almost none-existent. Until the early 2000s queer images on Turkish media were mostly problematic. To illustrate, in the 1981 film *Şöhretin Sonu* (The Consequence of Fame), a semi-biography about Bülent Ersoy's life, Bülent Ersoy goes through a gender identity crisis. After she overhears a kid asking to his mother whether Bülent Ersoy is a man or a woman, she goes to a therapist pleading for help and asking "Doctor, please pull me out of this depression. What am I? Am I a woman or am I a man?". The therapist, misgendering her and referring to her as a man, tells her that the cause of her depression might lie in her childhood or her fame. Other than reproducing the misplaced notion that transgenderism is a mental disorder, the film reflects the anxieties of Turkish public regarding the ambiguity her sexual identity and uses the shocking events in her life as a "shaming tool" for her "anti-normative gender identity and excessive behaviour in public" (Şeker, 2011, p. 96). As another, a more recent example of problematic queer representations in Turkish media, in the 26th episode of *Cennet Mahallesi* (2004 – 2007) (a situation comedy about two stereotypical lower class Romani families and various humorous situations they weekly find themselves in), Yunus (the single father of one of the families) gets shot and has to receive a blood transfusion. Because he has a rare blood type, they accept the blood of the first donor who is an effeminate gay character whom they met at the casino they work at. After learning that he received blood transfusion from a gay man, Yunus becomes a stereotypical effeminate gay character himself the next day. The episode explains his situation as a psychological and homophobic response to having received blood transfusion from a gay man and they cure it by giving him another blood transfusion from a

hypermasculine, macho mafia-boss. Not only this stereotypical representation links homosexuality to being effeminate, it also perpetuates the false conception that homosexuality is a disorder or an illness that one can catch and it can be cured.

Similar to the US, the effeminate homosexual stereotype is a persisting one in Turkish media and it is one of the most popular ones. It is still present in more recent productions, such as *Jet Sosyete* (2018 – 2020), which tells the story of a middle-class family who suddenly becomes rich and starts to live the luxurious, jet-set life. However, due to the government restrictions, the effeminacy of the characters in these shows are used only to imply the sexual/romantic orientation of the characters because they cannot disclose it (Gümüş, 2020, p. 2). Since the mid to late-2000s, the government's resistance to queer representations on media and general disapproval of LGBTQ members gradually intensified and became more glaring. Numerous parliament members (Engin, 2015, p. 847) and political actors ("Erdoğan: LGBT, yok öyle bir şey, bu ülke millidir, manevidir", 2021; "Turkey's Erdogan denounces LGBT youth as police arrest students", 2021) have exhibited their disapproval for LGBTQ members and denounced them in various occasions, arguing that such notions are against the "national and spiritual values" of the Turkish nation. Similar remarks have also been made by the Chairman of Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) where he noted that, as RTÜK, they "will not tolerate broadcasts that are contrary to the national and spiritual values" of the Turkish nation (Barkawi, 2020). Since RTÜK has the authority to regulate broadcasting policies, issue licences and enforce sanctions such as fines, temporary broadcast suspensions or shutting down channels, the programs which stray from the cis-heteronormative and conservative gender norms in any degree have been discouraged to do so (Gümüş, 2020, pp. 1, 2). However, while RTÜK takes extra precautions to protect the nation's so-called national and spiritual values in terms of queer representations, as Çağlar (2020, p. 139) notes, its restrictions are not as strict when it comes to male violence against

women and such depictions continue to be prominent in recent television series (Namlı, 2019; Taşcier, 2019).

2.5.4. Representation of Transgender Women

In the US, transsexual women, and transgender people as a general category, have increasingly gained visibility and representation on television over the years. Their early representations, although quite scarce, were very stereotypical and harmful and those stereotypical images can still be found in more recent representations. In addition, representations of other trans feminine images also affect the images of transsexual women even if represented characters do not identify as transsexual or transgender, such as in the case of Buffalo Bill from the movie *Silence of the Lambs* (1991). So, as regards to the representation of transsexual women, all forms of trans feminine stereotypes should be taken into consideration.

Stereotypical images of transgender women revolve around a few major themes: casting cisgender actors for trans roles and presenting them as deceitful and violent villains, pathetic figures, victims, objects of ridicule and as sex workers. Stereotypical representations of transgender people look at them from a “cisgender gaze” and present them as “curiosities” (Sandercock, 2015, p. 441), othering them in the process. From the view of the cisgender gaze, transgender women are “really and truly a man” (Searano, 2004, p. 43) and when filmmakers cast a cisgender actor that fits the character’s “birth sex rather than their gender” (Abbott, 2013, p. 36), this might eliminate the anxiety for cisgender heterosexual men that they might find a transgender woman attractive. This is also related to homophobia because, since they see transsexual women as truly being a man, when they find transgender women attractive, they feel like they are attracted to a man.

However, in some films, transsexual women characters can pass as being cisgender women (and usually are played by cisgender women) (Searano, 2004, p. 41). As such, they are not merely regarded as pathetic figures to relieve men of their anxieties. Instead, their image works to bring their homophobia to the surface and reinforce it. Deceptive transsexual stereotype is generally used as a tool to add plot twists to stories and the reveal of the character's gender identity, and sometimes the sight of their bodies, evoke feelings of disgust and shock both in the characters on the screen and the audiences, such as in the cases of *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* (1994) and *The Crying Game* (1992) (Lester, 2015, p. 145; Searano, 2004, p. 41). In both films, cisgender heterosexual male characters who share sexual or intimate moments with transsexual women without knowing that they are transsexual, give extreme reactions such as barfing, puking, yelling, using physical violence, taking a shower, brushing their teeth vigorously or even burning their clothes to "cleanse" themselves. Also, in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*, when Ace Ventura finds out Lt. Lois Einhorn is a transsexual woman and starts overreacting in disgust, the song *The Crying Game* (1987) by Boy George starts playing. The song is also sung in the film *The Crying Game* by Dil, the transsexual woman in the film. The song choice in *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective* is an intentional and direct reference to the film *The Crying Game*, which was released two years prior to *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective*. This means that the audiences who saw it have a pretty recent memory of the film. This intertextuality gives the audiences a reference point (where the disclosure of a character's transsexuality evokes feelings of disgust) and then builds on it, further reinforcing the idea that transgender people and being intimate with them is disgusting. Berger (1972) remarks that "the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or what comes immediately after it" (p. 29). In addition, meanings can also be enhanced and reaffirmed by the context they are presented within. The reference in *Ace*

Ventura: Pet Detective takes an image (or in this case an audio) and uses that to “confirm [its] own [...] authority” (Berger, 1972, p. 28).

This deceptive stereotype can sometimes take a dangerous turn and become murderous, such as in the examples *Psycho* (1960) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) (Reitz, 2017, p. 1). This stereotype, in addition to feeding the stigmatization of trans identities, influences people to feel unsafe around trans women or even be afraid of them and it perpetuates the use of violence and discrimination towards trans women. Pathetic transsexuals, on the other hand, are seen as harmless (Searano, 2004, p. 42). They are sympathetic characters which the audiences admire for their courage for being their authentic selves but the audiences are never meant to identify with them (Searano, 2004, pp. 42, 43). Pathetic characters are “figure(s) of privation” and lack “stability” in their lives (Funk & Funk, 2016, p. 70).

Transgender characters, like other LGBTQ characters, are stereotypically represented as victims (Rodriguez, 2019, p. 2) or objects of ridicule (Miller, 2012, p. 47) as pathetic figures; however, deceptive characters can be objects of ridicule, as well. In these representations, transgender women are “not active in the humor” (Miller, 2012, p. 48) because “we laugh at the characters, never with them” (Bermel cited in Miller, 2012, p. 48). For example, when a transsexual woman’s genitals or castration are the punchline of a joke we laugh at their “outward masculinity” (Searano, 2004, p. 43). Their bodies become something to be laughed at. While domesticating transgender identities, this also privileges heteronormative identities (Miller, 2012, p. 47). As Miller (2012) notes, although humour does not always rely on transgender characters’ gender identity (such as in the slapstick comedy of *Mrs. Doubtfire* [1993]), repeating these “narrative conventions and visual codes” (p. 49) further solidifies transgender women as objects to be laughed at.

Many transgender women, due to the exclusion and discrimination they faced, had a hard time finding a job and even today many still do. Having no other choice, many of them turn to sex work to survive. Thus, they have been sexualized, fetishized and seen as “accessible—and easily dismissible—” objects (Abbott, 2013, p. 34) by other people, mainly by cisgender heterosexual men because they usually interact with them as porn stars or prostitutes. This image of transgender women have found a place in popular culture as early as the 1960s (Abbott, 2013, p. 34) and has been persistently reused in film and television productions. Through humour, these productions “usually dismiss their eroticism” (Abbott, 2013, p. 34) and eliminate the anxiety trans women invoke in heterosexual men. This anxiety of being “tricked into sex by someone who is actually a man” is especially prominent with the deceitful stereotype and if it is not dismissed with humour it is resolved with violence. In short, the anxiety is rooted in both transphobia and homophobia and it is either resolved as a “comic misunderstanding” or seen as an “abhorrent deception that can justify murder” (Abbott, 2013, p. 34).

In terms of stereotypical representations, images of transgender women on Turkish media are quite similar to the ones in the US, although, as mentioned earlier, transgender women do not get as many opportunities of representation in Turkey as in the US. When the LGBTQ visibility started to increase in Turkey after the establishment of LGBTQ organizations in the 2000s, almost all LGBTQ characters were gay men or transgender women (Yayla, 2019, p. 76) and they were mostly represented in cinema; however, the number of representations took a turn for the worse in the following decade. Recently, LGBTQ and transgender representations are scarcer than before and when transgender women have an opportunity to be represented, they are usually depicted as actually being a man, a dangerous figure, a victim, an object of ridicule or a sex worker (Yayla, 2019, pp. 60, 70, 75, 77).

Overall, while the ways they are stereotypically depicted are very similar, transgender representations on US television are changing, both in quantity and quality, whereas the representations in Turkey are decreasing in quantity and remains, at best, static in quality. Since the US television has a worldwide audience, any change in it has the capacity to create a potentially a global influence. Stereotypical tropes and representations sadly still exist; however, they can be challenged with more progressive representations that present transgender people as multi-dimensional characters who are not defined by their sexuality or genitals and are not demonized or used as punching bags for cheap laughs, both figuratively and literally. Progressive representations are also important because it is not only cisgender heterosexual people who are watching them but also young and adult queer people who are trying to figure out who they are and are “searching both the interpersonal and media environment for clues to understand their feelings and sense of difference” (Steiner et al., 1993, p. 396).

3. Methodology

3.1. Subject and Purpose

Starting from 2015, GLAAD started including streaming platforms in their *Where We Are on TV* report and showed that LGBTQ representations have been steadily increasing in programmes of network, cable and streaming platforms (GLAAD, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018b, 2019d). Although there has been a decrease in the numbers in the 2020-2021 season compared to the previous year because some productions had to delay their schedules due to the Covid-19 pandemic (GLAAD, 2020), overall, the number of LGBTQ representations are going up. As discussed in the previous chapter, representations on media and especially television, since it is one of the media we still interact the most, have the power to influence people's perceptions about and level of acceptance for marginalized groups. While a lack of representations can lead to denial or erasure of marginalized groups' existence (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 182) and negative representations can further their stigmatization and discrimination, positive representations can help increase their acceptance in society and create a safer environment for them. Also, representations on television can help people understand and shape their own identities and make sense of the world around them by providing them opportunities for symbolic interaction with different groups of people in society. So, it is important to investigate what messages these representations convey to the audiences, how these characters are presented to them and what meanings the audiences actually make of them.

This thesis focuses on representations of trans women of colour in scripted fictional television series, more specifically in FX's drama series *Pose* and explores the different "readings" (Hall, 1973, p. 10) of them by the audiences with divergent social identities. However, it should be noted that the series is not broadcasted on FX in Turkey but is available on Netflix. So, the participants in this study will watch the series on that platform.

This study has a cultural studies approach and observes these representations from the perspectives of feminist and queer theory. Thus, in the light of this framework and with the acceptance that television as medium has a self-contradictory nature and provides contradictory ways of seeing (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, pp. 91, 92), this study aims to uncover the ideological messages behind these images shown on the screen, outline the ways in which social norms about gender and gender roles (especially in interpersonal relationships) are reproduced and/or challenged and investigate the divergent readings of the audiences who belong to different identity groups. The study also pays particular attention to representations of trans women of colour because, although the series' ensemble includes cisgender gay men too, the main focus of the series is trans characters. Also, the episode sampled for the analysis focuses mainly on the transsexual women in the series.

The analysis in this study consists of two parts. The first part attempts to provide a textual analysis of these representations by using John Fiske's (2001) semiotic analysis method, and the second part, through participant observations and in-depth analyses, attempts to investigate actual audiences' reception of them, how they relate to them and what meanings they make of them. By trying to uncover the ideological messages and myths reproduced and/or challenged by the representations in *Pose* and investigating the readings of actual audiences, this study aims to provide a multi-faceted understanding of the representations of transsexual women of colour in *Pose*.

3.1. Scope and Limitations

As a qualitative study, this thesis will not analyse the series *Pose* as a whole but will take one of the episodes as a case-study. The series has three seasons and its third and final season was aired in 2021. The title of the sample episode chosen for the analysis is "Life's a Beach." Aired on 13 August 2019, it is the 9th episode of the second season. *Pose* was chosen as the sample of this study due to its high inclusivity in terms of trans women of colour among

its characters. In 2018, when its first season was released, the characters in *Pose* made up more than half (5 out of 8) of the regular transgender characters on scripted programs of cable television channels (GLAAD, 2018b). In 2019, the regular or recurring transgender characters on *Pose* made up almost half (8 out of 20) of the transgender characters on scripted cable television programs (GLAAD, 2019d). This makes *Pose* an exceptional case when it comes to investigating the representations of transgender individuals in general and transsexual women specifically. The sampled episode was chosen by using purposive sampling method because it is particularly a useful method for in-depth analyses of “unique cases that are especially informative” (W. L. Neuman, 2014, p. 274). The reason this episode was chosen for the analysis is because it focuses on the show’s main transsexual characters and is a relatively self-contained episode about the characters’ small getaway at the beach. Because this study focuses specifically on the representations of transsexual women of colour, this is an exceptional case since the episode also only focuses on the leading transsexual women of colour in the series and their relationships. The narrative of the other episodes, which includes homosexual characters and focuses on their individual stories as well, are a part of a bigger story and are interconnected with the other episodes of the series. Thus, they would require the participants to have at least an intermediate knowledge about the show, the characters and their stories. Although the selected episode also requires some knowledge about the story of the series, it is minimal. To give the participants a sufficient background for them to be able to follow the episode without them feeling lost or confused, a short summary and key points about the five trans characters of the show (Blanca, Angel, Elektra, Candy and Lulu) have been shared with them before they started watching the episode.

Admittedly, this study has a number of limitations. First of all, the study, while taking the story of the series as a whole into account to a certain extent, only focuses on one episode of the series and uses John Fiske's (2001) semiotic analysis method for its textual analysis.

Thus, it is not representative of the representations in the series as a whole. It only provides a complex analysis of the meanings and messages that are conveyed within a small sample that was chosen from the series. Also, the findings of textual analyses cannot guarantee to predict the actual reception of audiences. In order to compensate for that and explore the readings of actual audiences, a reception study has also been conducted. For the audience reception study, the participants were selected on the grounds of them being conveniently accessible and their willingness to volunteer. While it is easier to find participants with this method, it should be acknowledged that the participants may not be representative of the general Turkish population. However, as a qualitative study, representativeness is not among the concerns of this study. So, it should be kept in mind that the participants' answers may not reflect the attitudes of the general Turkish public. Also, the study has a small number of participants, only three. Future audience reception studies with higher number of participants would be able to present readings higher in diversity.

Another limitation of the study is that all participants are college educated, are more or less from the same income group and either a member of the LGBTQ community and/or know at least one person from the LGBTQ community at an intimate level. So, this would most likely create a bias in their answers. Although while there are two LGBTQ participants, none of them are transgender. Also, they had varying degrees of knowledge about the LGBTQ culture of the US whereas their knowledge about the ballroom culture was almost limited to none. Lastly, the contemporary socio-cultural context of Turkey the participants live in is one that trans and LGBTQ representation in general is scarce on media and LGBTQ identities are disregarded and highly discriminated.

3.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following questions will be asked in the study:

Question 1: Are the representations of black trans women on *Pose* stereotypical or progressive and challenges social norms? What ideological messages do they convey or which myths do they produce or reproduce?

Question 2: How intersectional are these representations? How prominent is racial identity in these representations of black transsexual women?

Question 3: What meanings do the participants make of the representations they see on this episode in relation to the characters' identities and their relationships?

Depending on these research questions, the study will test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The images of black trans women on *Pose* present conflicting representations and contain conflicting messages.

Hypothesis 2: The images of black trans women on *Pose* fail to be intersectional.

Hypothesis 3: The audiences will find empowering messages in the images of black trans women on *Pose*.

3.1. Methods

As mentioned above, the textual analysis part of the study will attempt to uncover the ideological messages within the episode. To do that, it makes use of John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method and Tzvetan Todorov's (1971) narrative theory.

Fiske's "codes of television" method places particular emphasis on codes, both in industry specific and social terms. As mentioned earlier in the "John Fiske's Approach to 'Reading Television'" section above, codes can be defined as meaningful systems in which signs are organized through the use of certain conventions (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 41). In a televisual discourse, codes work as the bridge between the producers, text and audiences (Fiske, 2001, p. 4).

Fiske's (2001) semiotic analysis method is made up of three levels: reality, representation and ideology (p. 5). The first level deals with the images on the screen, such as the characters' appearance, costume, make-up, behaviour, their expressions, as well as the environment and sounds used (Fiske, 2001, p. 5). Codes are not limited to televisual reality and are active agents in the meaning production processes of our daily lives (Fiske, 2001, p. 4). In other words, our reality is encoded by the codes of our own culture and the only way to make sense of the world around us is by using the same cultural codes (Fiske, 2001, p. 4). We make sense, for example, of someone's appearance (such as their clothes, hair style, make up or skin colour) by using the codes we acquire from our culture. These social codes are also used within televisual discourse, as well, because television is an extension of our own reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179). So, representations on television, from the way characters look and behave to stories they are immersed in, work together to convey certain ideological meanings. Television, thus, acts as a "bearer/provoker of meanings and pleasures" which it conveys through the use of our cultural (social) codes and conventional codes within the film industry (technical codes) (Fiske, 2001, p. 1). It is important to unpack the socially coded depictions or presentations of images on television to uncover the encoded meanings behind them.

The second level of Fiske's method deals with representational codes but they are categorised into two subcategories: technical and conventional representational codes. Technical codes deal with what transmits the representations, such as camera angles, camera motions, camera distance, framing, editing, lighting, music and sound (Fiske, 2001, pp. 5, 6). Conventional representational codes, on the other hand, deal with what shapes the representation, such as casting choices, narrative, action sequences, setting, the characters and their dialogues (Fiske, 2001, p. 5). These are important because not only they can influence the way the audiences perceive the characters they also can influence the group those

characters may belong to. A clear example of casting choices affecting the way audiences perceive the group a character belongs to would be casting cisgender actors for transgender roles. As mentioned in the “Representation of Transgender Women” section, casting cisgender actors for transgender roles reinforces the idea that transgender people are actually the gender which their sex assigned at birth is traditionally associated with. In other words, casting a cisgender man to play a transsexual woman would reinforce the idea that transsexual women are actually men. Also, in terms of technical codes, as Fiske (2001) notes, harsh lighting indicates villainy while soft lighting is used for protagonists (p. 9) which means that using harsh lighting while representing a transgender character would code them as evil and dangerous characters.

The third and last level of Fiske’s method deals with the ideological meanings the messages on television embody, such as relating to “individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism” (Fiske, 2001, p. 5).

The textual analysis part of this study will examine the ninth episode of the second season of *Pose* following these three levels. First, the characters and the environment will be analysed in regards to the social codes they were encoded in. In this part, the costumes, makeup, hair of the characters and the environment will be examined to uncover the ways these images were encoded to establish a sense of reality. Then the technical codes in which these characters were transmitted will be investigated. This part will scrutinize the ways in which technical tools such as camera, lighting or sound are used to create a certain perspective from which the images are presented. The next part will look at the conventional strategies used in aspects such as the narrative structure and casting. To analyse the narrative structure of the episode, the study will make use of Bulgarian intellectual Tzvetan Todorov’s (1971) narrative theory. The episode will be analysed in accordance with the following narrative points Todorov (1971, p. 39) lays out:

1. State of equilibrium (a state of balance)
2. Equilibrium is disrupted (the balance is broken as a problem arises)
3. Recognition of the problem (the problem is noticed by the characters)
4. Quest to re-establish equilibrium (some action is taken to re-establish the equilibrium)
5. Re-establishment of equilibrium (the balance is restored)

Lastly, the episode will be critically analysed in terms of the ideological messages it conveys. This part of the analysis will also be made in light of the findings acquired at the previous levels. In other words, the way the images in the episode were socially, technically and representationally coded will provide a deeper understanding about the ideological messages the episode conveys.

The audience reception part of the study makes use of surveys, participant observations and semi-constructed in-depth interviews. Three participants were selected for the study through voluntary sampling. Throughout the study, they and the people they mention (except for when they mention the name of the author of this study) will be referred to by their randomly chosen pseudonyms to keep them anonymous. The pseudonyms chosen for the participants are Koray, Candan and Seçil. The survey, participant observations and first in-depth interviews were all conducted on the same day. A total of six in-depth interviews have been conducted (two interviews per participant). Before the interviews, all participants have been informed that the conversations will be voice-recorded. The recordings were then transcribed. Before the participants started watching the episode, they were asked to complete a short survey where they have been asked questions about their demographic characteristics, their TV viewing habits and attitudes towards LGBTQ members and black people. At the top of the survey, the participants have been informed in a written disclaimer about the purpose of the survey, that their identity will be kept anonymous throughout the study and they had the freedom not to answer any of the questions in the survey if they felt

uncomfortable in any way. After that, through a video call and right before they started watching the episode, they have been given an oral summary of the show, including the key events which are relevant to the episode and the characters in it. The participant observations have also been conducted through video calls due to the Covid-19 pandemic. During the participant observations, all participants have watched the episode on Netflix. The participants were directed by the interviewer to minimize the video call window to only have the episode on their screen and the interviewer have informed them that he will be muting his microphone in order not to distract them while they are watching the episode. While they were watching the episode, the interviewer took notes of their reactions by hand, with pen and paper.

The first in-depth interviews were conducted right after the participant observations and through video calls. The second interviews were also conducted through video calls (with one exception implemented face-to-face) a few weeks later, after the interviewer had a chance to analyse their reactions and answers they gave during the first interviews. The second interviews were conducted to ask questions which arose from their previous answers and to learn about their experiences with transgender people and black individuals. The interviews were conducted on February 12, 2021 and March 20, 2021 with Koray, February 18, 2021 and March 18, 2021 with Candan and February 19, 2021 and March 24 2021 with Seçil. Only the second interview with Candan was not conducted through a video call but outside, face-to-face, due to her availability and because it was more convenient for her.

3.1. Contributions to the Literature

In Turkey, within the last decade, since 2010, queer studies started to gain more and more attention in the scholarly circles. However, queer studies (and transgender studies within it) is still an under researched field in Turkey, especially within the field of media studies and more specifically television studies. Two separate database searches using the keywords “LGBT” and “transgender” on the website of Turkey’s Council of Higher Education’s

Dissertation Centre bring up a total of nine dissertations which investigate the representations of transgender individuals in film and television. Seven of these studies focus on representations of LGBTQ people in cinema and include a discussion on how trans characters are represented in the sampled material(s) they analysed (Büyüközer, 2018; Candemir, 2016; Demirel, 2019; Koç, 2019; Meleke, 2016; Şeker, 2011; Yayla, 2019). Only two among the nine studies look at the representations of trans individuals on television (Baştürk, 2016; İmran, 2020). İmran (2020) investigates the ideological messages presented in five Pakistani advertisements (one of which is about a transgender individual) which aim to contribute to the subversion of gender stereotypes in Pakistan and what meanings Pakistani audiences derive from them. Baştürk (2016), on the other hand, through their depictions on television and cinema, examines how the marginalized trans-feminine celebrities Candy Darling (actress), Divine (drag queen/actor) and RuPaul (drag queen/singer/actor/show host) can function to destabilize societal norms but also have the potential to be absorbed and domesticated by the capitalist system to benefit from them. Other than these two studies, the only dissertation from Turkey which looks at representations of LGBTQ members on television is Maden's (2020) study on the representation of LGBTQ members on Netflix's original series *Mindhunter* (2017 – 2019) from a postmodern perspective. However, Maden's analysis does not include trans people because the series has no trans characters in it. It is evident that the queer television studies literature in Turkey is lacking in terms of scope and diversity. One of the reasons previous studies on representations of LGBTQ members focused more on cinema rather than television could be the restrictive policies the AKP government placed onto television broadcasts in regards to the inclusion of non-heteronormative gender representations. As a relatively freer medium, cinema was (and is) able to provide a place for representations of sexual minorities in Turkey which enabled researchers to study them within the Turkish context. However, with the emergence of the internet and streaming platforms,

individuals in Turkey can access televisual content from outside the country (mainly from the western Anglophone countries) which includes representations of these marginalized groups.

In our globalized world, it is important to analyse the ideological messages within the televisual programs of countries such as the US and the UK since they have large audiences all over the world. It is also just as important to investigate how audiences from different cultures and backgrounds view these programs and characters. In addition, as mentioned earlier under the “Feminist Television Studies” section, an intersectional approach in reception studies about television audiences has been, for the most part, missing (Martin, 2020, p. 73; Zoonen, 1999, p. 122). These are the very points at which this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature in these areas with an interdisciplinary and intersectional approach. It aims to uncover the ideological meanings the series produces and reproduces through the representations of its black trans women characters and aims to explore the meanings real audiences make of them.

The television series *Pose* has also gained some attention in scholarly circles, as well. Since 2019 the series found its way into a few scholarly studies. Pensis (2019), in her article, examines how the themes of love, sex and sex work are presented in the first season of *Pose*. Koch-Rein et al. (2020) discuss the changing visibility and representations of trans identities by touching upon *Pose* and *Transparent* (2014 – 2019) as examples. Stout (2020) investigates the depictions of fat bodies and their visibility in the context of certain themes in the series such as the ballroom culture and HIV. Vázquez (2019), on the other hand, looks at how trans women in the series are represented in the show and presents them as progressive representations. However, Martin, (2020) notes that scholars should not only stop at asking “how” because doing so simply provides an intellectual reading of a text, implicitly brings along the perception that there is a one true reading of it and limits ones’ ability to see the text “as a form of activism that might effect meaningful industrial change and meaningful

representation” (p. 73). Through the example of the representations of trans women in *Pose*, he states that we should also ask why the characters are represented in that way (or at all) to uncover the industrial conditions of their production (Martin, 2020, p. 71). Still, Martin (2020, p. 73) also notes that within this (self-)representational activism, intersectionality usually stays neglected and untouched. Lastly, as the last suggestion in his article, he notes that it is just as important to ask what meanings real audiences make from the series because how real people understand a text and the meanings they make of it can be very different from scholarly readings or analyses (Martin, 2020, p. 73) or what the producers of that program may have intended to convey. In the light of all this, this thesis contributes to the literature around *Pose* by asking two of the questions Martin talks about: “How are trans women represented in *Pose*?” and “What meanings do the audiences make of these representations?” By asking “how,” the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the ideological messages conveyed through these representations which cannot be fully investigated through an audience reception study and by asking “what meanings do the audiences make from it,” it aims to explore the possible meanings real life audiences actually make of these representations which cannot be uncovered through a textual analysis. In other words, these two perspectives are used together to remedy each other’s shortcomings and present an embrative understanding about the representations of trans women in *Pose*.

To simply put, this study aims to contribute to the literature by presenting an intersectional and critical analysis of the representations of trans women in the television series *Pose*, uncovering the ideological messages behind them, and also investigating how real-life audiences from different identity groups perceive them and what ideological messages they get from them. The audience reception analysis is also important in that it provides insights to the cross-cultural impact of the US television productions and how audiences from a non-western context view them.

4. Findings

4.1. Pose: Context and Summary

Before getting into the analysis, it is important to give some contextual information about *Pose*. The series was created by Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk and Steven Canals. Ryan Murphy, a white cisgender gay man, has a long history with the cable channel FX, which is owned by 20th Century Fox, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company since 2019. Murphy worked on various programmes for the channel, such as *Nip/Tuck* (2003 – 2010), *American Horror Story* (2011 -), *American Crime Story* (2016 -), *Feud: Bette and Joan* (2017) and *Pose* (2018 – 2021). He has also worked with the 20th Century Fox on their other channels, on shows such as *Glee* (2009 – 2015) and *Scream Queens* (2015 – 2016). Murphy has a long history of representing LGBTQ characters in the shows he takes part in, such as *Nip/Tuck*, *Glee*, *American Horror Story* and *Pose* and working with LGBTQ cast and crew members such as Sarah Paulson, Cheyenne Jackson, Denis O'Hare, Angelica Ross, Dominique Jackson and Our Lady J. Besides, thanks to his long history with the 20th Century Fox and his influence in the industry he has the power to push for programmes which target niche audiences and, as a cable channel, FX is a fitting platform for them (Martin, 2020, pp. 70, 71). However, before producing *Pose*, there have been instances when Murphy's depictions of LGBTQ characters were problematic. For example, in *Glee*, Kurt was a stereotypically effeminate gay character whose character development was dependent on his sexual/romantic orientation and was presented as a victim of sexual discrimination (MacKenzie, 2020). As another example, trans representation in *Nip/Tuck*, through its depiction of Ava Moore, included transphobic messages because the character stereotypically represents trans women as deceptive, dangerous and being "actually men" (Lafrance et al., 2018).

As a period-piece, *Pose* follows the stories of LGBTQ members within Harlem's ballroom circle in the 1980s and 1990s in its first two seasons. *Pose* draws much inspiration

from Jennie Livingston's documentary *Paris Is Burning* (1990) (Koch-Rein et al., 2020, p. 5; Pensis, 2019, p. 17), one of the most prominent and controversial productions of the 1990s (criticised for exploiting the ballroom culture and people within it for capitalist and white consumption [Green, 1993]) which documented the ballroom culture of the late 1980s. Although the series is not a fictional adaptation of the documentary, many of the events and characters share strong similarities with the people interviewed in the documentary and their lives (Rudolph, 2019; Williams, 2019). In addition, the series takes inspiration from other historical events and characters (Sonoma, 2019; Street, 2019). As John Fiske (2001) argues, television "produces 'reality' rather than refle[cting] it" (p. 21) and the reality it produces is an extension of our own reality where we were thought its standardized images (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179) and of which we make sense through the use of our own cultural codes (Fiske, 2001, p. 4). By referencing to events and characters from our own reality, *Pose* reinforces its status as an extension of our own reality, enhances its sense of realism and attracts its niche, educated, quality television audiences who ask for challenging, complex, multi-dimensional and detailed storylines and realities.

Aside from its similarities to real life events, *Pose* was praised for its inclusivity. Focusing on five black trans woman (along with some black gay characters) as its main characters and including 140 LGBTQ members in its entire production team (Chi, 2018) earned the series recognition (Chi, 2018; Nordyke, 2019; Wong, 2017). The series also included Jennie Livingston and people who come from the ballroom culture such as Hector Extravaganza, Jack Mizrahi, Deja Smith and Twiggy Pucci Garçon in its team as consultants (Reign, 2018). This, again, gives the show a sense of authenticity and reinforces its sense of realism.

In addition to the contextual information, a short summary of the series should be presented. However, the following summary only includes the key points and events which

are relevant to the events in the analysed episode. The same information given in the following summary is also the one presented to the participants right before they watched the episode. In other words, it is not a complete summary of the series. Through this summary, the participants were only given the necessary information for them to be able to follow the episode easily and any information that was not related to the events in the episode was omitted. For example, Blanca's HIV status was not mentioned in the summary because the episode does not deal with or mention Blanca's HIV status.

The first season starts with the House of Abundance, Elektra as the mother of the house, and Angel, Lulu, Candy and Blanca as her children. Elektra is an authoritative mother and she does not always treat her children well. For example, in the first scene of the episode, Blanca suggests that they should walk in the "royalty" category. Elektra humiliates her and then says they should walk as "the royal house of Abundance," stealing her idea.

After some time, Blanca leaves Elektra's house because of Elektra's abusive behaviour to start her own. Angel and Damon (a black gay kid whose family kicked him out and whom Blanca met at a park) becomes her first two children. As a house mother, Blanca sets some ground rules for her children and states that if they wish to remain a part of her family, they either have to get an education or work, they cannot do or sell drugs and they need to participate in the balls. In the first season, Blanca deals with the struggles of establishing and being the mother of her own house and proving herself and her family worthy of respect.

Sometime after Angel and Blanca leaves Elektra's house, Lulu and Candy, too, cannot stand her abusive behaviour and start their own house together. Candy works as a prostitute and Lulu works as stripper to provide for their house.

Elektra used to be able to support her children through the money she received from her sugar daddy. However, after Elektra tells him that she wants to have a sex reassignment

surgery, he tells Elektra that he does not want her to go through it, that he likes her the way she was at the time and if she goes through it, he will stop financially supporting her. Elektra goes through with the surgery despite his disapproval and loses her only source of income. After Candy and Lulu leave her as well, she is left without any support. After some time, Blanca invites Elektra into her family for feeling sorry for her, and with the help of Blanca, Elektra finds a job as a waitress. However, after having disagreements with Blanca, she leaves Blanca's house, starts her own and starts working as a dominatrix.

In season two, Blanca opens her own nail salon. However, after her shop owner, Frederica, finds out that she is trans, she tries to kick her out but Blanca gathers a crowd, protests and with the help of Angel, Lulu and Elektra, covers Frederica's house with a huge condom and manages to stop Frederica from kicking her out because Frederica does not want her reputation to be tarnished. Yet, she still does not want Blanca in her shop and wants to find a way to kick her out.

Angel, on the other hand, finds a modelling job in season two. Her story covers her struggles in the modelling world and her drug use. Lulu and Candy, on the other hand, do not play a central role in the season until one day Candy is found dead in a hotel room, most likely murdered by one of her clients.

Elektra keeps working as a dominatrix but one day one of her clients' asks her if he can use drugs during their session. Elektra does not allow him at first but after he insists, she allows him to use them. During their session she leaves him alone for a while in a tied-up position and he dies of drug overdose. Because her client is an up-scale white man who works at Wallstreet, she knows that she will be blamed for his death and she will be in a big trouble. She first goes to Blanca for help but when she advises her to go to the police she goes to Candy instead, and with her and some other woman's help, they mummify the man's body in a suitcase and Elektra stores it in her closet.

The ninth episode of the second season (which is the one this study examines) follows the events related to Blanca's children leaving their house. Damon goes on tour as a backup dancer and Angel moves into her own house with her boyfriend Papi, and Blanca is left alone in her house.

The next sections will present two analyses regarding the 9th episode of *Pose*'s second season. The first section will provide an analytical reading by using Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method. The second one will provide an audience reception analysis of the episode with the three participants who belong to different groups of sexuality and ethnicity.

4.2. Textual Analysis

At first glance, having trans women in decision making positions and putting its black trans women characters at the heart of its story, *Pose* seems like a progressive show. It challenges cis-heteronormative gender norms by reaffirming the social existence of marginalized sexual identities and by casting trans actresses for trans roles; it implies that it is wary of falling into harmful stereotypes when it comes to representing trans women. In other words, the series adopts a "for us by us" attitude in terms of its LGBTQ representations. As can be observed in GLAAD's (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018b, 2019d, 2020) reports, the number of LGBTQ representations in the US television has been consistently increasing until the Covid-19 pandemic has staggered productions. In an environment where media pays more attention to LGBTQ stories than ever before, it is important to analyse the messages and meanings these programs convey through its representations. It is also especially important if those messages can have any influence at cross-cultural level, as well.

On the surface, the episode contains numerous subversive messages. For example, it challenges the conventional idea of nuclear family with the notion of a chosen one. In addition, it reaffirms and validates the gender identity of its trans characters through its

casting choices and the events in the episode. However, to unpack the encoded messages in the series and have a more nuanced understanding of the ideological meanings behind these representations, conducting an in-depth analysis of the episode is necessary.

This section of the study will analyse the episode following John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method. The images in the episode will first be analysed in terms of its use of social codes; they will be analysed at the reality level. Then, they will be examined at the representational level to uncover the technical conventions used to transmit these images. After that, the ideological messages these representations contain will be analysed from a critical lens. Before we start, however, it would be helpful to present the contents of the episode. To do that, the table below divides the episode into 26 scenes. The duration of each scene will be indicated on the columns next to them. Also, a description of the scene and the dialogues in them will be provided in the following columns respectively. The description part will lay out the technical details about the scene such as camera angles, camera distances, cuts, transitions, sound effects and music while the dialogues will present the conversations between the characters. Under the "Description" column, each line between the cells represents the cuts. The dialogues have also been adjusted in accordance with the cuts in the scenes. For example, if a line in a dialogue is spread across two different shots, the line will be separated into two cells where the cut divides it.

Table 1.

Technical descriptions and transcription of the 9th Episode of the 2nd Season of Pose

Scene no.	Scene Duration (minutes: seconds)	Description	Dialogues
1	00:43	Establishing shot (ES from now on) of Blanca's bedroom. Peaceful music playing. Camera moving right towards a high-angle (HA from now on) medium shot (MS from now on) of Blanca thumbing	(Sirens and car noises coming from outside)

		restlessly in bed because of the heat.	
		HA wide shot (WS from now on) of Blanca's bedroom from the corner of the room	(Phone rings)
		HA MS of Blanca getting out of bed	
		HA WS of Blanca's bedroom from the corner of the room. Music becomes dramatic.	Blanca: Four o'clock?
		Insert shot (IS from now on) of the telephone. Camera moves up to a low-angle (LA from now on) medium close up (MCU from now on) of Blanca as she picks up the phone and then zooms in. Music fades.	Hello? Yeah, this is Blanca.
2	02:07	Camera fades into a HA CU of Blanca standing in shock and breathing heavily in her burnt down nail salon.	Investigator: Ma'am. Hello, ma'am? Blanca: Sorry.
		HA WS of the nail salon. Blanca standing in the middle facing the camera. The investigators are facing Blanca and have their backs turned to the camera.	Investigator: You said there was acetone and isopropyl alcohol on the premises. You are aware that those substance are highly flammable?
		HA MCU of Blanca.	The kind of stuff that could blow a place up. Blanca: Yeah, of course but this was a nail salon.
		Over the shoulder (OTS from now on) medium long shot (MLS from now on) of investigator.	Those kinds of chemicals are needed for my business.
		HA reverse angle shot (RAS from now on) of Blanca.	I'm not a careless person
		OTS MLS of Investigator.	and I don't smoke, so ain't no lighter flames or cigarettes in here.
		HA MCU of Blanca squinting.	When was the last time you ever heard of a nail salon blowing up out of nowhere?
		OTS MLS of Investigator.	Investigator: Excuse me.
		HA WS of the nail salon,	

	Blanca in the centre. Investigators moving towards the bottom left corner.	
	HA MCU of Blanca	Frederica: What happened to my building?
	HA Cowboy shot (CS from now on) of Frederica entering the nail salon, MLS of the investigators,	This is devastating. How will I recover?
	MCU of Blanca	Blanca: What are you doing here?
	MS of Frederica walking	Frederica: My name is on the deed, sweetheart.
	MCU of Blanca	
	HA MS of Frederica walking	I was in the car heading to my summer cottage
	HA MCU of Blanca with Frederica facing towards her out of focus in the background	when I got the call that my property had burned down. Isn't that terrible? Blanca: Yeah.
	LA WS of the nail salon with Blanca and Frederica in the centre	I put all of my savings into this salon and somehow, I didn't know that insurance was needed to cover the supplies and furniture and all of my stuff!
	Dramatic music starts playing	It went up into smoke just like that.
	HA MCU of Blanca. Frederica starts walking towards her from the background.	
	MCU RAS of Blanca as Frederica touches Blanca's shoulder.	
	HA OTS MS of Frederica, the camera zooms in a	Frederica: You live and you learn.
	MCU of Blanca.	Going toe-to-toe with you, I learned what protecting yourself really looks like.
	RAS of Frederica	You taught me that. And for that, I will be grateful.
	RAS of Blanca	After our squabble
	HA OTS MS of Frederica	I raised the insurance coverage on this building.
	MCU of Blanca	I just had a feeling something like this could happen.
	HA OTS MS of Frederica	Come next spring, I'll triple the rent, attracting tenants

		MCU of Blanca	that will breathe a breath of fresh air
		RAS of Frederica	into this ghetto enclave.
		RAS of Blanca	Blanca: Yeah, this place is right on track for a much-needed makeover.
		RAS of Frederica	Frederica: (Chuckles) How I will miss our conversations.
		RAS of Blanca	I will relish all summer the thought of you back home
		HA RAS of Frederica	in your grim little Bronx walk-up
		RAS of Blanca	filing acrylics in the sweltering
		HA RAS of Frederica.	100-degree August heat.
		LA WS of the nail salon with Blanca and Frederica in the centre. Frederica starts walking to the left to leave a	
		MS of Blanca, and the camera zooms out.	
		HA WS of the nail salon, dramatic music fades	
3	00:37	Intro: The camera pans right in a circular motion with its focus on a pink bulb sign which spells out “POSE” and centres it into the shot.	(Sound of footsteps) Pray Tell: The category is... Live... Work... Pose!
		The light bulbs flicker and explode into pink sparks and confetti-like sparkles. Disco music is playing in the background. Intro fades to black.	Text on screen: Created by Ryan Murphy & Brad Falchuk & Steven Canals. Written by Janet Mock & Our Lady J. Directed by Gwyneth Horder-Payton
4	00:29	The camera moves up behind a fan to reveal a MCU of Elektra	
		LA MLS of Chi Chi	
		HA RAS of Elektra sitting in a couch	Elektra: Leaving already? Chi Chi: My
		LA RAS of Chi Chi	usual 3:00 is gone for the summer. Elektra: The whole
		HA RAS of Elektra	summer?
		LA RAS of Chi Chi	Chi Chi: This business is seasonal. Didn't you know?

		HA RAS of Elektra	It's not like the piers. Most of the clientele here take their vacation in August. The whole town clears out.
		Full shot (FS from now on) of Elektra and LA FS of Chi Chi	Shouldn't you be checking on that dude in your room?
		HA MLS of Elektra	Elektra: Oh, shit!
		FS of Elektra and LA FS of Chi Chi	I almost forgot.
5	01:12	HA MCU of Joe panting blindfolded in a latex BDSM outfit while Elektra takes of his blindfold	Joe: Has it been three hours already?
		LA MCU of Elektra	Elektra: Three and a half.
		WS of Elektra's dungeon with Joe and Elektra in the left at the corner of the room	Do you need a spanking or a beating of some kind? Joe: No.
		HA FS of Joe and Elektra. Joe is illuminated under a spotlight	Just leave me a little while longer, please? Elektra: I have
		LA CS of Elektra	other business to attend to. I'm a woman of the world. I don't want to stay here all day long. Joe: Then leave.
		HA MCU of Joe	I don't care. Come back in the morning.
		FS of Joe and Elektra, the camera slowly moving in	I just like being left in isolation. No sight, no sound. Feeling nothing but the pain of being in one position
		LA CS of Elektra	and the warm sweat under the latex.
		HA MLS of Joe	Elektra: May I ask, what exactly is the point of this?
		LA MCU of Elektra	Why pay to be left alone when you can be left alone for free?
		HA MCU of Joe	Joe: I'm not paying to be left alone.
		LA CS of Elektra	I'm paying to feel the pain
		HA MCU of Joe	of anticipation.
		FS of Joe and Elektra	Elektra: I'm not leaving you here all night.
		LA CS of Elektra	I don't have good experiences with leaving people to their own devices.
		HA MLS of Joe	Joe: (Sighs) Okay. Can I

			come back tomorrow, though? Elektra: I thought you were a bigwig on Wall Street.
		LA CS of Elektra	Aren't you leaving town like the rest of them?
		WS of Elektra's dungeon with Joe and Elektra in the left at the corner of the room.	Joe: I got a great place at the beach but I almost never go.
		LA MCU of Elektra	I like it better here, where it's...
		HA MLS of Joe	really hot.
		LA MCU of Elektra. "Everything" by Jody Watley starts playing	Elektra: Beach house, you say?
6	02:31	LA ES of Blanca's apartment, the camera moving upwards.	
		"Everything" by Jody Watley continues playing quietly in the background. A MCU of Lulu taking out a few popsicles from the freezer.	
		HA WS from the corner of Blanca's living room. Women are sitting across the room with fans on, trying to cool themselves down.	Lulu: Oh, my gosh, it's so hot. Angel: Hey, I know. Is the window
		MS of Elektra	open? Elektra: A popsicle in this heat is like throwing a snowball in hell. Angel: Do you ever
		LA WS of Blanca's living room from the left side of Elektra's seat. Angel is standing in the centre.	stop complaining?
		HA MS of Elektra	Elektra: No. Angel: Well, then now's a good time
		LA MLS of Angel, Blanca and Lulu	to learn. Lulu: Here, girl.
		MS of Elektra	
		MS of Lulu	Lulu: Girl, I can't believe the salon is
		LA MLS of Angel sitting on the windowsill, MLS of Blanca	gone. Angel: Come on, tell them what happened. Blanca: I can't prove anything but... I think she set the place

			afire herself.
	MS of Elektra		For the insurance. Elektra: Arson? I'd do the same if I owned that shithole.
	MS of Lulu. The camera tilts up as she straightens her back.		Lulu: Elektra! Elektra: Sorry,
	MS of Elektra		daughter. I'm crazy from this
	MS of Blanca		heat. Blanca: That's okay, I appreciate y'all coming over to support. Elektra: I hope so.
	MS of Elektra		I feel like I'm being fucked by Satan himself in the seventh circle.
	MS of Blanca looking at Elektra expressing her annoyance		Lulu: Are the authorities
	CS of Lulu		investigating?
	LA MLS of Blanca and Angel. Angel gets up/		Blanca: I ain't got no power. Elektra: This isn't the first time any of us have
	MS of Elektra		met with adversities.
	HA WS of Blanca's living room from the corner of the room		This tenement in August, for instance. Angel: Oh, my gosh. You can't give up, ma'.
	Overhead shot (OS from now on) MCU of an upside-down image of Angel lying on a floor mattress		I never thought my modelling career would be what it is but
	HA MCU of Angel from profile		you encouraged me.
	LA WS of Blanca's living room from the left side of Elektra's seat. Elektra gets up from her seat and walks to the kitchen		If I could do it, you most definitely can. Blanca: No, it's not about that. I spent my life savings on that salon. Angel: So, ma', just save again and get another one. You be a'ight. Blanca: Will you stop saying it's all right!
	MS of Blanca		My opportunity came and went. Everything I live for,
	HA FS of Blanca. Lulu comes and sits next to her.		my kids, my salon, it's gone. Lulu: It's all right, girl.
	LA WS of Blanca's living room from the left side of Elektra's seat. Elektra walks		Elektra: I think she's having a heatstroke. Lulu: Bitch.

		back to her seat and sits down	Angel: Shut up! Lulu: Would you stop complaining about the damn heat? We are all hot.
		MS of Elektra	Elektra: I am in purgatory. It feels like someone turned this thermostat up to "inferno." Lulu: Well, you're the one with the
		MS of Lulu and Blanca	air-conditioning. Blanca: Right. Angel: Why,
		HA FS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	how come we're not in your crib? Lulu: Yeah. Elektra: Because even with a window air-conditioning
		HA MS of Elektra	unit, it's beginning to smell.
		MS of Lulu and Blanca	Lulu: Smell? Why?
		MS of Elektra "Everything" by Jody Watley fades into silence. Funky music starts playing.	
		MCU of Blanca staring at Elektra	
		MS of Elektra trying to hide her nervousness	
		Cutaway FS of Elektra sitting in her bed, staring behind the camera, smoking a cigarette.	Elektra (voiceover): This old lady from the Caribbean has a fish fry and it wafts through the hallways.
		RAS showing inside Elektra's closet and zooming in. Two fans on the side blowing air towards inside the closet.	The stench intensifies when the thermostat hits 85 degrees.
		The camera fades into a closer HA FS of the crate Elektra and Blanca mummified and hid a body in. A candle is burning on a bench next to it.	
		MS of Elektra. Funky music stops. "Everything" by Jody Watley starts quietly playing in the background.	
		MS of Lulu and Blanca. Lulu gets up.	Lulu: Well, what we need to do is
		HA WS of Blanca's living room from the corner of the room. Lulu standing in the	take a trip down to the beach. Angel: Oo! Lulu: The water will cool us

		centre of the room.	off.
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: Well, good, 'cause I need a vacation.
		MS of Elektra	Elektra: That's a good idea.
		HA WS of Blanca's living room from the corner of the room. Lulu sits back next to Blanca. "Everything" by Jody Watley fades into silence. Rhythmic music starts to play.	Let's do a girls' trip. Angel: For real? A girls' trip?
		MS of Elektra	Elektra: Yes. Look at the year we've had.
		HA FS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	We've lost Candy,
		WS of Elektra	and Blanca ruined her house and lost her business and- Blanca: Okay,
		MS of Lulu and Blanca	where are we going?
		LA CS of Elektra standing up. The music turns in to an upbeat synthesized music.	Elektra: I have just the place.
		LA FS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	Ladies, pack your swimsuits
		CS of Elektra	and meet at my house tomorrow morning.
		LA FS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	(Excited chatter)
7	03:06	"Roni" by Bobby Brown is playing in the background. HA OTS MLS of Angel in her swimwear looking at herself in the mirror. Elektra enters the shot. The camera tilts up.	Angel: You're not scared people gonna try us if we walk down a New York street in swimsuits and heels?
		HA WS of Elektra's apartment	Elektra: I have a Hertz rental car waiting for us outside.
		OTS MS of Elektra	O.J. himself would approve.
		MS of Angel and Elektra	Angel: Work.
		CU of Angel, MS of Elektra	
		LA CS OTS of Angel. Elektra sits down.	What's that smell?
		Over the hip (OTH) CS of Elektra	Elektra: Pine
		Cutaway HA FS of Elektra hanging car air fresheners from the ceiling of her closet.	Elektra (voiceover): I'm a woman who likes her scented candles.
		CS of Elektra	Elektra: Excited? Angel: Yeah, I've
		HA MS of Angel and Elektra	never been on a road trip before.

	LA OTS CS of Angel	I feel like we about to go in a Chevy Chase movie or something. Elektra: (Chuckles)
	HA MS of Elektra	Darling, if you're going to be a successful model,
	LA OTS CS of Angel	you have to learn how to travel and how to travel well.
	HA MS of Angel, HA MLS of Elektra	Rule number one is to always look your best.
	LA OTS CS of Angel	Angel: What you trying to say?
	HA MS of Elektra gesturing Angel to twirl	
	LA OTS CS of Angel	Uh-huh, huh. Elektra: Perfection. I
	HA MS of Elektra	simply cannot stand it when a woman boards a plane without a full face of makeup.
	LA OTS MLS of Angel	Angel: Oh, I feel you.
	HA MS of Elektra	Elektra: Lulu!
	HA WS of Elektra's apartment	What's taking so goddamn long? Come out already! Lulu: You guys.
	MS of Angel, HA MLS of Elektra	Elektra: Oh, dear God. Angel: What the hell is wrong with her?
	OTS MLS of Angel, Lulu and Elektra's reflection in the mirror	Lulu: I feel so... fat. Angel: Hey, stop it. You look damn tasty.
	FS of Angel, Lulu and Elektra	Elektra: Not slumped over like that, she doesn't. Stand up straight.
	OTS MLS of Angel, Lulu and Elektra's reflection in the mirror OTS MLS of Angel, Lulu and Elektra's reflection in the mirror	Lulu: (Scoffs) It's one thing to be on the pole in a dark club, it's another thing to let it all hang out under the naked sun. I mean, what if I get clocked or something? Angel: Girl, please stop it. The only thing that they clocking is you being a beautiful woman.
	HA MS of Elektra	Give me some of that Lulu attitude.
	MS of Lulu and Angel, HA MLS of Elektra	Lulu: You're right, I do look pretty tasty. (Chuckles)
	OTS MLS of Angel, Lulu and Elektra's reflection in the	Angel: There we go.

	mirror	
	OTS MLS of Lulu from behind	
	MS of Angel, MLS of Lulu, HA MLS Elektra	Lulu: Wait a minute. Wh- What is that smell? Angel: Pine. Elektra: Scented candles. (Door buzzes) Elektra: That's Blanca.
	Elektra gets up and all three women walk towards the door. Elektra opens the door. MLS of Blanca and Elektra.	Angel: Mother. Elektra: (Screams) Somebody please fetch me my nerve pills. Blanca: Well, hello to you, too. (Chuckles)
	MS of Angel and Blanca, FS of Lulu	Elektra: Where's your
	LA MCU of Elektra	swimsuit?
	MLS of Angel and Blanca, FS of Lulu	I will not be seen in public with you
	LA MCU of Elektra	looking like Elly May fresh off the farm.
	MLS of Angel and Blanca, FS of Lulu	Blanca: This is all that I got.
	LA MCU of Elektra	Elektra: Of course, it is.
	WS of Lulu, FS of Angel and Blanca, MLS of Elektra. Elektra walks towards the camera then stops	I suppose I can let you borrow something from my guest closet. Blanca: No, I'm comfortable in this. Elektra: No, it's
	MCU of Elektra	really no problem. Just don't stain it with whatever awful food
	MS of Blanca. The camera shakes gently Blanca turns around.	you're eating these days. Blanca: Elektra, I said no.
	Dramatic music starts playing. "Roni" by Bobby Brown fades away. MLS of Elektra. Elektra walks towards the camera. LA MCU of Elektra.	Elektra: If this is about your salon, I will not allow your rotten mood to ruin
	MCU of Blanca	this trip for everyone. Blanca: It's not about the salon. I'm just not like you girls. There are certain things that you can wear
	MLS of Lulu, MCU of Angel. Dramatic music stops.	that I cannot. Angel: If this is about tucking, I got

		LA MS of Elektra	some extra duct-tape. Blanca: It's not
		MCU of Blanca. Emotional music starts playing.	about that, either.
		MLS of Lulu, MS of Angel	
		MCU of Blanca	I just don't like being exposed.
		LA MS of Elektra	I don't like the summer. Men whispering
		MCU of Blanca	on the streets, calling me a man, a freak, a tranny.
		MLS of Lulu, MS of Angel.	
		LA MS of Elektra	Angel: Ma',
		FS of Lulu, MLS of Angel and Blanca	people always gonna have opinions.
		MCU of Blanca	Don't matter how beautiful or busted you are,
		MLS of Lulu, MCU of Angel.	that's just part of being a woman in a men's world.
		LA MS of Elektra	
		MCU of Blanca	So, what we need to do
		FS of Lulu, MLS of Angel and Blanca	is replace those negative voices with some words of encouragement.
		LA MS of Elektra	Come on, y'all. I'm gonna
		MLS of Lulu, MCU of Angel. "Boogie Oogie Oogie" by A Taste of Honey starts playing.	treat Mother Blanca before we hit the road. Lulu: (Exclaims in excitement) We're gonna
		MCU of Blanca	go shopping. Angel: So, get your shit together.
8	00:20	FS of Blanca's reflection in the mirror, MS of Angel. Blanca is looking at an outfit she is trying on in the mirror.	Lulu: Oh! Angel: Hey. Oh.
		WS of the clothes shop, HA MS of Blanca, HA MLS off Angel, HA FS of Elektra and Lulu. Elektra is sitting in a couch. Lulu walks next to Blanca. HA ML of Lulu.	Didn't I tell you if you put a skirt on, it would be sickening? Blanca: Yes, I guess you're right. I do look kind of sexy, don't I? Angel: Uh, uh-huh. Lulu: Kind of? I hope you got birth control. Look at those
		MS of Lulu and Angel, MLS of Blanca	thighs. Angel: Right.

			Blanca: Ooh. Lulu: Laughs. Angel: Catch the jiggle when you slap it.
		WS of the clothes shop, HA MS of Blanca and Lulu, HA FS of Elektra	Elektra: Are you three done eating each other out yet?
		MS of Lulu and Angel, MLS of Blanca	(Lulu, Blanca and Angel at the same time) No. Elektra: Please,
		WS of the clothes shop, HA MLS of Angel, HA MS of Blanca and Lulu, FS of Elektra	let's get out of here. Angel: Oh, my gosh. She jealous.
9	00:39	WS of kids playing under the water coming from a fire hydrant. Elektra comes out from a shop and takes quick steps to not get wet.	Elektra: Ah!
		LA WS of the street behind the fire hydrant. Camera moves from LA to eye level. Elektra Walking towards the car.	Why'd I pick the one street that hasn't gentrified yet?
		FS of Angel lying on the bonnet of the car, MLS of Lulu leaning on the bonnet of the car. MLS of Blanca behind the car. Camera pans left. Blanca walks around the car. Lil Papi is loading boxes into the trunk.	Angel: Hey, who's driving this car? Elektra: I am. Get in. Blanca: I call shotgun.
		MLS of Lulu opening the left back door	
		MS of Papi and Angel. Angel gives Papi goodbye kisses.	Angel: Oh, look at my baby being... useful. Helpful.
		HA MCU of Elektra trying to start the car. Blanca helps her and starts the car.	Papi: Don't talk to no men. Angel: Don't tell me what to do. Elektra: Thank you, darling. Angel: I love
		MS of Papi. Papi leans down and give Angel a kiss then walks back. Camera tilts up.	you. I'm just playing.
		WS of the street, MS of Papi from the back. The car drives off and angel gets wet because of the fire hydrant.	Papi: Back when [indistinct speking]. Angel: Papi. Papi: Oh. Angel: (Shrieks) I love you. Papi: Oh, God. Oh.

10	01:35		Angel: (Screams)
		MS of Papi	Papi: (Laughs)
		WS of the scenery and traffic. Camera moves down to a MCU of Elektra. The women are dancing and singing along to “Boogie Oogie Oogie” by A Taste of Honey	♪If you're thinking you're too cool to boogie♪ Elektra: Sing it, daughter. Come on.
		MCU of Elektra, MS of Lulu	
		MCU of Blanca from the left, MS of Elektra	
		MCU of Blanca and Elektra, MS of Angel and Lulu. Camera pans to the right.	♪Boy, oh, boy, have I got news for you♪
		MS of Blanca, Elektra and angel from outside of the car, camera moves to the centre. Cars honking their horns in the background.	
		MCU of Blanca and Elektra, MS Angel and Lulu.	♪Everybody here tonight must boogie♪ Lulu: (Chuckles)
		MS of Blanca, Elektra and Lulu from outside of the car, camera moves up to show a HA WS of the traffic behind Elektra who is driving in the middle of the road.	♪Let me tell you, you are♪ Lulu: Come on, say it.
		MCU of Blanca from left, MS of Elektra	♪no exception♪
		MCU of Elektra and Lulu from right	♪to the rule♪
		HA MS of Blanca, Elektra and Angel from outside of the car, camera moves from centre to the right	Elektra: This is music.
		HA MCU of Blanca and Angel	♪Get on up♪
		MCU of Elektra and Lulu from right	♪on the floor♪
		MCU of Blanca and Elektra, MS Angel and Lulu	♪'cause we're gonna♪
		MCU of Angel from the left, MS of Lulu	♪boogie oogie oogie 'till you♪
		MS of Elektra and Lulu from the right	♪just can't boogie no♪
		HA MCU of Blanca and Angel	♪more, boogie♪
		MCU of Blanca and Elektra,	♪boogie no more♪

	MS of Angel and Lulu	
	HA FS of a car driving next to them. Camera zooms in. MS of male driver.	♪You can't boogie no♪ Driver: Her! You drive like shit!
	CU of Blanca, MS of Elektra. Blanca turns and gives the driver a bad look over her sunglasses.	♪more, boogie♪ Elektra: You look like it, bitch!
	MS of driver. Driver raises his middle finger at the women and drives away. Camera turns to Elektra's car. The volume of the music turns down.	♪boogie no more, listen to the music♪ Lulu: Oh my god!
	MCU of Blanca and Elektra MS of Angel and Lulu	Mother, look out!
	CU of Blanca from the left, MS of Elektra hits the break.	Oh, my God!
	OTS shot of the car in front of Elektra. She almost hits the car.	Elektra: (Screams) Angel: Oh, my
	MCU of Blanca from the left, MS of Elektra	goodness.
	MCU of Angel and Lulu	Angel: He's right. You're the worst driver I ever seen.
	MCU of Blanca and Elektra MS Angel and Lulu	Blanca: I ain't know you had a license. Elektra: I don't.
	MCU of Elektra	I bought one out of the bodega on 144th Street. Lulu: What? Angel: What?
	Cutaway to LA OTS of Elektra buying a driver's license	Elektra: They required it to rent the car. I even upgraded us to this. We're traveling in style this weekend ladies,
	MU of Elektra	and it's all on Mother Elektra.
	MS of all four characters	All you bitches need to pay for is the cocktails. Blanca: Man,
	MCU of Blanca from the left, MS of Elektra	something smells fishy about this. Elektra: That's just the ocean,
	MCU of Blanca, MS of Angel	Blanca dear. Just relax.
	MCU of Blanca from the left, MS of Elektra	We're nearly there.
	MCU of Blanca, MS of Angel	Angel: Where?
	The volume of the music turns back up. MCU of Angel from	♪Get down♪

		the left, Ms of Lulu	
		HA MS of Blanca, Elektra and Lulu	♪boogie oogie oogie♪
		MS of Elektra from the side, camera moves up and turns right to a HA WS of the traffic behind	♪Get down, boogie oogie oogie, get down♪
11	00:35	WS of Elektra's car driving toward the house "Boogie Oogie Oogie" by A Taste of Honey stops. Funky music playing. Camera turns right and move up. HA WS of the house.	Angel: Bitch. Blanca: (Laughs) (Women scream) Angel: Oh, my God. Ah! Get me out of this. Lulu: No
		MS of Lulu	way. No motherfucking way! (Laughs)
		MLS of Blanca, Angel and Lulu	Angel: Are we staying here? Blanca: Yes, we are. Lulu: Oh, my God. Elektra: Always trust in Mother
		MS of Lulu and Elektra	Elektra, darling.
		LA WS of the porch, LA FS of all four characters	Angel: T stance. Elektra: (Laughs) Angel: Five. Lulu Six.
		MLS of Angel, Lulu and Blanca.	Blanca: Seven. Angel: Eight.
		LA MS of Angel and Lulu. Women walking in unison.	Elektra: (Laughing)
		LA WS of the porch, LA FS of all four characters.	Lulu: (Laughs)
		HA WS of the house	Blanca: (Laughs)
		HA WS of the interior. Women enter the house.	Elektra: Welcome home.
12	00:24	FS of all four characters	Angel: Oh, my God. This is, like, straight out Architectural Digest or something. Lulu: Oh, my
		OTS WS of the living room	goodness. I call dibs on this couch right
		FS of Lulu, Angel and Elektra	here. Elektra: (Chuckles) No, no, no. You all get your own bedrooms,
		WS of Blanca	though the master is mine, obviously. We'll be watching House Party
		MLS of Angel and Elektra, camera moves left in a circular	in the screening room later. Retrieve anything you like

		motion and zooms in on Elektra	from the wine cellar.
		HA WS of the living room	The garage is off limits.
		WS of Blanca	Blanca: What's in the garage?
13	01:41	Funky music stops. Dramatic music starts. HA FS of Joe tied up in a cage in a latex suit. Camera moves up and zooms out. FS of all five characters. Dramatic music stops. Lulu knocks on one of the bars of the cage.	See, I knew something was fishy about this. Did you kidnap this man and steal his house? Elektra: What do you take me for? He invited us. Practically begged me to come, once I planted the idea in his head.
		Ground level (GL) LA MCU of Joe raising his head	
		LA MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: Can he hear us? Elektra: Not with the hood
		LA MCU of Blanca, LA MS of Elektra	and headphones on. Angel: So, I don't get it.
		LA MS of Lulu and Angel	He-He's paying you to take him down here and-and-and-and... and do what exactly? Elektra: Oh, I had a girl come up with him
		LA MCU of Blanca, LA MS of Elektra	earlier to set him up. My job is just to check on him every few hours.
		GL LA MCU of Joe	Tease him a little. Lulu: But, uh...
		LA MS of Lulu and Angel	How does he go to the bathroom in this thing?
		LA FS of Blanca, Elektra, Lulu and Angel: WS of Joe. Angel pokes Joe with her heel.	Elektra: We deprive him of food
		GL LA MCU of Joe panting in excitement	all weekend long. So, no
		LA MS of Blanca and Elektra	worries about number two. Otherwise, he just goes
		LA MS of Lulu and Angel	when he has to. Angel: Oh, girl. Oh, my God. Men are so fucked up. Lulu: Okay. Blanca: You know what? Angel,
		LA MCU of Blanca, LA MS of Elektra	Lulu, y'all go get ready for the beach. We need a moment.
		LA MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: Okay. Angel: All right. Yeah. Lulu. Mm-hmm.
		GL LA of Joe while Lulu and angel chatters and laughs and	

		leaves the garage	
		LA FS of Blanca and Elektra, HA WS of Joe	
		LA MCU of Blanca, LA MS of Elektra	Blanca: We are not having another situation like the other time. Elektra: Don't worry.
		GL LA MCU of Joe. Elektra crouches and removes Joe's blindfold and headphones.	The mask doesn't cover his mouth. He's perfectly safe. Look. Joe, Blanca.
		LA MS of Blanca	Blanca, Joe.
		GL LA MCU of Joe, LA MS of Elektra	Joe: Nice to meet you. (Panting) Elektra: Hm. Feeling dehydrated, Joe?
		LA MLS of Blanca	Light-headed? Joe: No.
		GL LA MCU of Joe, LA MS of Elektra	I'm feeling amazing. I'm loving being out here, where it's still scorching hot in the garage. Elektra: Mm-hmm. Joe: And even more isolated. Elektra: Mm-hmm. Joe: And cover me up again?
		LA MS of Blanca. Funky music starts playing.	Elektra: How long before we should come back?
		GL LA MCU of Joe, LA MS of Elektra	Joe: Tomorrow.
		LA MS of Blanca	Blanca: How long before we should come back? Joe: Ow.
		LA FS of Blanca, Elektra, WS of Joe. Blanca and Elektra leaves. Funky music stops.	Elektra: Okay. Let's hit the beach, darling, come on.
		Blackout	
14	05:44	Establishing shot of the ocean waves. "It Must Have Been Love" by Roxette is playing. Seagulls squawking and flying above the waves.	
		Extreme wide show (EWS) of the beach. "It Must Have Been Love" by Roxette fades and quietly continues in the background. The camera moves down to HA WS of Angel, Lulu, Elektra and Blanca lying and sitting on the sand.	Angel: You know, why the hell are we cooped up on that stinking island when we could be out here,

	HA MLS of Angel lying down	living like movie stars?
	MCU of Elektra	Elektra: No sweaty subways, no skyscrapers to trap the heat.
	WS of all four characters	This is heaven. Angel: Yes, it is.
	MCU of Blanca	Blanca: You know, all my life, I've lived an hour away from here, and this is the first time I've ever seen the ocean.
	HA MLS of Angel	You know, my late
	MLS of Angel, LA MLS of Lulu, Elektra and Blanca	mother used to tell me, "If you ever feel too big for your britches, go to the ocean and stare at it.
	MCU of Blanca	It'll make you feel small." Elektra: Mm-hmm. Blanca: Now I know what she was talking about.
	WS of the ocean over the beach	
	MCU of Blanca	
	FS of all four characters. Blanca gets up.	Blanca: Should we dip our toes
	MS of Blanca	in? Elektra: Uh-uh.
	MCU of Elektra	No way. I've seen <i>Jaws</i> way too many times to know better.
	FS of all four characters	Besides, I taste too sweet for sharks to resist.
	MCU of Lulu	Lulu: Girl, I just got my edges laid, and I'm not going near any water this
	MS of Blanca	weekend. Blanca: Angel?
	HA MLS of Angel	Angel: All right, now, y'all don't laugh at me but I am terrified of water. I don't know how to swim.
	MS of Blanca	I mean, I always wanted to learn, but there ain't no pools in the
	MCU of Lulu	projects. One
	MLS of Angel, LA MLS of Lulu and Elektra from the left	day my father brought me over to the, uh, fancy country club
	MS of Blanca	up north in the Bronx. He said he

	HA MLS of Angel	was gonna finally teach me how to swim but then, when we got there, girl, they ain't let us past the front desk.
	MCU of Elektra	Blanca: If it's any
	MS of Blanca	consolation, I'm not a good swimmer either.
	FS of all four characters	How about we teach each other right now?
	HA MS of Angel	Angel: Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah. Blanca: What? Angel: Ain't no way. Blanca: We'll hold hands. Angel: Hell no. Blanca: We won't
	MS of Blanca	go past our thighs. Angel: What if I
	HA MS of Angel	get stung by a jellyfish?
	MCU of Elektra	Elektra: Shark!
	MLS of Angel, LA FS Lulu and Blanca from the left	Blanca: Oh, come on, y'all.
	MS of Blanca	Blanca: When are we gonna ever do this again as a family? This is our vacation.
	HA WS of all four characters	Come on, let's live out our dreams.
	MCU of Lulu	Lulu: (Chuckles)
	MCU of Elektra	Angel: Jesus Christ.
	MLS of Angel, LA FS of Lulu and Elektra from the left	All right. Blanca: Y'all can stay
	LA MLS of Blanca on the left, LA WS of Adrian on the right top corner sitting at the top of the lifeguard tower.	here. Come on, Angel.
	MCU of Lulu	Angel: Bye, girls.
	FS of all four characters. Angel and Blanca walk right and exit the frame	Lulu: Have fun. Don't get bit. Elektra: I should've sent that damn girl to school. Lulu: (Laughs)
	"It Must Have Been Love" by Roxette stops. MS of Blanca and Angel from behind as they walk towards the shore.	Angel: I'll go in
	MCU of Blanca from profile, MS of Angel	the water only if your promise not to let go. Blanca: I promise.
	MS of Blanca and Angel from profile as they lock pinkies	

	MCU of Blanca from profile, MS of Angel. They stare into each other's eyes.	
	MCU of Angel and Blanca	Angel: All right. Blanca: (Laughs)
	MCU of Blanca from profile, MS of Angel	Yo, since we're making promises... Angel: Hmm? Blanca: You keeping yours? Angel: What you talking about? (...) Drugs? I ain't done none of that. (Chuckles) I know you got people checking on me.
	RAS of Angel and Blanca	Watching. Blanca: Uh-huh. As a mother you gotta keep eyes in the back of your head, spies in these streets. Angel: (Chuckles)
	RAS of Blanca and Angel	Angel: Okay, Mother of the Year. Blanca: That's right.
	MS of Blanca and Angel from behind. Emotional music starts playing.	Angel: No, but seriously,
	MCU of Angel, MS of Blanca	I haven't touched any of that stuff.
	RAS of Blanca and Angel	I promise.
	MS of Blanca and Angel from behind	Maybe soon enough I'll be back in your good graces
	MCU of Blanca, MS of Angel	and me and Papi can come back home. Blanca: Good. But you an adult now.
	MS of Blanca and Angel from behind	You and Papi got your own home. You gotta maintain it so you can have your own children, and raise them right.
	MCU of Blanca, MS of Angel	I want to make you Mother of the Year one day. Angel: Oh. Thank you.
	MS of Angel and Blanca. Emotional music stops. "Forever Your Girl" by Paula Abdul starts playing.	I know. (Laughs) Blanca: Come on.
	EWS of Angel and Blanca jumping and running at the shore.	
	"Forever Your Girl" By Paula	Lulu: Girl, why are they

	Abdul fades and continues playing in the background. HA WS of Elektra reading a magazine and Lulu putting on sunscreen	staring at us?
	MCU of Elektra with a man and a woman sitting far behind her	Elektra: Girl, who? Lulu: You think they clocking us? Elektra: They're just taking in the view. You're being paranoid.
	MCU of Lulu	Lulu: And what if you're wrong?
	MLS of Lulu and Elektra sitting down	Elektra: That's why I hid my switchblade in the cooler.
	HA MCU of Lulu and Elektra	Lulu: Mm. Elektra: (Sighs) Lulu: What you over here thinking about? You look like you just went somewhere. Elektra: I wish Candy was here. I miss that girl. Lulu: Yeah.
	FS of Lulu and Elektra	Elektra: I was so preoccupied with giving her a distinguished send-off that I never went up to her casket.
	MCU of Elektra	
	HA MCU of Lulu and Elektra	Lulu: What?
	MCU of Elektra	Elektra: I don't have any regrets. But I do regret that.
	MCU of Lulu and MLS of Elektra	Lulu: If it's any consolation, you sent her home in style.
	HA MCU of Lulu and Elektra	Candy would've wanted nothing less from you. Thank you for that, Mother.
	MCU of Lulu and MLS of Elektra	(Whistle blowing)
	MCU of Lulu	
	FS of Lulu and Elektra. "Forever Your Girl" by Paula Abdul stops playing.	Lulu: Where's Blanca?
	GL EWS of Angel running. Dramatic music starts playing.	Angel: Help! Lifeguard!
	LA WS of Adrian running to the ocean. Camera pans to the left as Adrian runs by	Life- Lifeguard.
	HA FS of Adrian diving into the water and swimming towards Blanca	Angel: Help her! Elektra: Oh my God! Please save her!

	MS of Blanca. The camera is halfway inside the water waves covering the frame as they hit.	Blanca: (Gasping for air) Angel: Blanca!
	MS of Adrian and Blanca. The camera is halfway inside the water, waves covering the frame as they hit.	Elektra: Blanca! Angel: We were splashing around and then [indistinct speech].
	FS of Adrian and Blanca	(Indistinct speech from the shore)
	LA MCU of Adrian and Blanca. The camera is halfway inside the water waves covering the frame as they hit.	(Indistinct speech from the shore)
	Music becomes more upbeat. Water drips off of camera one last time as Adrian carries Blanca to the shore. LA WS of the shore from the ocean	Lulu: Blanca! Elektra: No!
	GL LA WS of all five characters	No, no. Lulu: Oh, my
	GL MS of Blanca from profile as Adrian lays her down on the sand	God. Oh, my God. Angel: Oh, my God.
	MLS of Lulu, Elektra and Angel	Mother. Lulu: Blanca.
	GL MS of Blanca from profile as Adrian starts giving her CPR	Elektra: Please get up, Blanca. Angel: Please get up. Get up. Get up.
	MCU of Lulu and Elektra	Elektra: I can't lose another daughter! Come on! Lulu: Blanca!
	GL MS of Blanca and Adrian from profile as Adrian gives her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation	Angel: Get up! Elektra: No!
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Oh, God. Lulu: Blanca, come on.
	LA FS of all five characters	come on.
	OS OTS MCU of Blanca	Adrian: Five, six, seven... Angel: Get up! Lulu. Blanca.
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Elektra: Come on, Blanca!
	GL MCU of Blanca from profile. Music calms down.	Blanca: (Coughing) Angel: Okay, okay.
	LA FS of all five characters	Elektra. Oh! Lulu: Oh, thank you, Jesus.
	MCU of Lulu, Elektra and	

		Angel	
		OS OTS MCU of Blanca. Music becomes emotional.	Elektra: Oh, dear God, thank you.
		LA Blanca's point of view (POV) looking up to Adrian smiling	Adrian: Nice to meet you.
		OS OTS MCU of Blanca. Music stops.	
		Blackout	
15	00:26	LA WS of the garage. Camera moves down to an MS of Joe as Elektra walks towards Joe's cage. LA MS of Elektra as she lifts Joe's headphones to talk to him and then puts them back on. Joe pants as Elektra leaves.	Elektra: Joe, I must ask. Where are you hiding the adult beverages? Joe: Uh, there should be some in the wine cellar. Elektra: It's empty, you idiot! Joe: Uh, I'm sor-- I haven't been out here a lot this summer. I guess my house person didn't have time to... Elektra: Absolutely useless. Joe: (Pants in excitement) Lulu (voiceover): I'm telling you girl,
16	01:06	MLS of Lulu leaning on the bar	he was feeling it.
		MS of Blanca leaning on a window frame	Blanca: He was not. Lulu: I saw it.
		MLS of Lulu walking	He was feeling it and (...) it was big. Blanca: Oh,
		WS of Blanca	girl, whatever. The one time I go to the beach and I almost die. People
		WS of Lulu and Blanca	were looking at me. I feel so stupid.
		MS of Blanca	Nah, for real, though. I feel like he was trying to slip a little tongue in there. Lulu: Ah!
		MLS of Lulu, Angel searching for something in the background.	Get it, bitch. (Chuckles) Blanca: I could've
		WS of Blanca	lied there all day with him on top of me and let him do whatever he wanted.
		FS of Angel bent over	Angel: Mother!
		MCU of Blanca	Blanca: What? I don't care if anybody was watching.
		FS of Lulu, WS of Blanca	Lulu: She's just living her life. Elektra: Please tell me you're

		HA MLS of Elektra walking up the stairs. Funky music starts playing.	not still speaking of black Hasselhoff.
		FS of Blanca	We must concentrate on what
		MLS of Angel	really matters.
		LA MS of Elektra	Were any of you able to find us a suitable beverage?
		MLS of Angel	Angel: Just warm beer and scotch. Elektra: That
		LA MS of Elektra	just won't do. Lulu: How does
		MLS of Lulu	this man have all this money and nothing to drink? Angel: Girl,
		MLS of Angel	white people. Lulu: Mm.
		FS of Lulu and Elektra, WS of Angel	Elektra: You know what?
		WS of Lulu, Elektra and Blanca	Get dressed. We're going out. Angel: To town?
		FS of Angel	Us?
		LA MS of Elektra	Elektra: Fuck that. We have nothing to hide.
		MLS of Blanca, FS of Lulu and Elektra, WS of Angel	We're going out and treating ourselves to a feast and a drink. Lulu: (Chuckles) Why just one? Blanca: And I've always
		MS of Lulu, MLS of Blanca	wanted to try one of those Long Island iced teas. Lulu: Yes! Elektra: Well, Blanca dear, when in
		MS of Blanca, FS of Lulu and Elektra, WS of Angel	Rome... Ladies, to our rooms. Lulu: (Laughs)
		WS of women walking away. Music fades away.	(Excited chatter)
17	01:25	"Fly Me to the Moon" plays on the piano. FS of the hostess, Ange, Lulu, Elektra and Blanca. They walk towards the camera. MS of the hostess, MLS of, Angel, Lulu, Elektra and Blanca	Elektra: Four, please.
		WS of the restaurant, HA WS of people in the room. MLS of the hostess showing the women their table at the	Could we please have a

		corner of the room.	
		WS of the room from the other corner. Main characters visible behind the other customers.	table by the window? Hostess: I'm sorry, but all of our window tables
		OTH MS of hostess. Elektra's head is off the frame.	are reserved.
		RAS FS of Angel, Lulu, Blanca and Elektra	Lulu: (Grunts softly) Angel: She lying.
		WS of the room behind their table as they take their seats	Oh, all these people looking at
		MCU of Blanca	Me (Indistinct murmur). Hostess: Can I
		MCU of Blanca from the side, MLS of Elektra and the hostess	start you off with something to drink? Lulu: Yes.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	We'll have four Long Island iced teas, thank you. Blanca: And can we have a
		OTS MS of Blanca	shrimp cocktail while we look at the menu? I'm starving. Hostess: Sure thing. Your waiter
		OTH MLS of Lulu and Blanca and FS of Elektra and Blanca	will be with you shortly. Lulu: Thank you.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	Angel: Damn. Ew, this place is mad bougie. Lulu: (Scoffs) I don't recognize anything on this menu. What is a caviar blini?
		MCU of Blanca	Elektra: It's a small pancake
		HA MS of Angel and Elektra	wafer topped with caviar.
		WS of the room, HA MLS of Elektra and Angel from the back and HA FS of Blanca and Lulu.	They're sinful and delightful. Lulu: Well, let's
		MS of Lulu and Angel	get some. Angel: Ooh, I want the calamari.
		OTS MS of Blanca	Blanca: And some lobster, too. Elektra: Order
		MCU of Blanca from profile, MS of Elektra	what you like, children. Dinner is on me.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	Angel: Oh, thank you, Mother. Lulu: Well, I want to get some oysters. Y'all like oysters?

		OTS MS of Blanca	Angel: Ew. oysters are mad nasty. They've like the little clam shells with the
		RAS MS of Elektra	whatnot in it. Lulu: I wanna try.
		RAS MS of Blanca. Piano stops. Emotional music starts playing.	That might... Blanca: Thank you, Elektra. You don't know how badly I needed this.
		RAS MS of Elektra	Elektra: We may not live in the same house,
		RAS MS of Blanca	but you'll always be my daughter, Blanca. Lulu: Aww! Angel: Aww!
		MS of Lulu and Angel	(Lulu and Angel laughs)
		WS of the room, HA MLS of Elektra and Angel from the back and FS of Blanca and Lulu.	Elektra: You're all my children. Angel: That's why you paying for the food. Blanca: Ooh! Lulu: Ooh! (Laughs)
18	02:14	The piano is playing a slow music. WS of the restaurant. The camera turns and moves to the left	Lulu: Oh. Oh, you didn't. Elektra: (Laughs) Angel: (Laughs) Elektra: I can't believe
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Elektra	we lost him.
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	Angel: Lost who?
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Elektra	Elektra: Luther Vandross.
		OTS MS of Blanca	Blanca: Girl. Angel: Girl,
		MS of Lulu and Angel	he gay, he ain't dead. Elektra: He might as well be
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Elektra	if I can't have him. Lulu: Girl, stop being
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	stingy. Luther's behind is a whole meal, and all the boys want a bite,
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Elektra	okay? (Laughs)
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: Okay, I cannot keep up with this conversation. If you will excuse me,
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	I got to go pee out some of this liquor. Lulu: Mm-hmm.
		MS of Blanca stumbling as she gets up from her chair	Ooh!

	MS of Lulu and Angel	Angel: Be careful, now. Oh, shit. Lulu: You getting thick, girl. Angel: Oh. Elektra: She cannot handle
	MLS of Lulu, Angel and Elektra. A woman approaches the table from the right.	her liquor. (All laugh) Woman: Hello,
	CS of the woman	ladies. I'm a loyal customer here, out with my girl friends and
	OTH MS of Elektra	we're having just the darndest
	OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	time trying to relax into
	CS of the woman	this peaceful summer evening.
	OTH MS of Elektra	And what is it that we can do for you?
	LA OTS of the woman	There's nothing peaceful about your grating voices.
	MS of Lulu and Angel	Cackling so loudly,
	LA OTS of the woman	we can't even hear our own conversation.
	OTH MS of Elektra	Lulu: Elektra.
	OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	Do not do it. This one right here is
	OTH MS of Elektra	not worth it. Elektra: I don't think that my girlfriends and I are any louder than these other tables.
	CS of the woman	Why don't you be frank with us? What
	OTH MS of Elektra	exactly is it that you're trying to say?
	LA OTS of the woman	Woman: I'm no dummy. I work in the city.
	FS of Lulu, Angel and Elektra. MLS of the woman whose head is out of the frame. Music stops.	And I know a man pretending to be a woman when I see one. Angel: Oh,
	LA OTS of the woman	Woman: And I see three right in front of me. Angel: Shit. Lulu: Bitch. Woman: This is not that kind of establishment.
	OTH MS of Elektra	Lulu: Wait a minute.
	OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	Girl.
	Upbeat music starts playing. OTH MS of Elektra. Elektra	Elektra: God may have blessed

	stands up.	
	MLS of Elektra and the woman	you with Barbies, a backyard with a pony
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	in it boyfriend named Jake
	OTH CS of the woman	and an unwanted pregnancy
	WS of the woman's friends at the other table	that your father paid to terminate so
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	you could go to college and major in being a basic bitch.
	OTH CS of the woman	
	MS of Lulu and Angel. Angel snaps her finger to emphasize Elektra's words	
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	None of these things make you a woman.
	OTH CS of the woman	
	MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: Mm-hmm, clear your throat.
	MLS of the woman and OTS MLS of Elektra	Angel: Lubricate. Lulu: Mm-hmm.
	CS of Elektra and MLS the woman from the profile	Now, read that bitch.
	MLS of the woman and OTS MLS of Elektra	Elektra: Your uniform of ill-fitting J. Crew culottes,
	CS of Elektra and MLS the woman from the profile	fake pearls and 50-cent scrunchies
	OTH CS of the woman	cannot conceal the fact that you do not know who you
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	are.
	MS of Lulu and Angel	Angel: Mm. Elektra: I know our presence threatens you.
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	We've fought for our place at this table.
	LA OTS MLS of Elektra	And that has made us stronger than you will ever be.
	MS of Lulu and Angel snapping their fingers	Now
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	pick your jaw up
	OTH CS of the woman	off the floor and go back to your clam chowder
	MLS of another table of clients in the restaurant	and shallow conversations. My
	MLS of the woman and OTS MLS of Elektra	girl friends and I aren't going anywhere.
	OTH CS of the woman	Lulu: It was
	MS of Lulu and Angel	lovely talking to you.
	LA OTS MCU of Elektra	Elektra: Y'all heard that?
	WS of the woman's friends	Angel: Go and get your

		from the other table	
		MLS of Elektra sitting back, WS of the woman going back to her table	clam chowder, before the clam chowder gets you. Lulu: (Laughs)
		MS of Lulu, Angel and Elektra. Upbeat music stops.	Elektra: Shall we order another round? Lulu: Yes, please. Angel: Shit.
19	01:04	Piano playing a slow music in distance. FS of Blanca coming out of the rest room. Walks towards the camera and stops. MLS of Blanca.	
		FS of Adrian from the back, talking on the phone.	Adrian: Mm-hmm. Yeah.
		MLS of Blanca. Blanca walks towards the camera. The camera pans back and to the lefts. MS of Blanca, MLS of Adrian from the back.	Uh... Yes, grams. I'm wearing sunblock.
		HA OTS MS of Blanca	(Chuckles) I know. Brown skin burns, too.
		Blanca taps on Adrian's shoulder. CS of Blanca, MLS of Adrian from the side	Hey, let me call you right back. You look pretty good dry.
		HA OTS MS of Blanca	Blanca: (Laughs) Adrian: (Chuckles) Blanca: So, you saving lives and dishing out compliments, huh?
		LA OTS CS of Adrian. Calm music starts to play. Piano stops.	Adrian: (Chuckles) Something like that. I'm Adrian.
		HA OTS MCU of Blanca	Blanca: (Clears throat) Blanca.
		MS of Blanca, CS of Adrian from the side	Adrian: Pleasure. I've been manning these shores for six summers and I've never done
		HA OTS MCU of Blanca	CPR on anyone with lips like yours. Blanca: Well, I ain't ever had a man slobber over me like that before, so I guess there's a first time for everything. Adrian: (Chuckles)
		LA OTS MS of Adrian. The rhythm of the music picks up.	Why don't you let me take you out for a stroll on the beach?
		HA OTS MCU of Blanca	I'd die a happy man seeing you glow under that

			moonlight.
20	01:22	MS of lulu, MLS of Angel and Elektra sitting at the table. Calm music stops. The piano is playing softly in the background.	Lulu: For a minute there, I thought you was going to show her your signature move and flip this damn table over. Elektra: Damn, I forgot about that.
		FS of Lulu, Angel and Blanca. Elektra stands up.	We should invite her back over for an encore performance.
		MCU of Lulu and Angel. Angel pulls Elektra back to her seat.	Lulu: No, no, no, no, no. Angel: No, no.
		MS of Elektra sitting back down	Lulu: You did it. She- She got the point.
		MS of Blanca sitting back to her chair	Angel: Good. Lulu: Girl, you just missed all of that. Blanca: What happened? Lulu: Never mind that.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	(Chuckles) Angel: Look what the cat dragged in.
		MS of Blanca	Them oysters got to you now, huh? LULU: No! (Chuckles)
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	Blanca: No. Angel: (Laughs)
		MS of Blanca	I ran into that lifeguard.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: Ooh! Angel: Ooh! Elektra: Ooh!
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	Blanca: His name is Adrian,
		MS of Blanca	and he wants to take me on a stroll on the beach.
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	Elektra: You obviously said no.
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: No, I said yes. That man is fine. Plus, it's been a cute minute since I had a man show me that
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	sort of kindness. Angel: Take it for the team. Lulu. He was cute. Elektra: You're insane. It's
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	unsafe for girls like us to walk off in the middle of the night with a stranger.
		OTS MS of Blanca	You know you can't trust a

			man once the sun goes down.
		MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: That's true. Angel: Why, I didn't think about that.
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: That doesn't make any sense.
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	Angel: Yes, it does.
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel	You know these men are afraid of their desires for us. They take it out on us all the time.
		OTS MS of Blanca	Elektra: That's probably what happened to Candy.
		MCU of Blanca from profile, OTS MS of Elektra	They don't kill us because they hate us. They kill us because they hate what it means to love us. Blanca: So, am I supposed to just live in
		MS of Blanca	fear for the rest of my life?
		OTS MS of Elektra	Die without
		MS of Blanca	ever knowing love?
		MS of Lulu and Angel	Lulu: Maybe you could just meet him for coffee or something before we head back, girl. Angel: Yeah. Blanca: Where's the
		MS of Blanca	passion in that?
		FS of all four characters	Listen, I know y'all care for me
		MS of Blanca. Elektra grabs Blanca by the arm. Piano stops. Funky music starts to play.	but I have to trust my instincts on this one. I'm going. Elektra: Wait.
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Elektra. Elektra gives Blanca her switchblade.	If you're going to go at least take this.
		OTS MS of Blanca	ANGEL: (Grunts softly)
		OTS MS of Lulu and Angel. Angel gives Blanca her knuckledusters.	
		MCU of Blanca from profile, MS of Elektra	
		MS of Lulu and Angel. Lulu gives Blanca her taser.	Lulu: (Grunts softly)
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: (Chuckles softly)
21	02:34	Funky music fades away. HA	Blanca: I feel like I'm in one

		EWS of the beach at night. Blanca and Adrian are walking in the distance on the left side of the frame.	of those K-Tel commercials or something.
		MCU of Blanca, MS of Adrian. Blanca and Adrian are walking towards the camera and the camera moves backwards with them.	Selling one of those world's greatest love song albums. Adrian: That's good, right? Blanca: It's like a dream. (...) So, you do this to all your damsels in distress? Adrian: No. I'm not like that. I take this job seriously. Though I'll admit, sometimes the rich white ladies will pretend to be drowning in the hopes of fulfilling some fantasy. Blanca: (Chuckles) Adrian: (Chuckles) I go to Fordham the rest of the year. I'm studying to be a doctor. Blanca: For real? Adrian: Yeah. Blanca: Damn, you must be smart. Adrian: My mom died of stomach cancer when I was ten. One thing I noticed, all the orderlies were black and brown, some of the nurses too, but every doctor was white. I'm sure they did their best, but I think it helps to be looked after by one of your own, you know?
		The camera slowly pans left to Blanca's side but keeps the characters in the centre.	Do you have a dream? Blanca: I had one. I'm in the beauty profession. Nails mostly. I recently opened my very own salon but it burnt down. Adrian: That's terrible, I'm so sorry. Blanca: It's all right.
		HA EWS of the beach. Blanca and Adrian are at the bottom left corner. The camera slowly pans down towards Blanca and Adrian.	I'm a very optimistic person by nature. But I've got no illusions about the outside world having my back. Adrian: Outside world? Blanca: Um, you know, my

			community, and the outside world, and all those things.
		Romantic music starts playing. CS of Blanca, CS of Adrian. Adrian turns to Blanca. Blanca turns to Adrian. The camera zooms in and pans right to Adrian's side. The camera continues zooming in. MCU of Blanca, MS of Adrian. The camera moves up to a HA MCU of Blanca, MS of Adrian.	Adrian: I know, Blanca. You don't have to pretend with me. Blanca: So, you've been with a girl like me before? Adrian: No. It's not like that. You're a beautiful, funny, soulful woman. That's all that matters to me. Blanca: This has got to be a dream. (Chuckles) Adrian: Can I kiss you?
		MCU of Blanca from profile, LA MCU of Adrian from the side. Adrian leans in for a kiss. Music gets louder.	Blanca: Didn't you already do that earlier? Adrian: A real kiss. Blanca: I'm not stopping you.
		MCU of Blanca and Adrian kissing.	
		LA FS of Blanca and Adrian kissing. Music fades.	
		Blackout	
22	00:32	ES of the fences of the house with the beach and the ocean in the background. Blissful music starts to play. The camera pans left to a HA WS of Blanca. Blanca walks to the fences. Opens and goes through the fence door. Walks past the camera as the camera pans to the left. WS of the garden and the house. Blanca walks towards the house.	
23	02:14	Blissful music fades. LA WS of Elektra sitting down, Lulu vaulting and Angel pouring herself a drink by the bar, over the inside pool of the house.	Lulu: Where's she at, you guys? Angel: She should've been here by now. This is crazy. Do you think we should call the cops? Lulu: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my gosh.
		FS of Blanca walking to an MLS shot	
		MCU of Elektra	Where have you been? We
		MS of Elektra	were up all night. I thought he
		LA WS of the room	gutted and drowned you. We were five
		LA MCU of Elektra	minutes away from calling the po-po!

	HA MLS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	Aw, you really do love me. Lulu: (sighs a sigh of relief) Angel: Bitch. Elektra: I'm just
	LA MCU of Elektra	glad you're okay. Lulu: Okay, bitch, sit down.
	MCU of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	What happened? Tell us everything.
	WS of Elektra, Lulu, Blanca and Angel sitting at a high table	Here, this for you. Blanca: Okay. It was...
	MS of Blanca and Angel	Blanca: It was perfect. (Giggles) Angel: I knew it!
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Lulu: (Laughs) Blanca: I felt like I was the
	MS of Blanca and Angel	heroine, the star of some great romantic drama. Angel: (Excited humming)
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Lulu: Ah, oh. Angel: Keep going, Mother.
	MS of Blanca and Angel	Blanca: Oh- Angel: Tell us the details. Blanca: Oh, we went on a walk on the beach, uh...
	MS of Elektra and Lulu	I ain't never seen the moon that big. Lulu: (Sighs)
	MCU of Blanca	Blanca: That bright. (Sighs) His skin glistened in it.
	MCU of Blanca and Angel	And girl, when I tell you them muscles was popping. Angel: Mm! Lulu: Yeah, but what about that muscle down there? Was he
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	packing? Because I know he was, girl! (Laughs) Angel: Ooh! The third
	WS of Elektra, Lulu, Blanca and Angel sitting at a high table	muscle bitch! Elektra: Lulu! I didn't
	MCU of Blanca	raise you to be so vulgar. So
	MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Candy of you. Lulu: Uh-uh-uh-uh-uh. (Laughs) Angel: The third muscle, bitch.

			Blanca: All we did was
		MCU of Blanca	make out. It was romantic. Lulu? Mm-hmm. Blanca? Not lustful at all and it was heartfelt and hopeful.
		MCU of Elektra and Lulu	
		MS of Blanca and Angel	Angel: (Squeals compassionately) Blanca. It's definitely something I had been missing. Lulu: Mm. Blanca: And I needed that.
		MS of Elektra and Lulu	(Sighs) I know that a man is not gonna fill
		MCU of Blanca	the void of me losing my salon, but... It was nice to be wanted and seen.
		MS of Lulu, Blanca and Angel	He made me believe that good things are possible.
		MCU Elektra and Lulu	Lulu: Mm. Angel: Oh, ma'!
		MCU of Blanca	Lulu: (Laughs) Angel: So? Blanca: What?
		MS of Blanca and Angel	Angel: Did you tell him T? Blanca: Oh, I didn't have to. He knew. Angel: What?
		MCU of Elektra and Lulu	Lulu: What? Blanca: Mm-hmm.
		MCU of Blanca	He was a gentleman, through and through.
		MS of Elektra and Lulu	Lulu: Girl, give me some. Angel: Ow, Ma. Lulu: Yes. (Chuckles)
		MS of Blanca and Angel	Angel: You gonna see him again?
		MS of Elektra and Lulu	Blanca: I gave him my number. But I ain't got no expectations. Listen, it was perfect and brief. Angel: I feel that.
		WS of Elektra, Lulu, Blanca and Angel sitting at a high table	Blanca: I'm glad I'm here with all of y'all. Angel: It's so good. Lulu: Aw! Angel: We love you. Lulu: (Laughs)

			Angel: (Excited yell) Lulu: Girls' trip!
		LA WS over the pool, Elektra, Lulu, Blanca and Angel are having a group hug	(All scream happily) angel: Oh, my God! Blanca: Girls' trip! Girls' trip! Angel: Girls' trip! Lulu: (Screams) Angel: Girls' trip! Girls' trip!
24	00:55	OS from Elektra's POV, looking down at an MCU of Joe in the cage. Elektra taking off his mask.	Elektra: It's time to go home.
		LA MCU of Elektra from Joe's POV	I assume you can peel yourself out of this suit by yourself? Joe: Yeah.
		OS from Elektra's POV, looking down at an MCU of Joe in the cage Elektra starts unlocking Joe's handcuffs.	Uh, sweat and everything makes it nice and slippery. Mistress Elektra?
		LA MCU of Elektra from Joe's POV	Thank you for talking me into doing this. I kept fantasizing that you drove back to the city without telling anyone I was here.
		OS from Elektra's POV, looking down at an MCU of Joe in the cage	They wouldn't find me for days. Or ever, maybe.
		LA MCU of Elektra from Joe's POV. Emotional music starts to play.	Elektra: Do you realize how luxurious your life is?
		OS from Elektra's POV, looking down at an MCU of Joe in the cage	Joe: Yeah. I know. The house is great.
		LA MCU of Elektra from Joe's POV	Elektra: Not the house. You have the luxury of choosing loneliness.
		OS from Elektra's POV, looking down at an MCU of Joe in the cage	For some
		LA MCU of Elektra from Joe's POV	people, it's not optional.
		HA WS of the garage. Elektra walks and drops the keys to the ground and walks towards the door as the camera pans down. "Hold On" by En Vogue starts to play. Emotional music fades away.	
25	02:11	HA MLS of Blanca, Angel,	Elektra: Ooh! I like this one.

	Elektra and Lulu. They all are dancing.	Blanca: Right? Can we turn it up? Elektra: Yeah! Angel: Pull up the volume. Come on. Elektra: This is nice. Yes.
	CU of Blanca, MCU of Angel. Blanca sings along to the song.	♪Hoo! My first mistake was♪ Angel: Ow! ♪I♪
	MS of Blanca, Angel, Elektra and Lulu from the left	♪wanted too much time♪
	CU of Blanca, MCU of Angel	♪I had to have him morning, noon, and night♪ Angel: Morning, noon and, night, bitch.
	HA MLS of Blanca, Elektra and Lulu	♪If♪
	HA MLS of Blanca and Angel, FS of Elektra and Angel	♪I would've known then♪
	MS of Elektra and Lulu, MLS of Blanca	♪The things that I know now♪
	MCU of Blanca	♪I might not have lost the♪
	HA MLS of Blanca	♪time I complain about♪
	CU of Blanca MCU of Angel. They all start to sing along.	♪Don't waste your time♪
	MS of Elektra and Lulu, MLS of Blanca	♪Fighting blind♪
	MS of Angel and Lulu	♪Minded thoughts of despair♪
	HA MS of Elektra and HA MLS of Blanca	♪Hold on to your love♪
	MS of Blanca and Angel, FS of Elektra	♪You got to hold on♪
	MS of Blanca and Elektra, MLS of Angel and Lulu	♪Hold on to your love (ooh, baby, hold on)♪
	MCU of Lulu and Angel	♪Hold on♪ Lulu: Uh! ♪to your love♪ Angel: Oh, shit. Lulu: Wipe. Wipe. Hit. Hit. ♪Oh, you got to hold on♪
	MCU of Elektra MS of Lulu	♪Hold on to your love, ooh♪
	MCU of Lulu and Angel. Suspenseful music starts to play. Mystic sound effects.	Angel: All right, now, I'm about to show you a... ♪The art of playing games♪
	CU of Elektra	♪now, is not the hearts you break♪
	MS of Candy's reflection on the rear-view mirror. Candy appears and is sitting in	♪It's 'bout good love you make when his heart's on fire♪

	between Angel and Lulu	
	MS of Angel, Candy and Lulu	♪Give him love every day, remember he♪
	MCU of Elektra	♪needs space♪
	MCU of Candy. Suspenseful music stops.	♪Be patient and he'll give his heart to♪
	MS of Angel, Candy and Lulu. Candy starts to sing along with the other women.	♪you, don't waste your time♪ Candy: Don't waste your time.
	CU of Candy	♪Fighting blind♪ Candy: Fighting blind...
	MCU of Elektra	♪minded thoughts♪
	CU of Lulu, Candy and Angel's reflection on the rear-view mirror	♪of despair♪ Candy: Of despair.
	OTS MS of Candy doing a high kick, MS of Lulu	♪Hold on♪ Candy: Hold on.
	MCU of Elektra	♪to your love, you♪
	MS of Blanca and Elektra, MLS of Angel, Candy and Lulu	♪got to hold on, hey, yeah (hold on to your)♪ Candy: Got to hold on. Hey, yeah.
	CU of Candy	♪(love, ooh) You've got to hold on to your love♪ Candy: You've got to hold on to your love.
	MS of Angel, Candy and Lulu	♪Yeah, hey, oh (hold on to your love)♪ Candy: Yeah, hey! Oh.
	CU of Candy	♪Baby, hold on♪ Cand: Baby, hold on.
	MS of Blanca and Elektra, MLS of Angel, Candy and Lulu	♪Hold on to your♪
	Mystic sound effects. CU of Elektra	♪love, ooh♪
	MS of Angel and Lulu	Angel: Uh. ♪Hold on♪
	CU of Elektra	♪to your love, you got to hold♪
	HA FS of Blanca and Elektra from outside the car. Camera pans right and down to MS of Elektra and Lulu.	♪on, (hold on to your love, ohh) don't let go♪ Lulu: (Laughs) ♪you gotta keep the ties, (hold on to your love) and hang on tight, and don't let go♪ Lulu: And don't let go.
	LA FS of the car. Camera pans up to an EWS of the scenery. Car starts moves	♪(Hold on) yeah, hey, (to your love, ooh) scew yaba ooh ya yaba don't let go, hold

		further ahead.	on to your love♪ Blanca: Yeah.
		Blackout	
26	02:24	MLS of Blanc and Angel walking in Blanca's house's hallway	Angel: (Laughs) Blanca: I needed that trip so badly and I didn't even know it. We should do this once a year. Make it a thing, just us girls. Angel: Mm-hmm, just us girls. Well, I got a feeling you gonna be going out there a lot more often
		CS of Blanca pouring herself a glass of water from the sink	if things with you and Adrian work out.
		MCU of Angel looking inside the fridge	I'm gonna have to buy you a Long Island Rail Road express pass, Miss Honey. Ha-haa. Blanca: Girl.
		MS of Blanca	Stop it. That boy probably ain't even gonna call me. Angel: Girl, how you know? At least you had a little bit of loving.
		MS of Angel	I'm happy for you.
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: (Laughs)
		MS of Angel	
		MS of Blanca	Could you stay with me for the night? Keep your mother company?
		MS of Angel	Angel: Yeah, of course I'll stay.
		MS of Blanca	Blanca: Thank you.
		MS of Angel	Angel: You're welcome. Blanca: (Chuckles)
		MS of Blanca	Hey.
		CS of Angel	Listen, I know
		MCU of Blanca	we're not in the same house anymore, but I'm glad that we could still make it work.
		CS of Blanca and Angel	Angel: Aw, girl, you so dramatic.
		MS of Blanca	I'm your daughter, what are you talking about? Blanca: Okay, fine.
		MS of Angel	Angel: I'm gonna call Papi real quick and let him know not to expect me.

			Blanca: Okay. Angel: All right.
		MS of Blanca getting a glass from the cupboard and pouring herself a glass of water from the sink. Blanca walks to the living room	Blanca: (Sighs) Angel: Ooh, Mother, you got a new message. Blanca: What? Who?
		MCU of Angel. Blanca comes and stands next to her.	Angel: I dunno. Can I play it? Blanca: It's probably another bill collector, anyway. Angel: I don't know. Let's find out. Blanca: Watch. Adrian (over the phone): Hey, Blanca, it's Adrian. Um... Angel: He called! Blanca: He called? Adrian (over the phone): I know you're probably not home yet but I just wanted to call and let you know I'm thinking about you already. I was thinking about that night. I was thinking maybe we could get together again soon.
		Blanc steps forward and stops the voice recorder. Angel leaves. The camera zooms in on an MCU of Blanca.	Blanca: Oh! Okay. Angel: Ooh! Bitch! Ooh, his voice is so sexy. Blanca: Okay, listen, mind your business. The linens for your bed are in the closet. I'm gonna be on this phone line for a while. (...) Go! Adrian (over the phone): Hello? Blanca: Hey, Adrian.
		Text appears on the screen: "Is solace anywhere more comforting than that in the arms of a sister?" – Alice Walker	

4.2.1. Reality Level

As mentioned earlier under the “Analysis Methods” section, our reality and the way we perceive it are already filtered through our cultural codes (Fiske, 2001, p. 4). Television uses these cultural codes in its productions to convey audiences its intended meanings and the characters’ appearance, their environment, the way they speak and the way they behave influence how the audiences perceive them. This section will look into how *Pose* encodes its characters at what Fiske (2001) calls the “reality level.” This part of the analysis focuses on what can be seen on the screen, what is visible to the audiences. The following sub-sections will examine the appearance of the characters, their environment, the way they speak and the way they behave. Throughout the analysis, a few characters who play smaller but significant roles in the episode will also be mentioned along with the main characters, namely Frederica, Joe, Adrian and the woman at the restaurant. However, the main focus of the analysis remains on the black trans women in the episode.

In this sub-section, the characters will be examined under three different categories in terms of how they look: their physical appearance, their clothes and their make-up. Physical appearance in this case refers to their bodily features such as their skin colour, hair style, hair colour, height or secondary sex characteristics. It is important to lay out the physical features of the characters because they can be used to convey certain messages to the audiences who bring along their preconceived ideas about certain groups of people with them (such as people of colour, LGBTQ individuals, women, men or people who are differently abled) and they may affect their viewing experience and the meanings they produce from these representations. Their clothes and make up should also be analysed because they can be used to accentuate or hide some of the character’s features and they can convey messages about a character’s personality and social class (Tuğan, 2017, p. 182). After the characters’ overall appearance is analysed, their environment will be examined as well because the context an

event takes place can change, enhance or reduce the conveyed meaning or how we perceive the characters since it gives the audiences information about their habitus. Lastly, the characters' speech and behaviour should be examined because the way a character speaks and acts reflects their personality and indicates their social class; thus, they can carry certain meanings and affect the meanings that can be produced.

Physical Appearance

When talking about the physical appearance of black trans women, the use of an intersectional lens would yield a multi-dimensional understanding. In western societies, as one of the results of colonialism, women's beauty standards have been formed around white bodies and white femininity which values fair skinned bodies with blue eyes and long voluminous hair. It is also important to note that people who possess these qualities are usually regarded as being from a higher social class. In this equation, black women are immediately pushed outside the boundaries of desirability for being dark skinned alone, if not for their other features.

In a patriarchal society, where women's bodies are objectified for male pleasure, large breasts, large hips, thin waists and petite, hairless bodies are also among the standards of desirability. These standards are impossible to achieve for most women, if not all, regardless of their background or identity. Despite of their impossibility, however, women are not only judged by society for the way their bodies look but they are also made to feel self-conscious about them. In addition, the capitalist system benefits from these standards and actively reinforces them. Women who are made to feel discontented with the way their bodies look, feel compelled to change them and thus, consume products to lose weight, buy cosmetic products, remove their "excess" body hair or consult to cosmetic operations to achieve these standards. But, while they are encouraged to do so, they can also be judged for doing them because they can be perceived as looking "unnatural" and they are expected to meet these

standards without putting much effort into it, such as using certain products or going through certain procedures such as cosmetic surgery (Bonell et al., 2021, p. 235). In other words, women are expected to make themselves look beautiful within reasonable limits, and cosmetic surgeries are considered as a violation of those limits (Bonell et al., 2021, p. 236). Receivers of cosmetic surgeries can be judged for their choices for violating their sanctity or cheating their way to beauty, thus, deceiving their potential partners (Bonell et al., 2021, pp. 235, 236). In addition, recipients of cosmetic surgery can be seen by others as being colder, less competent, immoral and dehumanized (Bonell et al., 2021, p. 234).

In a way, the perception people have towards recipients of plastic surgery being “deceitful” is similar to the experiences of trans women. In society, trans women can be seen as “not being real women” because they may achieve their feminine looks by going through a series of operations and taking hormonal medications. From this perspective, people’s perceptions of plastic surgery intersect with transphobic ideas. So, the appearance of black transsexual women in the episode should be evaluated in light of the information presented above.

The characters’ physical appearances are as follows:

- Blanca has a dark skin colour, black curly hair, and of a smaller build overall.
- Elektra has a darker skin colour than Blanca and is taller than the other characters. In the 5th scene while she is working as a dominatrix, she has long straight hair but for the rest of the episode she has shorter, black, wavy hair which she usually puts in a stylish bun. She also has a slender body.
- Angel has a dark skin colour similar to Blanca’s, black hair with thick curls, and a thin body.

- Lulu has a dark skin colour that is lighter than the others. She has voluminous light-brown wavy hair and a voluptuous body with large breasts and large hips.
- Candy has a dark skin colour closer to Elektra's, black hair with thick curls, and a thin body.
- Frederica has a white skin colour, dark-brown wavy hair, and an average build.
- Joe has a white skin colour, no hair (although his eyebrows have a blonde/light brown colour), a stubble, blue eyes, and an average build.
- Adrian has a dark skin colour, short curly hair, short curly beard, and a slim but fit body.
- The woman at the restaurant has a white skin colour, blue eyes, blonde wavy hair, and a petite body.

The trans characters' thin, slim or voluptuous, hairless and overall feminine bodies fit the traditional and normative western female beauty standards. Blanca, Angel, Elektra and Candy's bodies do not look surgically enhanced. So, they have a more "natural" or "effortless" look in this sense. The traditionally beautiful and feminine look of their bodies gives the leading characters a cisgender passing look and visually reinforces their identity as women. Thus, the appearance of the black trans characters challenges the white centric beauty standards (the idea that white bodies are more attractive) and the stereotype about transsexual women as "actually being men," which is commonly used in media productions. But while the leading characters' appearance challenges this harmful stereotype that delegitimizes their gender identity as women, at the same time the implicit reinforcement of the characters' womanhood through their cisgender passing looks runs the risk of reproducing cisgender-normative standards about womanhood and femininity, which is related to what Billard (2019) notes in their study. It also reproduces the normative female beauty standards of the western world in this sense. So, from this perspective, the physical appearance of the black

trans women both challenges and/or reproduces normative standards about gender and beauty in the western culture.

While all of the above can be said for Lulu, as well, it should be noted that she is the only one among the characters whose bodily features look like they have been surgically enhanced. While this does not reduce her cisgender passing appearance and she does fit the traditional standards of feminine beauty, it takes away from her “effortlessly beautiful” look, which other characters seem to possess. Keeping in mind the biased perceptions of people about cosmetic operations, her visibly enhanced beauty might present her as being a superficial character or being fake.

The year 1964 saw the end of the segregation era in the United States; however, white people have continued to marginalize and systemically push black people to lower classes. In the episode (which takes place in the early 1990), Frederica, Joe and the woman at the restaurant create a clear contrast with the leading characters in terms of race and social class, with their white skin and higher economic status contrasting the dark skin and lower economic status of black trans women. Although Angel and Elektra seem relatively well off in the episode, they come from a lower-class background. Also, Angel’s modelling career and current living standards depend on her cisgender passing appearance and the discreetness of her trans identity, and Elektra depends on her income from her job as a sex worker.

As mentioned earlier, western female beauty standards are white-centric and tend to value qualities that are found more commonly on white bodies, leaving black women outside of the boundaries of desirability. The woman at the restaurant with her fair skin blonde hair, blue eyes and petite body is a prime example of white female beauty standards transmitted from the colonial times and serves as an embodiment of them. However, the leading characters in the episode are more attractive than either of the white women in the episode.

Thus, the episode also challenges the white supremacist female beauty standards and argues that black bodies are beautiful and desirable too.

Clothes and Makeup

The characters' outfits are just as important as their physical appearance. Clothes are a way for people to express themselves. Thus, a character's outfit contains meanings and convey messages about their personality, social class, gender, cultural, racial and ethnic background and the time period the story takes place (Tuğan, 2017, p. 182). They can also be used to accentuate certain features of a character (Tuğan, 2017, p. 182). In this context, colour plays an important role, too, because colours as signs can be and are used (in areas such as marketing or during cultural rituals) to evoke certain emotions or carry certain meanings, such as in the example of the wedding dresses which signifies the bride's purity with its white colour. Thus, colours can present a character in a certain way or associate them with certain ideas. The meanings colours convey are culture and context dependent (Elliot & Maier, 2014, p. 109; Madden et al., 2000, pp. 96-98). To illustrate, the colour red can be associated with various unrelated meanings such as love, anger or even socialism. Overall, though, generally, warm colours (with longer wavelengths) evoke arousing feelings and cooler colours (with shorter wavelengths) have calming effects (Elliot, 2015, p. 1). In addition, red, blue and green are especially important colours because studies suggest that red has enhancing affects in terms of sexual attraction (Elliot & Maier, 2014, pp. 102, 106, 107) and blue and green, being plentifully present in nature, has positive connotations (p. 108). In addition, although black usually has negative and white usually has positive connotations, in the context of clothing, black may indicate fashionableness and increase attractiveness (Elliot & Maier, 2014, p. 109). So, the importance of a character's wardrobe choices is apparent and should be investigated.

All of the above is also true for the character's use of makeup, as well. Similar to clothing, makeup can also be used to hide or accentuate a character's features, express their

personality and present them from a certain perspective. In addition, it is also used to make someone, especially women, more attractive according to the established beauty standards (Elliot & Maier, 2014, p. 106). Also, using makeup to hide certain features can reproduce the normative standards about beauty. On the other hand, similar to people's perception on cosmetic surgery, an excessive use of makeup can make women look dehumanized, enable others to deny their agency and can make them look "less competent, warm and moral" (Bernard et al., 2020, p. 323).

In the episode the leading characters change outfits a few times and because the episode is set in a summer month, they all wear thin, short or revealing clothes such as sleeveless tops, short shorts or bikinis. For the majority of the episode, though, the leading characters appear in two outfits: their beachwear and evening dresses. Although all of their outfits will be taken into account in the analysis, this is an important point that needs to be made because the leading characters appear in these outfits the longest; thus, they might have a stronger effect on how they are perceived. The characters' outfits will be analysed in the chronological order of the scenes, and screenshots from the episode will be presented accordingly. The descriptions of their clothes will be presented in a table, under their respective screenshots.

Figure 2.
Blanca restlessly tossing and turning in her bed.



Table 2.

Outfits 1

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca	Pink, sleeveless pyjama top with a floral pattern Grey sports shorts		

In this scene Blanca wears comfortable clothes and no makeup. She wears a pink top and pink is usually associated with femininity and has positive connotations. The scene shows a moment from her daily, mundane life and her natural appearance adds to the character’s realism and makes her look relatable.

Figure 3.

Blanca and Frederica at Blanca's burnt down nail salon.

**Table 3.**

Outfits 2

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca	Red bralette Colourful shirt with an abstract pattern A high-waist skirt that matches her shirt Flat, black slippers	Red bandana Gold coloured round White bag with two black stripes	Foundation Pink lipstick Blush False eyelashes Light brown, nude eyeshadow Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Frederica	White shirt Below the knee, beige skirt Yellow coat Yellow and white heels	Yellow hat Brown belt Gold and white necklace Golden ring Gold bag White, half-globe earrings	Foundation Blush Dark pink lipstick False eyelashes Dark eyeshadow Medium length nails with clear nail polish and French tips

Blanca's first two outfits dominantly have warmer colours such as pink, red, yellow and orange. Up until the 7th scene, the characters struggle with the summer heat. The warm colours of Blanca's two outfits may have been used to visually reflect the heat she is feeling or to reflect the troubled emotional state she is in. Here, the colours of her outfit may signify emotions such as anger, frustration and maybe even resentment. In relation to that, her multi-

coloured and abstract patterned outfit may have also been used to reinforce her distressed and turbulent emotional state.

In the scenes, Blanca's makeup is subtle and looks natural, which adds to her casual appearance while subtly enhancing her attractiveness. Her loose and comfortable outfit and overall low effort look makes her look casual and relatable.

Frederica's put together, neat and elegant look visually contrasts Blanca's colourful, casual and comfortable outfit. Frederica's outfit reflects her upper-class status while Blanca in her casual outfit looks middle to low class. Also, her prim and proper look might make Frederica seem cold and insincere. The cut of her outfit also has sharper lines than Blanca's and she is more clothed than Blanca; Blanca's outfit shows more of her skin. The cut of Blanca's outfit makes her look more humane and likable while Frederica's makes her look intimidating and cold. In addition, Blanca's outfit presents her as vulnerable covering less of her body while Frederica's outfit almost covers her entire body, giving her more barriers, so to speak. While this highlights the social class differences between the characters, it also further validates Blanca's victimhood and makes more sympathetic.

When we examine her look within the context of the situation and the dialogues, the warm and light colours in her outfit further reinforce her insincerity because the positive connotations the colours have contradict her attitude. In addition, Frederica's makeup is not heavy and has a natural look. Her makeup enhances her beauty, but when examined in light of her actions it might, again, add to her insincerity.

Figure 4.

Elektra listening to Joe.

**Figure 5.**

Joe asking Elektra for extra time.

**Table 4.**

Outfits 3

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Elektra	Black, short, latex dress with a bustier which is connected to a neck corset Black elbow length gloves Dark pantyhose Knee-high heeled boots	Triangular earrings with black stones and light brown frames Leather spanking paddle	Foundation Dark blush Dark maroon lip gloss False eyelashes Glossy, dark violet eye shadow Hair extensions
Joe	Latex bondage outfit	Hand cuffs Ankle cuffs	

In the scene, Elektra's form fitting black outfit accentuates her upper arms, her chest and her face and presents her in a sexually attractive way. Keeping in mind the context and the power dynamics between her and Joe within the BDSM/kink scene they are playing out, her outfit also enhances her powerful, dominant and sexually appealing appearance. Her bold and glossy makeup with dark tones elevates her feminine and beautiful appearance and complements and adds colour to her look rather than drawing all focus unto her face. Throughout the scene she looks powerful, dominant and attractive.

In contrast, Joe, who has his hands and ankles tied and cuffed inside a black latex body suit, is presented in a submissive role. His outfit draws focus unto the only visible parts of his body which are his mouth and his eyes, highlighting his facial expressions. Thus, his outfit makes his emotions and the pleasure he gets from being in that position more visible. Because kinks are usually considered to be outside the boundaries of acceptable and normative sexual activities (even within heterosexual standards) and can sometimes be judged as being pervasive, being able to prominently observe the pleasure Joe gets from this activity implicitly creates an uncomfortable environment for the audiences. This presents Joe in a negative way and as a deviant figure. This image is also reinforced by the main characters' attitudes in the scene where they see Joe in the cage at the beach house.

Figure 6.

Elektra talking about going to the beach.



Figure 7.

Elektra looking at the crate in her closet.



Figure 8.

Lulu, Blanca and Angel listening to Elektra's plan.



Table 5.*Outfits 4*

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca	Red bralette Colourful shirt with an abstract pattern and a matching high-waist skirt Flat, black slippers	Red bandana Gold coloured round White bag with two black stripes	Foundation Pink lipstick Blush False eyelashes Light brown, nude eyeshadow Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Elektra (cutaway)	Dark rose gold pyjama top	Orange and brown turban Cigarette	
Elektra	Orange top with an asymmetric shoulder Orange skirt Gold slippers	Big, yellow belt Gold bracelet Gold earrings from woven bars Gold ring	Foundation Blush Dark, tile red lipstick False eyelashes Gold and brown eyeshadow Long nails with rose gold nail polish
Lulu	Lavender dress Green heels	Purple belt with a braided, green, blue and purple section and blue, green and purple fish with a gold frame at the front as buckle Earrings with purple, yellow and green balls	Foundation Blush Nude lipstick Lavender eyeshadow Medium length nails with pink nail polish
Angel	Pink top with pink feathers Black shorts	Round earrings with blue stones and gold frames	Pink lipstick Medium length nails with green/blue nail polish

The overall appearance of the women in the scene creates an intimate environment.

Blanca and Angel have a very casual look with their comfortable clothes and little or subtle makeup. Their makeup highlights their attractiveness while giving them a natural and effortless look.

Elektra has a stylish outfit and Lulu wears a simple dress and heels that accentuates her curves. However, Lulu's dress is less casual than Angel and Blanca's outfits. Yet, her outfit is also less sophisticated than Elektra's. While her dress makes her look feminine and attractive, the lack of sophistication might make her look a bit tacky. Both Elektra and Lulu's makeup add to their attractiveness and complement the colours of their outfits. Although Elektra and Lulu's clothes are not as casual as the others', they have either messed up hair or sweat marks or both. So, they do not have a neat and tidy look, either. The casual or messy looks of the characters implicitly convey their close and intimate relationship, add to their realism and make them more relatable. In addition, while the characters' confidence about looking unkempt or casual in each other's presence shows the intimacy they share with each other, seeing them in that situation also makes the audiences feel involved in that intimate relationship and makes the characters more sympathetic.

Figure 9.

Electra hanging car air fresheners in her closet.

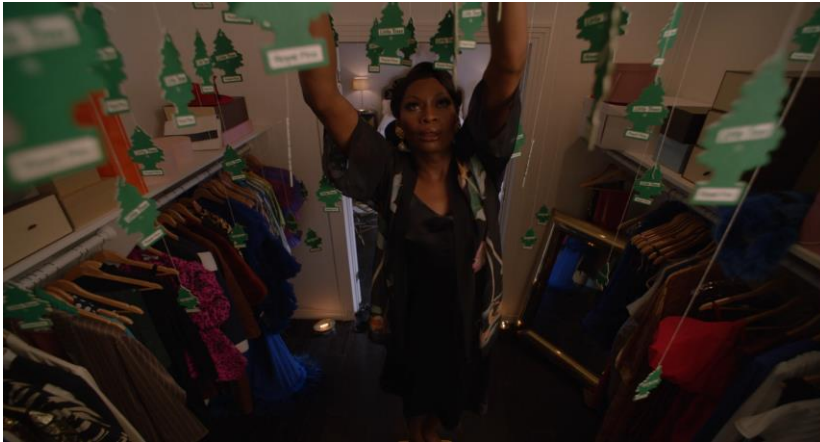


Figure 10.

Angel suggesting that they should go shopping for Blanca.



Figure 11.

Blanca trying on new clothes.



Figure 12.

Blanca, Angel, Lulu and Elektra going to the beach.

**Table 6.**

Outfits 5

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca (casual)	Blue and white t-shirt Jean shorts Flat, black slippers	Straw hat Gold hoop earrings Baby-blue and white striped beach bag	Foundation Blush Nude lipstick False eyelashes Nude eyeshadow Has her hair in pig tails Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Blanca	Dark-blue bralette bikini top with three purple stripes and a zipper Dark-blue skirt three purple stripes and a zipper Yellow, open, ankle heels	Gold and white vizor Gold hoop earrings Purple bikini cover-up top Animal print sunglasses	Foundation Blush Pink lipstick False eyelashes Purple eyeshadow Has her hair up in a pony tail Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Elektra (casual)	Black night dress Black gown with pink and blue flowers on it	Golden, shell shaped earrings with a white ball hanging from it	Foundation Dark blush Light brown, nude lip gloss False eyelashes Brown, nude eyeshadow Long nails rose gold nail polish
Elektra	One-piece, pink	Golden, shell shaped	Foundation

	swimsuit with a deep V-neck and a big pink flower on its shoulder Pink slippers with heels and white bows	earrings with a white ball hanging from it golden bracelet Pink bikini cover-up bottom with a floral pattern White beach hat with black stripes and a flower on its side Pink sunglasses White bag	Dark blush Light brown, nude lip gloss False eyelashes Brown, nude eyeshadow/Pink eyeshadow Long nails with rose gold nail polish
Lulu	Yellow, pink and black bikini top Blue and black bikini bottom Pink, open, ankle heels	Yellow, pink, blue and black bikini cover-up gown Gold earrings with two black stipe shaped stones on them Black, see-through beach hat with a blue sash around it	Foundation Light brown, nude lip gloss False eyelashes Blue eyeshadow Medium length nails with pink nail polish
Angel	Asymmetric white and green bikini top with a triangular hole in the middle White and green bikini bottom with a triangular hole at the right side Green, open, ankle heels	Green turban Rainbow-coloured feathers with sparkles on them White sunglasses	Foundation Blush Nude lipstick False eyelashes White and blue eyeshadow Medium length nails with green/blue nail polish

The characters have their beach outfits from the 7th scene up until the 17th scene, for a total of 15 minutes and 48 seconds. In the 7th scene, all the characters, except Blanca, fit the traditional standards of female beauty and their stylish swimwear contrasts their previous unkempt looks. The characters are presented in a hyperfeminine and sexual way in their revealing beachwear. They accentuate their feminine features, present them within the traditional norms of femininity and womanhood which, again, reproduces traditional standards about female beauty and sexualize their bodies. Blanca, in her casual outfit, breaks this pattern of accentuated femininity; however, she, too, changes her outfit into one that presents her in a hyperfeminine way after the others encourage her. While the motivation

behind Blanca's outfit change is her gaining some confidence to wear the clothes that she wants to wear without thinking about what people might think or say about her and from that perspective the scene conveys the message that one should be free to embrace their authentic self, which is closely related to the emphasis within feminist and queer theory on self-determination. This outfit change also implies that trans women want to present themselves in a hyperfeminine way but may lack the confidence to do so because of transphobic societal conditions or other reasons. However, while some trans women may wish to present themselves in a hyperfeminine way, as Julia Searano (2004) notes, this is a stereotypical assumption (p. 43) because some others may not. Thus, while the scene conveys oppositional messages in regards to transphobic discourses in society, the outfit change itself reproduces stereotypical ideas and normative standards about womanhood and femininity and sexualizes their bodies.

All characters' swimsuits have their own distinct styles and colour palettes, highlighting the diverse personalities within their group. But, Blanca, Angel and Lulu all have two-piece swimsuits while Elektra has a one-piece one. This visually separates Elektra from the others. What this wardrobe choice might signify can be interpreted from two different perspectives. The first is related to aesthetic concerns. Because all the other characters have a two-piece swimsuit, Elektra's one-piece suit might have been used to balance or add variety to them. In addition, though, the others' two-piece swimsuits are also different from one another's in terms of style and colour. All four characters have their distinct styles of swimwear with different colours. Thus, the characters' distinct swimwear gives a message of diversity, too. On the other hand, the one-piece swimsuit could have been used to reinforce Elektra's image as a motherly figure. Elektra used to be the mother of the House of Abundance, to which all other trans women in the episode belonged to, and to an extent, she still plays a motherly role in their group. From this perspective, the relatively less trendy type of swimsuit she has on

might encode her in a way that enhances her motherly aura. Yet, admittedly, despite being a relatively old-fashioned type of swimsuit, it is a stylish one.



Figure 13.

Angel, Lulu, Blanca and Elektra are requesting a table.



Figure 14.

Customers at the restaurant.



Figure 15.

Elektra is reading the woman.



Figure 16.

Blanca and Adrian are talking.

**Table 7.**

Outfits 6

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca	Sleeveless turquoise dress with small, reflective, golden spark shapes on it Pink heels	Leather bag with multiple colours, patterns and textures and a red shoulder handle Gold shell shaped earrings	Foundation Blush Brown, nude lipstick False lashes Blueish-white eyeshadow Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Elektra	Plain, short, pink, sleeveless dress Long, pink, sleeveless crochet dress Gold heels	Handbag with dark green and gold stripes Gold, round earrings with red and maroon stones on them Big, gold, plate necklace with an abstract shape	Foundation Blush Pink lip gloss Pink and black eyeshadow Long nails with rose gold nail polish
Lulu	Plain, short, sleeveless white dress Pink and white heels	White handbag Gold bracelets Gold chain necklace with pink and golden seashells attached to it Gold earrings with three geometric shapes and blue crystals	Foundation Pink lipstick Very subtle blush False eyelashes White eyeshadow Eyeliner Medium length nails with pink nail polish
Angel	Plain, short, sleeveless red dress Red white and black heels	Black leather bag Gold hoop earrings	Foundation Blush Dark red lipstick Mascara Brown nude

			eyeshadow Medium length nails with blue/green nail polish
The woman	White polo shirt Baby-blue culottes Beige open shoes	Baby-pink belt Scrunchie Fake pearl necklace Earrings with a gold frame and a white, round stone with an anchor printed on it	Foundation Blush Nude lipstick Short nails with pink nail polish
Adrian	Turquoise and blue shirt with an abstract pattern on it A pair of grey pants Brown shoes	Brown belt	

The women's evening outfits are the second set of the outfits they wear the longest, after their beachwear. They appear in their evening dresses for a total of 6 scenes and for 11 minutes and 31 seconds. Their dresses are simple, yet they present them as feminine and beautiful. Individually, the colours of their dresses are monochrome, but, as a group, their dresses are colourful. In addition, the colours of Blanca, Elektra, Lulu and Angel's makeup match those of their dresses, which adds to their feminine, beautiful and colourful looks. The styles of their dresses are quite similar to one another's. The unity of style in their clothes creates a sense of solidarity among them. However, Elektra's dress separates her from the other women to a degree, once again. While Angel, Lulu, and Blanca all have dresses with above the knee skirts, Elektra's crochet dress (which she wears on top of a simple pink dress with a mini skirt) ends just above her ankles, at about three fourths of her shins. While Elektra's dress looks stylish and mature, Angel, Lulu, and Blanca's dresses look stylish and youthful, at least compared to Elektra's. Separating Elektra from the others in this way while also not breaking the group's sense of unity implicitly reinforces Elektra's motherly and leader image. Also, Elektra's dress accentuates her neck and shoulder area and her big jewellery draws the eye to her face. This allows the audiences to focus on Elektra's facial

expressions and emotions. This is especially important for the instances where Elektra and Blanca have an emotional moment and when Elektra “reads” (a term commonly used by LGBTQ members which refers to the act of insulting someone in a relatively kind manner by pointing out the person’s flaws and shortcomings without using swearwords) the woman who discriminates them.

The outfits the women wear also set them apart from the other people at the restaurant. Compared to the other customers, their dresses look diverse in colour while the customers’ outfits look quite similar to one another’s in terms of style and colour. The customers dominantly wear white or beige clothes with some blue and greens and floral and plaid patterns sprinkle across the room. Contrasting that, all the main characters wear clothes with distinct colours. Although, individually, Blanca and Lulu’s dresses do blend in with the other customers to a degree, Elektra and Angel’s pink and red dresses stand out. The wardrobe choices of the main characters separate them from the people at the restaurant and present them as an outsider group which disturbs the customer’s unity. Overall, the outfit choices of the main characters contribute to their standing out as a group within the restaurant and create a sense that the black trans women do not fit in or belong in that environment.

As mentioned above, the woman who comes to the main character’s table to discriminate them for their transsexuality is a good example of the racist female beauty standards. Her makeup and the style of her clothes reinforce her image as a stereotypical white, conservative, Christian, American woman. Her makeup is very subtle and gives her a natural look. Unlike the main characters, her makeup does not complement the colours of her outfit. Her outfit is not revealing or form fitting. It is simple, traditional and lacks a sense of fashionableness and style, which is present in the outfits of the main characters. In addition, her popped collars and belt also gives her outfit sharper lines which, again, contrasts the softer lines of the main characters and presents her as less likable. Ironically, though, while the

woman discriminates the main characters for being transsexual, the colours of her clothes are those of the transgender flag (white, baby-pink and baby-blue). This can be interpreted in two ways. Because the episode is set in the early 1990s and the transgender flag was designed in 1999, the blue and pink colours in this particular case might signify her belief in traditional and cisgender normative gender categories. However, even though the transgender flag was not designed at the time period the episode is set in, the contradiction between her actions and the colours of her clothes is still observable for the series' contemporary audiences. Thus, it is more likely that this contradiction would reinforce the character's insincerity and even make her look foolish in an ironic manner.

Lastly, Adrian's smart casual outfit presents him as a decent and trustworthy character and within the traditional category of masculinity. The colour of his shirt is important because it matches the colour of Blanca's dress. This visually reinforces idea that the characters might be a good romantic match.

Figure 17.

Elektra walking out after releasing Joe.



Figure 18.

The characters are dancing and singing along to “Hold On” by En Vogue.



Figure 19.

Blanca and Angel at Blanca’s apartment.



Table 8.*Outfits 7*

	Clothes	Accessories	Makeup
Blanca	White, off-shoulder crop-top High-waist jean skirt Yellow, open, angle heels	Big, yellow hoop earrings	Foundation Blush Nude lipstick False lashes Nude eyeshadow Long nails with clear nail polish and French tips
Elektra	Dark blue rompers with gold buttons and pocket lines	Red hat Gold necklace Gold earrings with two blue stones Gold bracelet Black and gold sunglasses	Foundation Blush Red lip gloss False lashes Nude and black eyeshadow
Lulu	Sleeveless top with a floral pattern on it High waist, pink skirt	Beige and black belt Black and white sunglasses Green earrings	Foundation Brown, nude lipstick Medium length nails with pink nail polish (Eye makeup hidden behind her sunglasses and not visible)
Angel	Pink, plaited dress Open, red sandals	Pink and yellow, abstract patterned turban Earrings with pink crystals White sunglasses	Foundation Blush Mascara Pink lipstick Medium length nails with blue/green nail polish
Candy	Gold bra Yellow, sleeveless vest Pink heels	Gold sunglasses Pink record earrings Pink, blue, green and white bow Yellow handbag with pink, purple and blue abstract shapes	Foundation Blush False lashes Pink lipstick Yellow eyeshadow Blue eyeliner Medium length nails with pink nail polish

The last set of outfits the main characters wear looks diverse and casual. Among all, Elektra and Candy have the most stylish outfits and the most prominent makeup. Blanca, Angel and Lulu's casual outfits give them an effortless look and their makeup, and despite

being subtler compared to Elektra and Candy, they highlight their attractiveness. Elektra and Candy's stylish outfits make them look authoritative with their sharp lines and their prominent makeup complements the colours of their outfits.

When we look at all the outfits and makeup worn throughout the scenes, certain patterns seem to emerge. First of all, the outfits of the leading characters have been used to present them within the traditional standards of femininity and female beauty. Through their outfits, the episode reinforces the black trans characters' identity as women, and even when they are not dressed in a hyperfeminine way, they are never presented as masculine or "manly." Thus, the wardrobe choices contribute to challenge the stereotype which delegitimizes the gender identity of trans women. While presenting them in a hyperfeminine way might contain such oppositional meanings, they also carry the risk of reproducing normative standards about femininity, female beauty and womanhood and sexualizing their bodies in the process because, as Serano (2004) notes, the fascination over presenting trans women in a hyperfeminine way is a "by-product of [media's] sexualization of all women" (p. 45). In other words, the representations in the episode avoid using certain stereotypes about trans women but reproduces stereotypes about women as a general category in the meantime.

The leading characters' style as a group conveys messages of diversity and unity at the same time. The styles of the leading characters' clothes (except for their evening dresses) are distinctly different from one another's. This is closely linked to the postmodern emphasis within feminist and queer theory on diversity. However, this emphasis on diversity is only presented through a lens of hyperfemininity and of the traditional standards of female beauty. All the main characters have their distinct styles that reflect their personality but still present them as traditionally feminine. In this sense, the episode conveys self-contradictory meanings because, while the series gives the characters their own, distinct styles, the diversity remains on the surface and the episode falls short of presenting alternative subjectivity positions

outside the normative understandings of femininity and womanhood. To put it differently, the episode presents trans women in the episode solely within cisgender-passing standards and falls short on presenting diverse trans identities.

The colours of the main characters' clothes convey contain certain meanings, as well. The diverse colours of their outfits reflect their individual personalities and styles but they also frequently contain certain colours. After the group decides to go to the beach, the outfits of some of the character always include white, pink and blue. In their beachwear, Angel wears white, Elektra wears pink and Blanca wears blue; in their evening dresses, Lulu wears white, Elektra wears pink and Blanca wears blue; and in their last outfits, Blanca wears white, Elektra wears blue and Angel wears pink. Although the tones of the colours are different than the tones of the transgender flag, they are the colours of the transgender flag. Thus, the outfits of the leading characters present them in a hyperfeminine way and might subtly emphasize the characters' transgender identity at the same time.

Colour plays an important role in their makeup, as well. When Angel and Blanca are not dressed up, their makeup contains nude colours to highlight their attractiveness and to give them a natural and effortless look. For Lulu and Elektra, their makeup usually complements the colour of their outfits. This is also true for Angel and Blanca when they wear their beachwear and evening dresses and for Candy when she appears in the car. Thus, for the main characters, makeup is used to add to their attractiveness, give them a natural appearance and, as an extension of their outfits, complement their colours.

The individual styles of the leading characters contain certain patterns, as well, and convey information about the characters' personality. When we look at Blanca's outfits throughout the episode, she has a more casual or comfort-oriented style compared to the other characters and her style presents her as a relatable and likable character because while looking beautiful, she does not look like as putting more effort into how she looks than the socially

accepted standards. Her looks also parallels her mood. In the beginning and the early scenes of the episode, when she is stressed, angry and heated up, the dominantly warm colours of her clothes visually convey her emotions. After she changes into her second swimsuit, her mood elevates and she becomes calmer and happier. Along with her mood, her clothes become more stylish, as well. In addition, she dominantly wears blue after the characters decide to go to the beach, with is a colour with positive connotations such as calmness, trustworthiness and security and has strong links with the nature. Her clothes present her as a relatable character with her unthreateningly stylish and beautiful look and colours with positive connotations.

Contrary to Blanca's outfits, Elektra's outfits are never casual; even her pyjamas and night gowns are stylish. Elektra's stylish and sophisticated outfits reinforce her worldly and motherly image, indicate her well-off economic status, emphasize her poised and authoritative character and present her as a strong woman. Throughout the episode, she wears various outfits with different but mostly warm colours. As mentioned earlier, warm colours are arousing and they might have been used to reflect or complement Elektra's caring, assertive and aggressive personality. For two of the outfits she wears the longest in the episode (her swimwear and her evening dress in which, together, she appears for about three fourths of the episode), she wears pink which is associated with femininity. Patriarchy, which sees women as existing for male pleasure, associates femininity with passivity; however, Elektra's aggressive character contradicts this notion. By presenting herself as hyperfeminine and being caring, assertive and aggressive at the same time, Elektra challenges normative patriarchal views on womanhood and shows that empowerment and femininity are not exclusive categories.

The colours of Lulu's outfits do not follow a pattern in terms of the consistent use of a certain colour; however, the style and colours of her clothes convey messages about her as a character. In the episode, she wears both warm and cool colours with positive connotations

such as lavender, purple, green, pink, yellow, blue, and white. Although her beachwear also includes black, which is a colour that contains negative connotations, it is used to add to her attractiveness rather than signifying negative meanings. Like Elektra, she, too, wears stylish clothes throughout the episode but hers are not as sophisticated as Elektra's. This sometimes might make her look tacky. This indicates that her economic status is not as high as Elektra's and she is not as worldly as her. Despite the lack of sophistication in her clothes, at least in comparison to Elektra, they still make her look feminine and attractive.

The outfits and the makeup Angel wears in the episode emphasises her image as a "natural beauty." In the series, she works as a model and is known for her beauty and cisgender passing appearance. In the episode, she either wears the least amount of makeup or the most subtle one, and half of her outfits are very casual. One of her outfits which are not casual is her beachwear which is very revealing and does not try to hide any part of her body but highlights them. Also, the colours of her beachwear are white and green. Both of the colours have positive connotations and green is usually associated with the nature. In addition, her earrings are made of feathers, which, again, strengthen her connection with nature and add to her image as a "natural beauty." Although her evening dress does not add to her "natural" image with its red colour, it enhances her attractiveness, nonetheless. Overall, Angel is presented as the most "natural" and the one with the most effortless beauty among the group.

In the episode, Candy appears as a daydream for a very short amount of time but her clothes also convey messages about her character. She wears a casual but very stylish and trendy outfit. The style of her outfit gives her a youthful and rebellious look. The warm colours of her outfit which are associated with vibrancy reinforce her youthful appearance. Her overall look makes her seem well and alive which conveys the message that she lives in the leading characters memories and still is a part of their family, even though she is dead.

Environment

The episode, on a macro level, is set in two locations: New York and a town with a beach, outside the city. In these locations, the main characters are shown in domestic, public and work spaces. We shall first look at the environments that the characters are presented in the New York city and then move on to the places they occupy when they go to the beach.

In the scenes 1, 6 and 7, the leading characters are presented in domestic spaces, in Blanca and Elektra's homes. The place the 1st and 6th scenes take place is Blanca's house, and the 7th scene is set in Elektra's house. The two environments drastically contrast each other. Blanca's house does not look messy but there are items on the kitchen counter, clothes on a chair and items on the nightstand in Blanca's bedroom as well as a floor bed, some fans and some other items like a half-full glass of water in the living room. This creates the feeling that the apartment is habited and someone actually lives in that house and makes the place look realistic.

Interior of the apartment looks a bit worn down, with broken door glasses and torn blinds. The decorations do not look stylish but functional instead, and they look worn down, as well. In addition, the colours of the furnishings are mostly the tones of brown, beige and mustard-yellow, which gives the apartment an old and crude feeling. In short, the apartment reflects Blanca's lower class economic status. In this environment, the black transsexual characters are presented in poor living conditions. By doing so, the series, as a period drama with references to events from our own reality, reflects and raises awareness about the tough conditions and injustices LGBTQ people of colour have had to endure and presents them from a sympathetic lens, but, from a certain perspective, it might also feed into the "pathetic transsexual" stereotype. However, Elektra's tidy and elegantly decorated three-storey apartment with black, white and gold decorations counters this stereotype by signifying her high economic status, giving the message that not all transsexual women lead miserable lives

or live in poor conditions. By doing so, the episode conveys the message that transsexual or transgender experience cannot be generalized into one (stereotypical) category and transgender people, just like any other group in society, live diverse lives. Still, in the series, Elektra's income depends on her work in the sex industry as a dominatrix which reproduces another stereotype.

The episode shows how trans women are excluded, marginalized and discriminated in spaces that have been gentrified for people who belong to normative sexual identities. When Blanca tries to start her own business in a location where Frederica thinks will be gentrified and actively tries to contribute to that gentrification, Blanca's nail salon mysteriously burns down in an explosion, most likely caused by Frederica who wanted to kick her out. This event criticizes how transsexual people are forced out from and are not allowed to exist or work in areas thought to be designated for new urban middle classes.

Elektra's work space, however, depicts her in a sex dungeon, working as a dominatrix. The dungeon has no windows and is underground. So, contrary to Blanca's work place, it is isolated from the outside world. It also contains various different kink tools and furniture. Here, Elektra is presented in an environment outside the common population's sight and in a place where extreme sexual activities are played out. Thus, the scenes implicitly code the leading characters as belonging to those places outside the view of the public makes use of the common stereotype that presents transsexual women as sex workers.

In the city, the leading characters mostly spend their time indoors; one of the public environments they are presented for a short amount of time is inside a clothing shop where Blanca gets her new swimsuit. The leading characters are depicted outdoors in one scene in the city, which is the scene when they get into their car. Thus, it can be said that the episode depicts the city as a confined space and adds a sultry feeling to the scenes. It is also worth

noting that the part of the city they are in is a lower-class neighbourhood, and the leading characters are depicted in relation to that environment.

The scenes which take place in the city are mostly set inside domestic and work spaces but a big portion of the scenes at the beach town are set in outdoor and public areas. The main characters only spend 39 seconds of their time outside when they are in the city. After they leave the city, including the scenes where they are on the road, the leading characters spend a total of 15 minutes and 25 seconds of their vacation time in outdoor and semi-outdoor areas.

The leading characters spend a large part of the episode in public spaces such as the beach and the restaurant. In these spaces, discrimination is a common theme. The leading characters, more specifically Lulu, are worried about someone “clocking” them (figuring out their trans identity). Lulu also expresses her concern about being “clocked” at the beach while they are getting ready at Elektra’s place and Angel talks about her concern about people discriminating them in the city’s streets when they walk in their swimwear. The leading characters also experience micro and explicit discriminations while they are at the restaurant. The hostess and the customers give them anxious and weird looks and the woman who comes at their table explicitly discriminates them for being trans. Thus, the public spaces, for the trans characters, are associated with the risk of discrimination. The series, here, presents an oppositional message about transsexual characters not being able to go out without having to worry about being discriminated. As mentioned earlier, *Pose* takes a lot of inspiration from the documentary *Paris is Burning*. The scene where the leading characters relax at the beach and especially the part where Angel and Blanca have an emotional conversation (see Figure 21) and then have fun in the ocean most likely takes its inspiration from the scene where Brooke and Carmen Extravaganza chat and have fun at the beach in *Paris is Burning* (see Figure 20). This has been pointed out by some others, as well (Heller, 2019). The similarity is also reinforced by the green feather earrings Carmen wears because, although Angel takes

them off before she walks towards the ocean with Blanca, she wears rainbow coloured feather earrings (for a clear image of the earrings, see Figure 22). Although the scene in *Pose* is not a re-enactment or a copy of the scene in *Paris is Burning*, there are strong resemblances to suggest that the scene took some inspiration from *Paris is Burning*. Thus, through these similarities and references, the scene adds to the series' sense of realism, strengthens its status as an extension of our own reality and re-establishes its status as a quality television series.

Figure 20.

Brooke and Carmen Extravaganza at the Beach.



Figure 21.

Angel and Blanca at the Beach.



Figure 22.

Angel with her feather earrings.



Speech

Speech is one of the most important elements in the episode. It is just as important to examine how the leading characters speak in addition to what they say and who says them. Daily practices have been and still are used by higher classes to establish and maintain their privileged social status. In the western world, and more specifically in the context of the series, in the US, black individuals have been relegated by white people to the lowest positions in social hierarchies, and their daily practices (from their cultural habits to the way they speak and the words they use) have been deemed as crude and inferior while images of white individual's daily practices have been constructed as being more civilized and superior.

The characters' accents are one of the factors that indicate their social status and express their personality. The leading characters all have an accent that could be defined as a New York accent through a generalization but New York's districts all have their unique accents and the characters' accent can be defined as, more specifically, being closer to a Harlem or Bronx accent. Stereotypically, as lower-class neighbourhoods dominantly habited by black people and other people of colour, Harlem and Bronx accent would signify the

leading characters' lower social status. However, the characters' accent is not the only factor that would contain such meanings.

The way the leading characters talk varies greatly from one another. Angel and Blanca tend to slur their words. While Lulu has a better articulation than them, she, too, slurs her words sometimes, whereas Elektra is very eloquent in the way she speaks. Elektra also has a very authoritative and confident manner. This reinforces Elektra's image as the mature and motherly figure in the group.

Elektra is not the only character who speaks articulately, though. Frederica and the woman who comes at the characters' table at the restaurant have a standard English accent and are also articulate with their pronunciations. Thus, it can be said that the speech patterns of the white characters who discriminate against the leading characters indicate their higher social status. However, what is most important in their speech is the use of irony and sudden changes of tone. Frederica highly makes use of irony and insincere remarks which adds to her negative image. The insincerity is also apparent in the attitude and the tone of the woman who comes to their table. The sudden change in her speech from kindness to hostility directly codes her as untrustworthy. In addition, the smugness in her voice when she is discriminating against the main characters, as if she exposed their secret, makes her look rude.

The pitch of the leading characters' voice is also an important factor when it comes to their representation. As Candis Cayne (a trans actress) talks about in the documentary *Disclosure* (2020), the pitch of a trans character's voice can be manipulated to convey certain messages such as to imply that they are trans and thus, implicitly, perpetuate the stereotype about trans women as actually being men (Feder, 2020). The episode does not manipulate the characters' voices and the characters speak in their natural tones. The pitch of the characters' voices when they speak is not too high or too low and they all sound natural and traditionally

feminine. Thus, the episode avoids using the harmful stereotype that presents trans women as being men in essence and reinforces and further validates their identity as women.

The episode, while validating the black trans characters' identity as women, does not ignore their trans and black identity, however. The vocabulary the leading characters use includes many words, phrases and exclamations that belong to their specific subculture(s), such as "getting clocked," "getting one's edges laid," "girl," "tucking," "sickening," and "reading." By doing so, the episode reinforces the realistic image the characters have.

Behaviour

When we look at the episode as a whole, the story talks about the validity and recognition of the leading characters' gender identity as women and their standing up against their oppression as trans individuals and liberating themselves. The characters' behaviour also plays a supporting role in the prominence of these themes.

The leading characters perform their gender in a traditionally feminine way which visually reinforces their gender identity as women, and the positive change in their mood and posture parallels their liberation from their physical and social confinement. For the majority of the first seven scenes, the leading characters are shown in confined and private spaces such as their apartments or work places. In these scenes the leading characters, for the most part, look sweltered, serious, sad, demoralized, aggressive or concerned. However, starting from the 7th scene, the leading characters begin to cheer up, and starting from the 8th scene, the leading characters are more and more shown in public and open areas such as the clothing shop, the restaurant and the beach. During these scenes the leading characters are mostly presented as looking happy, smiling, relaxed and having fun. There are instances such as the moment in which Blanca almost drowns and people around them discriminate against the leading characters, when the leading characters look sad, angry or serious; however, these are

brief moments. Thus, the character's behaviours throughout the episode reflect their struggle against and liberation from their oppression as they more and more occupy space in public and defend their right to exist in those places. By doing so, while the events in the episode regularly put them in a position of victimhood, they are not presented as pathetic characters with miserable lives; on the contrary, they are presented as strong women who can stand up for themselves and can lead happy and content lives in spite of their oppression and struggles against it.

The characters' behaviours also show their personality. In the episode, the black transsexual characters usually show positive qualities in their behaviour. Angel's behaviour presents her as a fun, confident, loose and sincere figure; Lulu's behaviour presents her as fun and flirty; Elektra's behaviour presents her as charismatic, aggressive and compassionate, and Blanca's behaviour presents her as compassionate, virtuous and strong-willed. As another black character, Adrian also possesses positive attributes. He is kind, friendly and caring. Other supporting characters, however, do not possess positive attributes. Both Frederica and the woman at the restaurant are arrogant, insincere and mean. Joe, on the other hand, usually behaves in a submissive and deviant manner. Thus, the behaviours of the characters create a clear opposition between the races.

4.2.2. Representational Level

At the representational level, John Fiske's (2001) model focuses on the technical codes through which social codes are transmitted. These codes include technical ones like camera, lighting, editing, and music but also conventional ones such as dialogues, characters, action, settings, narrative structure, conflict and casting choices. In this section, these categories will be analysed.

Camera

Television productions usually use medium to close-up shots to create a sense of intimacy with characters. The episode does not stray from this convention. The frequently used camera shots in the episode are, from the most frequent to less, medium shots (MS), medium close-up (MCU) shots and medium long shots (MLS). So, for the most part, the camera stays within the medium distance range of the characters. By doing so, it keeps a comfortable distance between the characters and the viewers while also forming an intimate relationship between them.

Close-up (CU) shots are also used in the episode; however, for the most part, these are where the characters are shot from the side and one character is closer to the camera than the other. But, there are instances where this technique is used for specific purposes, as well. At the end of the 1st scene, the camera fades into the 2nd scene and to a CU of Blanca looking at her burnt down salon. Here, the CU shot is used to focus on Blanca's facial expression and enhance the effect of the scene by highlighting how shocked she is. CU shots are also used in the 24th scene to enhance the effectiveness of the scene when Candy (who was murdered five episodes ago, in the fourth episode of the season) appears inside the car after Elektra talks about how she regrets not going to her casket earlier in the episode. The CU shots focus on Elektra and Candy's faces. For Elektra, the CU shots highlight her facial expressions and her emotions when Candy appears to her. For Candy, they enhance the emotions she creates in the audiences as she directly stares at the camera and sings "Hold On" by En Vogue directly to the audiences, breaking the fourth wall. This also creates the effect that she is singing the lyrics as an advice for the audiences.

In the episode, over the shoulder (OTS) shots are used to enable identification with the leading characters. In the 2nd scene when Blanca and Frederica are talking, Blanca is always shot with a MCU and is never shown in an OTS shot from Frederica's side but Frederica is

shot both with MCUs and high angle (HA) OTSs from Blanca's side. This locates the camera on Blanca's side and codes Blanca as the character to be identified with. Also, the HA shots of Frederica over Blanca's shoulder adds to this identification process by enabling the camera to see Frederica closer to the angle from which Blanca sees her.

In the scene where the leading characters are discriminated by the woman at the restaurant, the technique has been used for opposite purposes. Here, OTS shots are not used to form identification with the leading characters, particularly Elektra, but to position the audiences as an observer in the room. The camera height stays between the hip and shoulder level of the characters; thus, the camera is situated at a seated level and the audience is assigned an observer position, sitting at the restaurant like they are one of the people in the room. The use of angles is also important in this scene. While the woman is featured with over the hip (OTH) shots, the camera makes no use of HA and low angle (LA) shots. Elektra, however, when taken with OTS shots, is shot from a LA point. LA shots are used to make characters look grander and stronger. Thus, the scene makes Elektra look strong and dominant while she is "reading" the woman and adds to the effect of the scene.

The episode also makes use of point-of-view (POV) shots as well. POV shots put the camera in the characters' position and allow the audience to see the events from their eyes. The technique is first used in the episode when Adrian saves Blanca from drowning and Blanca looks up to him after opening her eyes. Here, the camera technique and the LA shot is used to create and identification between the audiences and Blanca and to make Adrian look grander and admirable. The second scene which this technique is used is the one where Elektra frees Joe from his cage. The scene uses both characters' POV but shows Elektra from a LA and Joe from a HA, presenting Elektra as more dominant, righteous and grander while Joe is presented as inferior and flawed.

Camera angles are also used to add or reinforce the meaning of the scene in other scenes, too. In fact, they are consistently used in the scenes where Joe is present. Other than the scene mentioned above, in the 3rd scene and in the beginning of the 13th scene Joe is shot from a HA shot which makes him look small and submissive. Although, he is mostly shot from regular and low angles and in the 13th scene. In the scene, the other characters are frequently shot from low angles, too, but while they are shot from hip level, Joe is shot from ground level (GL). Thus, even though both shots have a low angle, Joe is presented in a lower position than the other characters by positioning the camera on a lower height. This presents him as inferior and submissive.

Camera angles are also used in the scenes where the leading characters are victimized, sad or happy in order to enhance the effectiveness of the scene. When Blanca is standing in her burnt down shop, she is shot from the top corner of the room with a HA. She is also shot with a HA when Adrian takes her out the water and does CPR on her. In both scenes, Blanca's victimhood is highlighted by the HA shots that present her as vulnerable. The same is also true for Elektra when she talks about how she regrets not going to Candy's casket at the funeral. The HA shots enhance the emotional effect of the scene and add to Elektra's vulnerability.

Other than the ones mentioned above, LA shots are used in one more scene to add to the effect of the scene. When Blanca and Adrian are at the beach, they share an intimate kiss, and the camera pans left and takes the characters at GL and with a LA shot. The angle and the movement of the camera add to the romance in the scene, conveying the message that the characters are experiencing a euphoric moment. This strengthens the message that the characters form a compatible match.

Lighting

The episode makes use of indoor and outdoor environments. So, the lighting in the episode contains both indoor lighting and outdoor natural lighting.

As mentioned above, in the earlier scenes of the episode the leading characters spend most of their time in indoor areas, which means that the artificial lighting can be manually adjusted to create the desired effect. In the earlier scenes, until the 9th scene and except for the 7th scene which is a turning point in the episode where the leading characters' mood takes a turn for the positive, the lighting is dim, dark or warm. Thus, the lighting adds to the depressing and sweltering feelings the scenes contain by creating gloomy or warm environments. The white light in the 7th scene, however, creates a cooling effect in Elektra's air-conditioned house. There is a direct opposition in terms of the use of lighting between the 6th scene where the leading characters sweat in Blanca's house and the light inside the house is warm (for a comparison of warm and cool light used in Blanca's house see Figure 23 and Figure 24 respectively) and the 7th scene where the temperature and the light inside the room are cooler (see Figure 10).

Figure 23.

Elektra in front of the dining room door.



Figure 24.

Angel and Blanca in front of the dining room door.



The earlier scenes in the episode tend to use harsh lighting more than the scenes after the 6th scene. 1st, 2nd, 5th and 6th scenes all use harsh lighting in various ways. In the 1st scene, the harsh lighting adds dramatic effect to Blanca receiving the news about her nail salon burning down. In the 2nd scene, the harsh lighting is used after Frederica touches Blanca's shoulder to create a dramatic and sinister atmosphere and to reinforce the insincere and menacing image of Frederica. In the 5th scene, the overhead light in the corner of Elektra's dungeon harshly illuminates Joe to create an image of him as a deviant character for taking pleasure in the non-normative sexual activity they are playing out. Lastly, the 6th scene tends

to make use of harsh lighting to create a dramatic environment when the characters are talking about Blanca's nail salon burning down. In three of the scenes (1st, 2nd and 6th), the harsh lighting is used to add dramatic effect to the scene. This is also true for the scene where the sunlight in dusk illuminates the characters from the side when Adrian saves Blanca from drowning and for the scene where Elektra frees Joe from his cage. In the 2nd and 5th scenes, however, the harsh lighting is also used to present the white cisgender characters, Frederica and Joe, negatively.

After the leading characters leave the city, they are often shown in softer light and spend more time in outdoors, under natural light. Thus, the characters are presented in warmer environments that do not create a sweltering feeling but intimate ones. Also, the natural light creates a realistic environment and adds to the realism of the episode.

Editing

The duration of the episode is 40 minutes and 10 seconds and as mentioned earlier, they have been split into 26 scenes (including the intro) and five acts (first act is the 1st and 2nd scenes; second act is from 3rd scene to 13th scene; third act is the 14th scene; fourth act is from 15th scene to 21st scene; and fifth act is from 22nd scene to 26th scene; they are all divided by blackouts). The duration of the acts (excluding the intro) are respectively 2 minutes 48 seconds, 12 minutes 32 seconds, 5 minutes 44 seconds, 10 minutes 13 seconds and 8 minutes 16 seconds. The average duration of a scene is 1 minute and 33 seconds. Among them, 9 scenes (1, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 22, 25) are shorter than 1 minute; 7 scenes (10, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20) are shorter than 2 minutes but longer than 1 minute; 7 scenes (2, 6, 18, 21, 23, 25, 26) are shorter than 3 minutes but longer than 2 minutes; 1 scene (7) is shorter than 4 minutes but longer than 3 minutes; and 1 scene (14) is longer than 5 minutes.

When we look at the duration of the scenes and the acts that they belong to, the first act includes one scene shorter than 1 minute and one scene shorter than 3 minutes. In the second act, more than half of the scenes that are shorter than 1 minute are located in it and only two scenes are shorter than 2 minutes, one scene is shorter than 3 minutes and one scene is shorter than 4 minutes. Here we can see that, the first two acts together (which take up the equilibrium, disruption, recognition and some parts of the reparation stages of the narrative) tend to make use of shorter scenes with a few longer scenes among them. This gives the narrative dynamism and quickly builds the story in the first third of the episode. After that, the episode slows down with the 14th scene, the longest scene where the characters spend time at the beach. This creates a sort of a resting point for the story and allows time for character development. The fourth act tends to make use of scenes that are around one to two minutes. This allows the story to unfold in a consistent rhythm. The last act also makes use of this and creates a consistent rhythm with short and long scenes to tie the story to an end. Overall, the story is first quickly built up in the first two acts; then a resting point is established to slow down the narrative, which is then developed and concluded in a consistent rhythm.

The episode is female and black centric as regards to which characters it gives most screen time. The black trans women are present in every scene throughout the episode. There are male characters such as Papi, Adrian and Joe with whom the leading characters interact; however, they only appear in small portions of the episode. The episode also does not give much screen time to white characters either, and when it does, they are usually coded negatively, as mentioned earlier. Thus, it can be said that the episode puts emphasis on the agency of black trans women among its characters and encourages its viewers to identify with them.

In certain scenes, editing techniques have been used to add to the effectiveness of scenes. The fade into the second scene after the first, for example, highlights how shocked and

dissociated Blanca feels after she receives the news about her nail salon. The fade creates a continuum but also a gap between the two scenes. This highlights the shock and disbelief Blanca feels at the moment and conveys her disassociation from her reality. Another technique that is used to emphasize the events in the scene is the moment where Blanca is drowning and Adrian goes into the water to save her. The moments in the water are shot halfway buried in the water but what is important here in terms of editing is when Adrian gets Blanca out: A splash of water runs down the camera lens. This dramatizes the moment when Blanca and Adrian are out of the water and aims to reinforce the audience's identification with the leading characters by presenting the events from their experience.

Editing techniques have been also used to add humour to the scenes, as well. After Elektra tells the women that the garage is off limits at Joe's house and Blanca asks "What is in the garage?" the scene cuts to an image of Joe lying in a cage, shot from a HA point. This sudden scene change right after Blanca's line creates an ironic and rather humorous moment.

Music

In film and television, music is conventionally used to support the emotions and messages a scene tries to convey and to foreshadow the events to come. Throughout the episode, music has been used for these purposes, as well. In every scene, music is added to convey emotions such as sadness (e.g., 7th scene), happiness (e.g., 8th scene and at the end of 4th scene), indicate humorousness (e.g., 18th scene and 20th scene) and malicious intent (e.g., 2nd scene), emphasize the emotionality of a scene (e.g., 17th scene, 21st scene and 22nd scene) and add dramatic effect (e.g., 14th scene and 24th scene). While in some scenes, music is used to convey only one of these effects, in some others, it is used to convey multiple meanings. For example, in the 2nd scene, music first starts off to create a dramatic effect and support the emotions of the scene but when Frederica is saying her last line, a bass is added and the music intensifies, indicating and emphasizing the malicious intent behind her words.

Music can also be used to foreshadow events that are about to come. In the beginning of the first scene, the music is calm and serene, but when Blanca's phone rings and she gets out of her bed the music becomes mysterious and suspenseful. The music in this scene first reinforces the calm environment in Blanca's house and foreshadows the bad news she is about to receive about her nail salon.

The music in the episode sometimes contradicts the image on the screen. In the 6th scene when the camera cuts away to Elektra sitting in her bed and looking at the crate in her closet that contains a dead body in it, the music is upbeat and funky. By contrasting the image on the screen, the music takes away some of the seriousness and the morbidity off the scene. Thus, eliminating or decreasing the possibility of uncomfortable or negative feelings it may evoke.

In the episode, the precise moments when the music stops convey meanings, too. To illustrate, at the end of the 12th scene after Blanca asks "What is in the garage?" the scene cuts to the next one and music stops and fades away. Combined with the sudden cut, as discussed above, the music adds to the humorous effect of the scene. Another moment where this happens is after the woman at the restaurant comes to the leading characters' table and discriminates them by saying "I work in the city. And I know a man pretending to be a woman when I see one." The piano in the room suddenly stops playing. This emphasizes the offensiveness of the woman's words and indicates the shock she creates in the leading characters and even in the room.

The episode uses a similar strategy in some other scenes to enhance the effectiveness and to reinforce the dramatic events that take place. It does this by silencing the music in the background and replacing it with another one. To illustrate, in the 6th scene, "Everything" by Jody Watley fades away and is replaced with some other music in two occasions. In the first one, this strategy is used to change the feeling of the moment where the scene cuts away to

Elektra looking at the crate in her closet and in the second, it is used to reinforce the cheerful moment when Elektra tells the others to get ready to leave for the beach. In another example, in the 7th scene, when Blanca yells at Elektra, the song playing in the background, “Roni” by Bobby Brown, fades away and some dramatic music takes its place to support the emotions the characters feel in the scene. Lastly, the same effect is also used in the scene where Lulu realizes that Blanca is missing in the ocean. As she gets off her lounge, “Forever Your Girl” by Paula Abdul stops playing and a dramatic and suspenseful music starts playing.

The episode also uses music to enhance its realism. It uses music that is from our own reality, namely *Everything* by Jody Watley, *Roni* by Bobby Brown, *Boogie Oogie Oogie* by A Taste of Honey, *It Must Have Been Love* by Roxette, *Forever Your Girl* by Paula Abdul, *Fly Me to the Moon* Frank Sinatra and *Hold On* by En Vogue. Also, the release dates of many of these songs range from 1986 to 1989. Considering that the episode takes place in the early 1990s, the episode uses songs that would be new, popular and relevant at the time period it takes place. Thus, by using both music from our reality and music that would be considered timely as regards the time period the narrative takes place in, the episode reinforces its realism.

In many occasions where these songs are played, they also implicitly create sympathy for the leading characters. Except for *Boogie Oogie Oogie* by A Taste of Honey and *Hold On* by En Vogue, all the songs play in the background when the leading characters are hanging out and talking to each other. By doing so, the scenes create warm and humanized environments and appeal to the audiences’ sympathy. This effect is actually enhanced for the scenes that play *Boogie Oogie Oogie* and *Hold On* because the leading characters also interact with the songs by singing along and dancing to them.

Lastly, the lyrics of *Hold On* by En Vogue carry additional messages in the episode. Firstly, the song comes in two scenes after Blanca talks about her date with Adrian and says

that she does not have expectations about him calling her. The lyrics of the song (which are presented in the table under the “Textual Analysis” section) can be interpreted as reflecting Blanca’s desire to be with Adrian but keeping her expectations low. However, what is more prominent in the scene is the part where Candy appears and sings along and dances with the other women. The part of the lyrics she sings along are presented below.

Don't waste your time fighting blind minded thoughts of despair

Hold on to your love

You got to hold on, hey, yeah (hold on to your love, ooh)

You've got to hold on to your love

Yeah, hey, ooh (hold on to your love)

Baby, hold on (hold on to your love, ooh)

Hold on to your love

As mentioned earlier, Candy stares right at the camera while singing the song. This creates the effect that she is almost singing the words as an advice for the audiences. Keeping in mind that she died five episodes ago, the lyrics that come out of her mouth can be interpreted as a message that encourages one holding on to their love for people who are close to them, even after they are gone. Thus, the scene demonstrates the characters’ sincere and lasting platonic love for each other as a family and re-establishes the idea that family does not consist of people who you have biological ties with but ‘s made up of people you love unconditionally and have strong bonds with.

Dialogue

The dialogues in the episode are used to both create sympathy for the leading characters and to give ideological messages. The back-and-forth conversations the characters have create a natural flow and make the conversations look realistic. Admittedly, the characters sometimes interrupt each-other in the heat of the moment, too, and this further reinforces the realism of the dialogues.

In their dialogues, the leading characters talk about an array of subjects such as their daily problems, regrets, feelings and gratitude for each-other. They also make small talk and jokes with each other. This makes the characters more realistic and sympathetic. To illustrate, seeing characters talk about the rumours about Luther Vandross being gay or Lulu saying “Yeah but what about that muscle down there? Was he packing? Because, I know he was, girl...” appeals to the sympathy of the audiences by making the characters seem ordinary and real people. In addition, the character’s talking about Luther Vandross, a celebrity from our own reality, also reinforces the realness of the characters and the series.

Lastly, the characters give explicitly ideological messages in their dialogues. By doing so, they may raise awareness or draw focus to issues about transphobia, sexism and racism. One important issue that should be mentioned, however, while trans characters explicitly articulate messages about transphobia, they only give implicit messages about racism. The only explicit message about racism is given by Adrian, a black cisgender man. Thus, while trans characters implicitly talk about their racial identity in their dialogues, the episode falls short on expressing the intersectional identity of the leading characters.

Characters

As mentioned earlier, the episode tends to represent black characters positively while representing white characters negatively. By doing so, the episode invites audiences to

identify with the black trans characters and reinforces the negative effect of the white characters' discrimination over them. Although Joe never explicitly discriminates the leading characters in the episode, as a white man working in Wall Street, he is a character who helps sustain the capitalist system that benefits from white supremacist ideals exploiting black individuals. So, he implicitly partakes in the leading characters' discrimination in society. Thus, it can be argued that through its characters, the episode conveys implicit messages that are oppositional to the capitalist and white supremacist ideologies.

Action

In the episode the leading characters do various activities; they make jokes, dance, sing, sunbathe, drive, go out for dinner and chat. In other words, the leading characters are shown doing daily and fun activities. Although they also appear sitting sad, angry and sweltered in the earlier scenes or aggressive when they are explicitly discriminated, they make up a smaller portion of the scenes and presented in a relatable and justifiable way. So, it can be argued that, by doing so, the leading characters are presented in a relatable and sympathetic way. However, Elektra also takes part in kink activities as a sex worker. Even though they are a small part of the episode and are not explicit, they present the character in a sexualized context. Thus, the scenes perpetuate the "transsexual sex worker" stereotype in one sense.

In the 7th scene, the leading characters are shown getting ready in Elektra's house. However, in the scene, the leading characters are already dressed up and ready to go out. The scene does not show them actively putting on their clothes or makeup on. As Serano (2004) notes, media productions tend to depict trans women in a "feminization process," when they are "'putting on' their feminine exteriors," namely their feminine outfits and makeup (p. 43). By doing so, they aim to convey the artificiality of their feminine looks and invalidates their identity as women by presenting them as being men in essence (Serano, 2004, p. 43). While the scene sexualizes the leading characters by showing them in hyperfeminine and revealing

outfits, it does not fetishize the leading characters' sexual identity by showing them putting on their clothes and makeup. In fact, at some point, Blanca shows up wearing a very casual outfit and then decides to change into a hyperfeminine and even then, she is not shown while putting on her clothes. She just gets out of the changing cabin in her new outfit. So, while the scene sexualizes the women, it does not fetishize them by not showing them in the act of putting on their clothes and makeup.

The black trans characters are also shown in engaging romantic activities. When the leading characters are getting in their car to leave for their vacation in the 9th scene, Angel and Papi are shown displaying romantic affection through verbal affirmations and kissing. Also, Blanca and Adrian share a romantic kiss at the beach, too. This is an important point because, as Abbott (2013) points out, representations of sexual and romantic attraction towards trans individuals is usually presented either as a "comic misunderstanding" in the best case scenarios, or as "an abhorrent deception that can justify murder," which are strongly connected to transphobic and homophobic discourses present in society (p. 34). Thus, presenting trans women in happy, romantic and affectionate interactions challenges these stereotypical representations and the transphobic and homophobic discourses in society.

Another important aspect of the leading characters' actions is about how Elektra is separated from the other leading characters. There are numerous examples on how Elektra acts differently than the other characters. First of all, she is presented as the leader of the group. It is always she who stands up against people when they explicitly confront them or discriminate them. To illustrate, she is the one who aggressively responds to the man in the traffic who yells at them for driving badly and stands up against the woman who discriminates them at the restaurant for being transsexual.

She is also physically separated from the other characters, both at Elektra's house and at the shop where they buy Blanca a new swimsuit. In the house, she stands in front of her

children while facing them and in the shop, while other women are standing in front of the mirror, she is at the back, lounging on the couch (see Figure 11). In another example, when the leading characters are going into Joe's house, Angel, Lulu and Blanca form a line on the walkway, take a "T stance" and walk and twirl in unison. However, Elektra does not join them in this ritual and first watches them get in line while standing on the grass and chucking with compassion and then does walk in front of them without taking part in their twirl. Thus, she is presented as being different than the other women in some way.

Throughout the episode Elektra also performs numerous acts of compassion where she shows that she cares about the others' wellbeing. She arranges their trip to the beach house, pays all their expenses, advises them when she thinks they might be in danger and overall acts compassionately towards the other women. For example, when Adrian is trying to save Blanca, she expresses her concern by yelling, and through her body language, like the other women, but what separates her from them is as follows: When Blanca coughs out the water from her lungs and they breathe a sigh of relief, Elektra embraces Lulu and Angel in a protective manner (see Figure 25). Thus, her actions present her as a mature character who looks after her children and accordingly emphasize her motherly image.

Figure 25.

Elektra embraces Lulu and Angel.



Elektra is not the only motherly character in the episode. While Elektra's motherhood is more prominent in the episode, Lulu and Blanca are mothers, too. Although Lulu's motherhood is never mentioned, Blanca's motherhood is not disregarded. The scene where Blanca and Angel walk towards the ocean emphasizes Blanca's motherhood by presenting her as a compassionate and selfless character who wants best for her children. In the scene, she also uses physical touch to reinforce this image and their physical proximity also indicates the intimacy they share and care they have for each other. In both cases, the concept of motherhood is detached from biology and is linked to attributes such as selflessness, compassion and care. In addition, the episode destabilizes the traditional definition of motherhood and broadens its definition beyond the categories of cisgender and fertile women.

Lastly, Candy's mere appearance in the 25th scene conveys certain messages, as well. Her appearance in the car presents the leading characters' family as a whole and visually reaffirms their image as a family. Thus, the scene contributes to the reproduction of the "chosen family" myth in the episode.

Setting

The settings in the episode reinforce the effect of the events in the scenes. In the earlier scenes where the leading characters are struggling with the heat and dealing with Blanca's nail salon burning down, they are depicted indoors and in dark, worn down or sultry spaces. After the leading characters decide to go on a trip to the beach, starting from the 7th scene, the settings become neater, lighter and airier. As mentioned in the "Behaviour" section about, in the earlier scenes the leading characters are depicted as sweltered, serious, sad, demoralized, aggressive or concerned but starting from the 7th scene they start to cheer up. Thus, the settings parallel and reinforce the prominence in the change of the main characters' emotional mood.

The settings sometimes adapt to the events in the scene. In the beach, for example, when the leading characters are enjoying their time, the setting is airy and bright and the weather is sunny and breezy. However, when Blanca starts to drown and Adrian goes into the water to rescue her, the sun goes down to dusk and the setting becomes gloomier. When Adrian takes her out of the water and lays her down, the sunlight creates a dramatic and romantic effect. So, the setting also adapts to and reinforces the effect of the events in the episode.

The setting is used to reinforce the effect of the scene at the restaurant, as well. The restaurant has a fancy look and all the customers inside are white and cisgender. Thus, the setting implies that the leading characters do not belong there because they look as strangers among the other customers. This adds to the effect of the discriminatory actions of the woman who comes at their table to tell them that they do not belong there because they are transsexual.

Narrative

To analyse the narrative structure of the episode, this section, as mentioned above, will make use of Todorov's (1971) narrative model. Considering that television series are continuous narratives that are split into numerous episodes, include multiple storylines and tend to have small climaxes before a bigger one at the end, they tend to repeat multiple stages of Todorov's. The individual episodes can be considered as compact narratives, as well, and be examined as stand-alone stories; however, they also interact and affect each other. Thus, it is important to take into account what comes before the episode examined here. The previous episode ends with Blanca's children leaving the house and Blanca going through an "empty nest syndrome." So, she is already grieving a loss in an empty house without her children and the narrative is already at the "Disruption of Equilibrium" stage. Still, the ninth the episode as a separate narrative has its distinct events that fit the stages Todorov lays out.

1. **Equilibrium State:** The episode begins with Blanca tossing and turning in her bed, trying to fall asleep with multiple fans on but failing to do so because of the heat. While it can be argued that there is already no equilibrium because the heat creates a disturbance, the environment is calm and there is nothing in sight that could derail Blanca's daily routine. Thus, there exists, at least, a partial equilibrium.
2. **Disruption of Equilibrium:** The heat can be considered as one of the factors that disrupt the equilibrium in the episode and from this perspective the episode starts at the disruption stage; however, there is another, a more important factor that disturbs the equilibrium in the episode and makes Blanca being upset: Her nail salon is burning down. Although the episode does not show the moment her nail salon burns down, it shows Blanca when she learns about the explosion at her nail salon in the 1st scene. Thus, the disruption and the recognition stages in the episode are intertwined and this stage includes scenes 1, 2, and 6.
3. **Recognition Stage:** The recognition stage also includes scenes 1, 2 and 6 and there are three events that occur within it: the leading characters complaining about the high temperature, Blanca learning about her nail salon burning down and the other characters learning about Blanca's nail salon and seeing her how upset and broken she feels. The leading characters recognize the problems by complaining about the heat and trying to cool themselves down in various ways and by expressing their sympathy and concern for Blanca by trying to console her.
4. **Restoring the Equilibrium:** The restoration of equilibrium takes up the biggest portion in the episode. This stage starts at the 7th scene and lasts until the 23rd scene, taking up 27 minutes and 18 seconds of the episode. In this stage, the leading characters decide to go on a little getaway trip to Joe's place at the beach. They plan the trip to get away from the heat but also, to cheer themselves up after all the bad events they went

through throughout the season, including Blanca's salon burning down. In this stage, they give Blanca a makeover, hang out at the beach, go out on a fancy restaurant and Blanca goes on a romantic date with Adrian. Although this stage also includes moments where characters find themselves in danger or are discriminated, they are all negated and the leading characters have a nice time.

5. Re-establishment of Equilibrium: Equilibrium is re-established after Blanca comes back from her date and tells the other characters how it went. This happens at the end of the 22nd scene and lasts until the episode ends after the 25th scene. After the restoration stage is over, the leading characters look happy and content and they do not sweat or complain about the heat after they go back to New York. The text which appears right before the end credits that reads "Is solace anywhere more comforting than that in the arms of a sister?" indicates that the leading characters were successful in consulting and cheering up Blanca and the equilibrium is established once again.

Conflict

The main conflict in the episode is the leading characters' struggle against the transphobic discourses and discrimination in society. Throughout the episode, the leading characters express their concern in various occasions. First, at Elektra's house, Lulu expresses her concern about "getting clocked" at the beach. After her, Blanca talks about how she does not like wearing revealing clothes because people harass and discriminate her for her sexual identity. At the beach, Lulu expresses her concern again and Elektra assures her by saying that she hid her switchblade in the cooler which shows that she was worried about that, as well. Even during her date with Adrian, Blanca hesitates disclosing her trans identity because of the possibility that he may discriminate her, use violence against or, even worse, murder her. Thus, the episode continuously shows how trans women have to think about how they can be discriminated and take precautions for that.

The leading characters not only worry about the possibility of being discriminated but experience discrimination numerous times in the episode: In the beginning of the episode Blanca's nails salon burns down, most likely by Frederica's hands; when the leading characters enter the restaurant, the hostess gives them a weird look and denies them a table near the window by lying to them that they are reserved; and lastly, a woman from another table at the restaurant comes at their table and discriminates against them because of their trans identity.

The trans women in the episode constantly push back against their discrimination. So, the episode as a whole consists of this conflict between transphobia and the leading characters' struggle against it. The most explicit example of this is the scene where Elektra stands up against the discriminatory actions of the woman at the restaurant and "reads" her. However, the leading characters perform more subtle ways of resistance such as by simply existing. As mentioned before, in the beginning of the episode the leading characters are shown in confined spaces but as the episode goes on, they start to go out in public and outdoors. This can most prominently be observed in the 16th scene. When Elektra tells the other women to go get dressed to go outside after they cannot find any alcoholic beverages they want to drink in Joe's house, Angel says "To town? Us?" To that, Elektra responds with "Fuck that. We have nothing to hide." So, the leading characters continuously challenge transphobia by simply existing in public and open spaces. Thus, throughout this conflict, the episode aims to reinforce the validity of trans individuals' identity and challenge the cis-normativity in society.

Casting

The casting choices of the actresses play a very important role in the way transsexual women in *Pose* are represented. One of the show's claims is adopting a "for us by us" attitude in its production and actively aims to achieve that by hiring trans and LGBTQ individuals

both in its cast and crew. This is apparent in the casting of the actresses because all the actresses that are chosen for transsexual roles are transsexual themselves. In addition, all of the actresses have been active members of real-life ballroom circles in their lives. In fact, Dominique Jackson (also known as Tyra Allure Ross in ballroom circle) is a very prominent name in New York's ballroom circle. Thus, the series actively avoids the stereotypical casting decision of having cisgender men play transsexual women's roles, re-establishes its quality television status, appeals to the LGBTQ community by casting people who belong to the community and enhances the series realism by casting people who know and experienced barroom.

Considering the actresses themselves, none of them were mainstream famous before they were cast for the show. They either took part in smaller projects or had smaller roles in other productions but they did not have a popular image they could bring along with them. However, all of the actresses are cisgender passing. Therefore, it can be argued that the series' casting executives intentionally avoided people who could present a queerer depiction and chose cisgender passing actresses to leave no room for interpretations that could visually perceive the leading characters as other than women. Thus, it can be concluded that the casting choices in the series have also been used to reinforce the leading characters' identity as women and actively challenge the commonly used and harmful stereotypes that present trans women as men. Still, while doing so, it runs the risk of normativizing cisgender aesthetics for transgender individuals.

The casting choices for supporting roles also carry meanings. The actors that are chosen for the characters that discriminate against the leading characters are all white cisgender women. By doing so, the series implicitly creates an opposition with the leading characters and presents a critique of white supremacist ideology and how white people continue to discriminate against marginalized groups in society. This is an intentional choice

because the white, cisgender characters in the episode explicitly discriminate against the black trans women for their trans identity and not for their racial identity, at least on the surface. So, cisgender people of colour could also have been chosen for the role to discriminate against the leading characters for their trans identity. However, the lack of people of colour among these characters indicates the intention behind the decision of the casting executives.

In addition, it bears meaning that all characters who discriminate against the leading characters are cisgender women. The choice of women for characters who discriminate the leading characters can be interpreted in various different ways. To begin with, as mentioned in earlier in various sections of the “Literature Review” chapter, trans women not only have been (and still are) discriminated and marginalized by society in general but also by and within some feminist movements. TERFs, a majority of whom are cisgender women, have opposed transsexual identities for reproducing patriarchal and binary sex norms about womanhood by conforming to “man-made femininity” (Raymond, 1979, p. XIX), as they argue, and refused to recognize their gender identity as women. When we look at the women who discriminate the characters, the characters are from different economic classes but from a feminist point of view, none of them are presented in relation to a man; thus, it can be argued that they are all empowered, independent women, either presented as young working women (the hostess at the restaurant) or women with higher economic status (Frederica and the woman at the restaurant). From this perspective the choice of women for discriminator roles can be read as a criticism of TERF ideas. On the other hand, the cisgender men in the episode never discriminate against the black transsexual women in the episode. The only instance a man comes close to actively discriminating against the leading characters is the moment when a driver yells at Elektra for driving bad when she actually was driving bad. In that scene even Angel admits that Elektra was driving bad by saying “He's right. You're the worst driver I [have] ever seen.” Other than that, the customers at the restaurant, men and women alike, can

be considered to have discriminated the leading characters with their looks but in the scene, even though their reactions can still be observed in the back ground, camera does not focus on the customers' reaction to seeing the leading characters enter the restaurant; it focuses on the leading characters and the hostess. So, the discriminatory looks of the men among the customers cannot be clearly and prominently observed. Thus, what is prominent in the episode is that the leading characters are actively and repeatedly discriminated by the cisgender women in the episode and not by cisgender men. This might convey messages that are rooted in patriarchy where men are thought to be more rational. because they are more rational, they do not discriminate against the leading characters without a justified reason. In this equation, women, on the other hand, act out of their discomfort (on their feelings) and discriminate the leading characters without reason and for their identity. Thus, the casting choices for the discriminator roles can be said to reproduce patriarchal power dynamics between men and women which positions men superior to women.

4.2.3. Ideological Level

Finally, Fiske's (2001) semiotic analysis method focuses on the ideological messages that are disseminated through televisual discourse. In this section, the episode will be examined in terms of the ideological messages it conveys to the audiences.

The episode is packed with ideological messages, both implicit and explicit. In light of the discussions above, it can be argued that the episode conveys messages that oppose certain myths and ideologies in society. The most prominent oppositional theme in the episode is the defiance of discrimination based on sexual identity, namely transphobia. Although, the episode also contains subversive messages in regards to a number of topics and issues such as the concept of womanhood, racial discrimination and homophobia in society as well as the conventional idea of family. Through the validation of the trans characters' identity as women, the episode challenges traditional norms about womanhood and challenges the rigid

and binary norms about sex and gender and exposes the socially constructed and performative nature of these concepts. Also, by giving black characters leading roles and allowing audiences to identify with them, the episode subverts the white supremacist ideals in society and criticizes relegation of individuals of colour to lower social classes solely based on their racial identity. In addition, the episode gives its female characters agency and presents them as empowered women who can stand on their own feet even though they continuously face adversities; thereby the episode challenges the patriarchal assumptions about women being fragile, weak and in need of protection. Lastly, by presenting a group of individuals who do not share biological ties with each other as a self-proclaimed family, the episode challenges the normative conception that equates of the concept of family to the concept of blood-tie centric, biological family and replaces it with a chosen one, arguing that biological ties do not make a family and puts emphasis on the self-established relationships between its members and the connection and intimacy they share with each other.

There are also instances where the episode conveys messages that reproduce stereotypes about the marginalized groups in the episode, recirculate certain myths and reinforce certain ideologies. The stereotypes the episode reproduces should also be examined from an intersectional perspective. Firstly, the episode reproduces numerous stereotypes about trans women, despite actively avoiding to do so. When we evaluate the leading characters in terms of the common ways transgender women are stereotypically represented, the characters reproduce a few stereotypes. First of all, in the episode, Elektra, as a sex worker, is shown to engage in non-conventional sexual activities with her client. Admittedly, as mentioned earlier, all black trans women in the episode, except for Blanca, have been shown doing sex work at some point in the series. Even though the series depicts a story at a certain time in history that may be authentic to the lives of many people in that community and era where discrimination towards LGBTQ individuals were relatively more prominent (compared to the 2000s and

onwards) and trans women had to resort to sex work to survive (and some still do), the episode and the series as whole reproduces the sex worker transsexual stereotype, nonetheless. In addition, the episode conveys contradictory messages by both challenging the pathetic transsexual stereotype and reproducing the stereotype that presents trans women as victims. The events in the episode put the leading characters in victim positions multiple times, which makes the audiences feel sorry for them. However, while they are victimized, the leading characters are also shown as strong individuals with agency and have their own ambitions, can stand on their own two feet and stand up for themselves when discriminated. The pathetic transsexual stereotype does not encourage identification with the characters but rather presents them as admirable figures for being their authentic selves, objectifying them and exploiting their struggles for cisgender consumption. While the episode also presents its characters as admirable figures for being their authentic selves, especially when Blanca changes into her new swimwear, throughout the episode the leading characters are presented as individuals with agency and people who the audiences can identify with. Also, the leading characters' stories do not only revolve round their trans identity. In other words, while the episode may present a story where trans women are victimized, as a period piece, it offers an authentic representation of the experiences of trans women living in that era, and it does not present its leading characters as pathetic figures but as strong individuals who stand up against and resist their oppression.

When we examine the episode in terms of its use of stereotypes about black women, there is only one instance which can be considered as a stereotypical representation. In the episode, Elektra is aloud, assertive and aggressive character. Therefore, it can be argued that the character fits the sapphire stereotype, which is the equivalent of the contemporary angry black woman stereotype. This stereotype, as mentioned earlier, perpetuates the idea that black women usually give aggressive reactions and their anger in situations where they are

oppressed can be brushed off as overreactions; thus, justifying their oppression and silencing them in the process. Although the episode does not actively present Elektra's anger in situations where the characters are discriminated as overreactions, rather, it presents them as just actions, her overall loud, assertive and aggressive behaviour may perpetuate this stereotype.

When we focus on the gender identity of the leading characters as women, we can observe that they contain many conventional elements. To begin with, the leading characters are presented in a hyperfeminine way which reproduces traditional norms regarding womanhood and female beauty. However, it should be noted that this does not mean that transsexual women perpetuate patriarchal gender roles by transitioning, which is what Raymond (1979) argues, and they must not strive to blur the boundaries between the binary gender positions, which is what Jeffreys (1997) argues. It simply means that hyperfeminine representations of the leading characters present women from a patriarchal lens, through the male gaze, and sexualizes their bodies. Thus, they can reinforce the normative and patriarchal power relations between men and women where men are to act and women are to be observed. Still, from a postfeminist viewpoint (which is a term used for third wave feminist movements that have been influenced by postmodernism), the hyperfemininity of the leading characters can be interpreted as women owning and taking charge of their own sexuality, regardless of what other people might think or say, and expressing their authentic selves. Secondly, the representations in the episode contain a few stereotypes regarding how women are represented in fictional productions. For example, Lulu is presented as a fun and flirty character. Although she does not flirt with anyone in the episode, she occasionally makes sexual innuendos or talk about sexual activities and overall has a frisky manner. Thus, it can be argued that, Lulu fits the coquettish minx stereotype. Blanca and Elektra, on the other hand, admittedly Elektra more than Blanca, are presented as motherly characters. In the

episode, they are shown as compassionate and caring characters towards their “children” and want what is best for them. Thus, it can be argued that they fit the doting mother stereotype and reinforce women’s role in society as mothers. Though, it is worth mentioning that they do not fit the traditional image of the mother in the family and are not confined to domestic spaces.

The episode challenges, produces and reproduces certain myths in society, mainly myths about motherhood and family. The episode contains messages subversive to the traditional understanding of motherhood which stipulates that a mother is the person who gives birth to a child, and it replaces it with another motherhood myth, one that argues that a mother is a compassionate person who loves and supports one unconditionally. The moment where Blanca and Angel have an emotional conversation at the beach in the 14th scene is a good example of this. In the scene, even though Angel broke Blanca’s house rules by doing drugs and Blanca had to kick her out, she still has affection for her, wants what is best for her and wants to make sure that she is doing well. In addition, as mentioned above, the mothers in the episode are not confined to domestic spaces. Thus, the episode reproduces the myth of a working mother who can both make a living on her own and stand on her own two feet and look after her children.

Lastly, the episode reproduces the myth of chosen family and emphasizes the importance of family. As mentioned above, the leading characters are not related by blood but choose and accepted each other as their family because of the affectionate bond they share with each other. Furthermore, as transsexual individuals who are not completely accepted by their biological families, they turn to each other for support and solidarity because of their shared experiences. Indeed, they are pretty much one another’s only source of support. Thus, the episode gives the message that family members always support each other and they are the only people one can rely on.

The episode also contains many ideological messages that are conveyed in the characters' dialogues. These ideological messages can be grouped into certain themes. The first theme is centred on their remarks about the leading characters' trans identity. In many occasions, trans women express their concerns about their trans identity being exposed and being discriminated as a result of that. To illustrate, Lulu, in both Elektra's house and at the beach, talks about her concern about people figuring out their trans identity and expresses her concern about being "clocked." Similarly, Elektra implicitly shows that she also shares her concern when she states that she has her switchblade in the cooler in case someone clocks them. In another case, Blanca talks about her frustration over people on the street discriminating against her by calling her names and slurs after they realize that she is trans and how that affects her. Lastly, Angel also expresses her concern about people discriminating against them on the street when they go out wearing only their swimwear. Thus, in the leading characters' dialogues, the episode shows the anxiety and concern trans women feel about being discriminated for their trans identity in everyday situations. However, Angel's concern about people harassing them on the streets also intersects with their gender identity as women because it can be argued that cisgender women would also be harassed if they wore swimsuits and heels on the streets. Thus, from that perspective, Angel's words could also be interpreted as a concern for being harassed on the street as women. Although it is more likely that Angel is trying to convey the former message, it is open for both interpretations.

There are other instances where the leading characters' trans and woman identity have been emphasised at the same time. When Blanca expresses how she does not feel comfortable wearing revealing clothes because she worries about being discriminated for her trans identity, Angel tells her that, as a woman, she would be judged "no matter how beautiful or busted" she looks and it is a "part of being a woman in a men's world." By doing so, she implicitly criticizes how patriarchy reduces women to visual objects, how the patriarchal and capitalist

society benefits from their insecurities and how women are judged and made to feel insecure and ashamed about the way their bodies are. Similarly, Elektra also expresses what it is like to live in a cisgender-normative patriarchal society as a trans woman and criticizes how trans women (and women as a general category) feel unsafe in their daily lives because of the threat that men pose on them by saying “You know you cannot trust a man once the sun goes down.” In the same conversation Elektra and Angel also give messages oppositional to transphobic ideas in society. They point out that men kill trans women not because of their hate for them but because of what it means for them to have sexual desires for trans women. This is closely linked to homophobia and gay panic defence (which is a strategy used to justify violent actions against individuals assigned male at birth by framing the men’s actions as unconscious reactions towards undesired same-sex sexual intimacy) because when transphobic men (who see trans women as men) have desires for trans women, they perceive those desires as same-sex attractions which threatens their fragile sexuality and results in them consulting to violence to eliminate that threat. Thus, the series presents oppositional messages that condemn both transphobia and homophobia.

Homophobia is a minor theme in the episode; however, the episode includes another implicit invalidation of a common homophobic discourse in society. When the leading characters are talking about Luther Vandross, Elektra (probably unintentionally) makes comments that are implicitly homophobic and says “I cannot believe we lost him.” and “He might as well be [dead] if I cannot have him.” to which Lulu replies with “Girl, stop being stingy. Luther's behind is a whole meal, and all the boys want a bite, okay?” When we look between the lines, Elektra’s comments reproduce the harmful heteronormative and deterministic stereotype that, at its core, defends the notion that the purpose of human sexual activities is to reproduce and because only people in cisgender and heterosexual relationships can do that, they are the only ones that are valid and because gay men cannot procreate in

homosexual relationships, their sexual activities are not valid and gay men are wasted or even good as dead. Lulu's reply to Elektra's comments, however, challenges this harmful notion and implicitly gives the oppositional message that gay men are not a waste because procreation is not the sole reason of sexual activities and gay men can engage in meaningful sexual activities with each other.

Along with heteronormativity, the episode gives subversive messages about cisgender-normative and transphobic perceptions when it comes to romantic relationships, as well. As mentioned earlier, in media, romantic relationships including trans individuals are either brushed off as humorous moments or as excuses for using violence against them. Blanca's hesitation about disclosing her trans identity in the scene where Blanca and Adrian go on a walk on the beach in the 21st scene clearly shows the fear trans individuals have for experiencing discrimination or violence in that context. Elektra's words in the 24th scene give a clear message on this topic. When unlocking Joe's cuffs, Elektra says "You have the luxury of choosing loneliness. For some people, it's not optional." Thus, she opposes people's transphobic perceptions when it comes to being in romantic relationships with trans individuals and expresses how they further marginalize and exclude them. In this context, Blanca and Adrian's date is an important scene in the episode because it challenges the transphobic and homophobic perceptions cisgender people might have towards having attraction for trans individuals, reassures them about their sexual orientations and further validates its leading characters' identity as women. This is most prominent in the moment where Adrian says "You are a beautiful, funny, soulful woman" to Blanca and before they share a romantic kiss.

The leading characters in the episode also resist the social pressure that oppresses them and forces them into secluded spaces and give messages that encourage social change. In the episode the leading characters express their concerns about being discriminated in open areas

and public many times. For example, when Elektra tells the other women they are going out in the 16th scene, Angel reacts with “To town? Us?” to which Elektra replies with “Fuck that. We have nothing to hide.” In this scene the leading characters explicitly acknowledge the unfoundedness of their oppression and actively resist it by simply going out and being visible and existing in public. This strongly related to Gilles Deleuze (2006) words on Foucault’s concept of biopower: “Life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object.” (p. 92). The scene not only challenges the transphobia in society but actively shows a way to resist it. Another scene in which this is also the case is the 18th scene where the woman at the restaurant comes at the main characters’ table and discriminates against them for being there as trans individuals. Elektra’s reaction to the woman also gives the same message but in a more direct and effective manner. The scene actively and directly opposes transphobic behaviour in an aggressive manner and condemns it.

Another topic the characters in the episode give ideological messages about is race and racial discrimination. In the episode, the black trans women do not explicitly challenge racist ideologies in their dialogues; however, there are instances in which this is implied. For example, in the 14th scene, she talks about how her father was going to teach her how to swim at a fancy country club but they did not let them in. While the reason for their discrimination is not mentioned in her story, it would not be wrong to conclude that it was because of their racial identity, keeping in mind the time period. As another example, when the characters were talking about Blanca’s nail salon in 6th scene and Lulu asks “Are the authorities investigating?” and Blanca answers with “I ain’t got no power.” Here, she implicitly conveys the message that the because of the white supremacist and transphobic ideologies that are dominant in society, the police would not look into it, especially when a white person from a higher economic status is involved in the situation. Thus, she exposes and criticizes the injustices within the police department in the USA. However, the person who gives the most

direct message that criticizes the systemic nature of the white supremacist ideology is Adrian. During their walk with Blanca, he talks about how he noticed that people in prestigious and well-paying jobs were held by white people and people of colour have been relegated to lower status and lower paying jobs. Thus, he highlights that, although people of colour are not segregated or legally assigned a lower-class status, the systemic devices that oppress them are hidden but still there and well-functioning. When we look at these examples, however, what stands out is how the episode shies away from presenting explicitly intersectional messages. While the trans characters give messages that condemn racism in society, they are relatively implicit hidden between the lines. In the episode, the only explicit message about racism is given by a cisgender black man. Thus, also keeping in mind that the trans characters are not explicitly and directly discriminated for their racial identity, it can be argued that, while the series contains messages that are oppositional to white supremacist and racist ideologies, it falls short on presenting them in an openly intersectional way.

Lastly, the episode gives subversive messages regarding the traditional understandings about the concept of family and it does it in numerous ways. First of all, the main characters in the episode regularly call Elektra “mother.” In addition, Angel calls Blanca “mother,” too. However, keeping in mind that the characters are not biologically related and Angel and Blanca used to be “sisters” under Elektra’s house, House of Abundance, the familial relations do not align with the traditional concept of family. Thus, the series destabilizes the normative understanding of family and reinforces the concept of chosen family as an alternative. The familial bonds between the characters are repeatedly reinforced by them referring to each other as family members. For example, when Adrian is doing CPR on Blanca to save her, Elektra yells “I cannot lose another daughter.” As another example, in the 17th scene, after Blanca thanks Elektra for the trip, Elektra says “We may not live in the same house but you

will always be my daughter Blanca. You are all my children,” which reinforces the image that they are a family.

Overall, the series presents many ideological messages. Many of those are oppositional ones, namely challenging patriarchal, misogynistic, white supremacist, cisgender-normative and heteronormative ideologies within society. It normalizes trans identities, validates their gender identity, criticizes white supremacy and challenges the normative understandings of the concept of family as a biological one. Doing so, it also actively tries to avoid using harmful stereotypes and does not delegitimize their gender identity by presenting them as being men in essence and does not present them as violent and deceitful characters or objects of ridicule. However, it also reproduces some other ideologies that serve the status quo, as well. It presents its leading characters as hyperfeminine figures and reproduces some stereotypes regarding the different dimensions of the main characters' identity. The stereotypes that the episode reproduces can be listed as transsexual sex worker, transsexual victim, sapphire, doting mother and coquettish minx. In addition, the episode reproduces the patriarchal discourse around men being rational and women being emotional and impulsive by only showing women as discriminating against the leading characters solely for their sexual identity. So, it can be argued that the episode contains and conveys contradictory messages at the same time. After all, as Fiske and Hartley (2003) point out, television is a complex medium that contains many contradictions and contradictory ways of seeing (pp 91, 92).

4.3. Audience Reception Study

As mentioned earlier, the audience reception part of this study is conducted by making use of the survey, participant observation and in-depth interview methods. While participant observation and in-depth interviews together provided valuable insights about their reception, the surveys provided the context about the participants' personal background and their TV viewing preferences and attitudes, which may affect how they view *Pose*.

Surveys

In the surveys, the participants were given multiple choice questions and asked to select the one that best describes them or a box where they can write a short answer. The multiple-choice questions also included an “Other” option when appropriate so that the participants could write their preferred answer in detail. At the beginning of the survey, the participants were informed about the purpose of the survey and how the data will be used. They were also informed that their identities will be kept anonymous and their names will be changed with a nickname. Lastly, they were also informed that they could choose not to answer any of the questions if they felt uncomfortable answering it, and their written informed consent were taken.

The results of the surveys show that the participants share many similarities in terms of demographics, attitudes towards LGBTQ and black minorities and their viewing habits; however, they also showed certain differences in some categories, as well. Firstly, all of them are in their mid-20s (two of them 24, one of them 25), college educated (two of them are undergraduate and one of them is a graduate student), live in Istanbul (a metropolis) and are from a similar income group (5,000 – 10,000 TL household income per month). All participants are students but one of them (Candan) also works as a business development intern. Koray stated that he wants to work as a visual communication designer and Seçil said

that she wants either to be a PR strategist or an academic. Also, Candan and Koray said that they live with their parents and Seçil said that she mostly lives alone but she spends about three months of a year with her parents.

Two of the participants in this study identify themselves as cisgender women (Seçil and Candan) and one identifies as a cisgender man. One of the female participants (Seçil) identified herself as demisexual and when asked during the interview she more specifically identified as a demisexual woman who is attracted to men. So, both female participants are heterosexual but Seçil also identifies as demisexual. As the only male participant in the study, Koray identified himself as homosexual. The demographics of participants can be seen in a neatly organized table below.

Table 9.

Demographics of the Participants

	Koray	Candan	Seçil
Age:	24	24	25
Gender:	Cisgender man	Cisgender woman	Cisgender woman
Sexual orientation:	Homosexual	Heterosexual	Demisexual/ Heterosexual
Ethnic identity:	Cherkes	Does not belong to an ethnic minority in Turkey	Partly Kurdish
City:	İstanbul	İstanbul	İstanbul
Education:	Bachelor's student	Bachelor's student	Master's student
Monthly income of the household:	5,000-10,000 TL	5,000-10,000 TL	5,000-10,000 TL

In terms of their attitudes towards LGBTQ and black minorities, they all share positive attitudes towards people from both groups. When they were specifically asked about their attitude towards transsexual women, their answers did not change. Also, they all reported that they know someone who belongs to the LGBTQ community. While Candan noted that the person she knows is her best friend, Seçil stated that she had close friends and acquaintances and Koray had an acquaintance(s) who is/are from the LGBTQ community. In terms of

ethnicity, Koray noted that he is Cherkas while Candan stated that she does not belong to an ethnic minority in Turkey. Seçil, however, explained that she has a mixed ethnicity, one fourth being Kurdish, and a mixed culture. She also noted that she takes discrimination against Kurdish people personally and she has been discriminated before due to her identity.

In terms of their television viewing habits, again, there were similarities and differences. According to their answers, Seçil watches 10-15 hours of television a week while Koray watches 15-20 hours and Candan watches 20-25 hours. Koray and Candan note that they do not watch television from free TV but Seçil says that she does this about 10-15 hours a week. Also, they all watch programs from pay TV. Seçil and Koray state that they spend 15-20 hours a week on pay TV and Candan says that she does 20-25 hours a week. Also, while Candan and Koray say that they watch their programmes from streaming platforms and on their computer, Seçil notes that she watches them on television channels and on a television screen. In terms of how they watch their programs, only Candan says that she always watches her programmes alone while Koray and Seçil say that they sometimes watch them alone and sometimes with other people around.

All in all, the participants were of similar age, had similar educational backgrounds and were students, were of similar income groups, shared common attitudes towards ethnic and sexual minorities. While they had these commonalities among them, all their sexual orientations and ethnic identities were different from one another. In terms of viewing habits, they all spent different amounts of hours watching television. Koray and Candan had similarities in where and which platform they watched their programs but Candan stood apart from Koray and Seçil in her open preference for watching TV alone.

Participant Observations

As mentioned earlier, none of the participants have watched the show before. So, before watching the episode, a verbal summary was presented to them by the interviewer. After the summary, they were asked if they had any question or anything they would like to have further explained about the show or the leading characters. After their questions were answered, the participants watched the episode immediately after the summary and all of them watched it on Netflix, alone in a room and on their computers with their cameras and microphones on. In order not to distract the participants, the interviewer's microphone was turned off and the participants minimized the video chat window on their computers so that the only thing on their screen was the episode.

To present the findings, first, the reactions of each participant will be presented side by side, in separate columns, in the table below. The table only includes scenes, events or dialogues to which the participants reacted in any way.

After analysing the findings and locating the key elements in them, the participants' reactions which present a judgement about the social injustices the leading characters face or their social positions, make a comment about the leading characters' identities or show how they were related to or identified themselves with them will be laid out in detail below the table. The reactions of participants, when verbal, were in Turkish. So, the verbal reactions will be presented in their original language first and then their English translations will be provided under them.

Table 10.*Participant Observation Findings*

No:	Scene/Event/Dialogue	Reactions		
		Koray	Candan	Seçil
1	Shot of Blanca's burned down nail salon			Surprised facial expression
2	Police Officer: You are aware that those substances are highly flammable			Surprised facial expression
3	Frederica reaches towards Blanca	"Kesin bu orospu yaptı, bu sarılı." "I bet this bitch did it. The one in yellow."		
4	Blanca Frederica: You live and you learn.			Gathers her eyebrows
5	Intro	Lit a cigarette		
6	Elektra's Co-worker: Shouldn't you be checking on that dude in your room. Elektra: Oh, shit! I almost forgot.		Smiles	Smiles
7	Elektra: Do you need a spanking or a beating of some kind.	Smiles	Smiles	
8	Joe: I just like being left in isolation. No sight, no sound, feeling nothing but the pain of being in one position and the warm sweat under the latex		"Yazık lan." "How pitiful."	
9	Joe: I got a great place at the beach, but I almost never go.		"Keşke deniz kenarında bir evim olsa da hiç gitmesem." (Güler) "I wish I had a beach house I never went." (Chuckles)	
10	Women are complaining about the		"Uff, teni ne kadar güzel.	

	heat at Blanca's house		Terlerken bile çok güzel görünüyor kadının teni." "Uff, look how beautiful her skin is. Even when she's sweating her skin looks wonderful." (Chuckles)	
11	Elektra: Arson? I'd do the same if I owned that shithole.			Smiles
12	Elektra: I hope so. I feel like I'm being fucked by Satan himself in the seventh circle.		Chuckles	
13	Elektra: I think she's having a heat stroke. Lulu: Bitch, would you stop complaining about the damn heat? We are all hot.		Smiles	Smiles
14	Elektra: It feels like someone turned the thermostat up to inferno.	Smiles		
15	Angel: Why—How come we're not in your crib? Lulu: Yeah. Elektra: Because, even with a window air-conditioning unit, it's beginning to smell."	"Cesetten dolayı (...) mı? (...) Evet." "Is it because of (...) the body? (...) Yeah."		
16	Lulu: Smell? Why? Blanca and Elektra's eye contact referencing to the dead man in Elektra's home		Laughs	Raised her eyebrows and smiled
17	Elektra: The stench intensifies when the thermostat hits 85 degrees.		"Oha çok fena! (...) Ay çok korkunç." "Oh, that is awful! (...) That is horrifying."	Chuckles
18	Elektra: Ladies, pack your suits up and meet me at my house		Smiles	Smiles

	tomorrow morning.			
19	Angel: What's that smell? Elektra: Pine. I'm a woman who like scented candles. (Voiceover to Elektra hanging air fresheners inside the cabinet with the dead man.)		"Çok kötü. (Gülüyor) Ay çok kötü." "That's horrible. (Laughing) Oh, that's horrible."	Smiles
20	Lulu: I feel so... fat.		"Ablam siz şişkoysanız ben öleyim." "Sister, if you are fat then I should just go ahead and die."	
21	Lulu: You're right. I do look pretty tasty. (Chuckles)	Smiles		
22	Lulu: Wait a minute. Wh- What's that smell.		Chuckles	
23	Elektra: Where's your swimsuit. I will not be seen in public with you looking like Elly May fresh off the farm.		Smiles	
24	Blanca's outburst	No reaction/Serious	No reaction/Serious	No reaction/Serious
25	Lulu: I hope you got birth control. Look at those thighs.		Laughs	Smiles
26	Kids on the street playing under the water of an open fire hydrant and Elektra gets wet Elektra: (Yells) Why would I pick the one street that hasn't been gentrified yet?	Chuckles	Smiles	Smiles
27	Elektra tries to find the key hole and Blanca turns it for her		Smiles	Smiles
28	Women dancing and singing along in the car to "Boogie Oogie Oogie – A Taste of		Dancing along to the song and smiling	

	Honey”			
29	Man: Hey! You drive like shit! Elektra: You look like it, bitch!	Chuckles	Chuckles	Smiles
30	Elektra almost hits the car in front of her		Nervous facial expression	Gathers her brows
31	Women’s reaction to almost hitting a car		Chuckles	
32	Elektra admitting that she does not own a driver license and she bought one from a bodega		Laughs	Smiles
33	“Boogie Oogie Oogie – A Taste of Honey” continues to play		Smiles	
34	The view of the house as the car approaches		“Eve bak anasını satayım. 80lerdeki eve bak.” “God damn, look at the house. Look at the house they had in the 80s.”	Looks at her phone
35	Women walking in synchronicity		Smiles	
36	Blanca: What’s in the garage? Transition to Joe in the cage	Smiles	Surprised facial expression and laugh	Gathers her brows
37	Blanca: See, I knew something was fishy about this. Did you kidnap this man and steal his house?	Chuckles		
38	Lulu knocks on the cage			Smiles
39	Angel pokes Joe with her heel		Smiles	
40	Elektra: We deprive him of food all weekend long, so no worries about number two. Otherwise, he just goes when he has to.			Gathers her brows
41	Elektra: Joe, Blanca. Blanca, Joe. Joe: Nice to meet you.			Smiles

42	Elektra and Blanca leaves Joe		“Manyak adam.” (Gülümser) “The guy is crazy.” (Smiles)	
43	Elektra: No sweaty subways, no skyscrapers to trap the heat.			Smiles
44	Elektra: No way. I’ve seen Jaws way too many times to know better.		Chuckles	Smiles
45	Angel: What if I get stung by a jellyfish. Elektra. Shark.		Smiles	Smiles
46	Elektra: I should’ve sent that damn girl to school.			Smiles
47	Angel: I’ll go in the water only if you promise not to let go. Blanca: Promise They lock pinkies and squint at each other	Smiles		
48	Blanca: As a mother, you got to keep eyes in the back of your head, spies in these streets.			Smiles
49	Lulu: Girl, why are they staring at us?			Smiles
50	Elektra: You’re being paranoid. Lulu: What if you’re wrong. Elektra: That’s why I hid my switchblade in the cooler		Smiles	Raises her eyebrows
51	Lulu: Where’s Blanca?	Eyes widened and gathered his brows	Gathers her eyebrows	Gathers her eyebrows
52	Blanca’s drowning scene	“Eğer ölürse sinirlenip diziği kapatırım.” “If she dies, I will be so mad and I will turn off the episode.” Lit a cigarette		
53	Adrian takes Blanca out of the water			Widened her eyes

54	Adrian rescues Blanca from drowning and she opens her eyes		Smiles	Looks at her phone
55	Shot of Joe in the cage			Smiles
56	Elektra: Absolutely useless. Joe smiles and pants in excitement in response to his humiliation	Smiles	Smiles	
57	Blanca: Nah, for real though, I feel like he was trying to slip a little tongue.		Chuckles	Smiles
58	The look of distaste on the waitress's face when the women enter the restaurant and request a table	"A-a, bakışa bak!" "Ah! Look at the look on her face!"		
59	Elektra: Order what you like, children. Dinner's on me.			Smiles
60	Blanca: Thank you, Elektra. You don't know how badly I needed this.	"Aww."		
61	Lulu and Angel: Aww! Elektra: You're all my children.			Smiles
62	Elektra: He might as well be gay if I can't have him.			Smiles
63	Lulu: Luther's behind is a whole meal, and all the boys want a bite, okay?		Chuckles	
64	Woman: I'm a loyal customer here, out with my girlfriends and we're having just the darndest time trying to relax into this peaceful summer evening.	"E?" "So?"	Gathers her brows	Grimaces
65	Woman: There's nothing graceful about your cackling voices, cackling so loudly, we can't even hear our own conversation."	"Siktir git o zaman." "Then fuck off."	"Orospu sikik." "Fucking bitch."	

66	Woman: I work in the city, and I know a man pretending to be a woman when I see one.		“Orospu sikik.” “Fucking bitch.”	Gathered her brows
67	Woman: And I see three right in front of me.		“Orospu sikik.” “Fucking bitch.”	Grimaced
68	Elektra starts “reading” the woman	“Ayy!” “Oof!”	“Ablam benim.” “You go sister.”	Widens her eyes
69	Lulu: Mm-hmm, clear your throat. Angel: Lubricate.			Smiles
70	Elektra “reads” the woman	Smiled and chuckled throughout the scene	Smiled and chuckled throughout the scene	Continues to smile
71	Woman returns to her table		“Kart suratlı. Yerden birme orospu. Sinirlendim.” “Crone. Half-pint bitch. Got me mad.”	
72	Adrian talking on the phone with his back turned	“Bu, o cankurtaran mı?” “Is that the lifeguard?”		Looks at her phone
73	Adrian: “You look pretty good dry.”	Smiles	Smiles	
74	Adrian: I’ve been manning these shores for six summers and I’ve never done CPR on anyone with lips like yours.		“Abim koştur.” “Don’t hold back, brother.”	
75	Blanca: Well, I ain’t ever had a man slobber over me like that before, so I guess there’s a first time for everything.			Smiles
76	Elektra: You know you can’t trust a man once the sun goes down.		“Haklı.” “She’s right.”	
77	Elektra, Angel and Lulu gives Blanca a knife, a knuckle duster and a taser	Laughs	“Wow.” (Laughs)	Sad smiles

78	Adrian: I'm studying to be a doctor.		"Doktor." (Etkilenmiş yüz ifadesi) "Doctor." (Impressed facial expression)	Raised her brows
79	Adrian: My mom died of stomach cancer when I was ten.	Sad facial expression	Sad facial expression	
80	Adrian: One thing I noticed all the orderlies were black and brown. Some of the nurses too, but every doctor was white.		"Sikeyim böyle dünyayı harbiden." "For real though, fuck this."	
81	Adrian: I'm sure they did their best, but I think it helps to be looked after by one of your own, you know.			Approving head nod
82	Blanca: But I've got no illusions about the outside world having my back.	Looking at his phone		
83	Adrian's positive attitude toward Blanca's transness	"Kesin bir bokluk çıkacak ha." "I bet something bad will happen."		
84	Adrian: Can I kiss you? Blanca: Didn't you do that earlier.		Smiles	Chuckles
85	Blanca and Adrian kissing.	"Yaa." "Aww."		
86	Blanca walking to the house			Looks at her phone
87	Elektra: Where have you been. We were up all night. I thought he gutted and drowned you.	Smiles		Smiles
88	Blanca: It was perfect. (laughs)	Smiles	Smiles	Smiles
89	Lulu: Yeah, but what about that muscle down there? Was he packing? Because I know he was, girl!	Chuckles	Chuckles	Smiles
90	Blanca: It's definitely	Compassionate		

	something I had been missing.	facial expression, as if saying “aww”		
91	Blanca: He made me believe that good things are possible.	“Kesin başına kötü bir şey gelecek bunun ya!” “I know something bad is going to happen to her!”		
92	Women have a group hug			Smiles
93	Joe in cage		Chuckles	
94	Joe: Yeah. Uh, sweat and everything makes it nice and slippery.		“İyy, ‘terden kayganlaşıyor’ diyor. Kafayı yemiş.” “Yuck, he says ‘sweat makes it slippery.’ This guy is crazy.”	Smiles
95	Elektra: Do you realise how luxurious your life is.			Gathers her brows
96	Driving and dancing to “Hip Hop Lover – En Vogue”	Swinging on his place and dancing to the music and holding the rhythm with his hand	Swinging along to the music	Looks at her phone
97	Candy appears to Elektra, sitting in the back seat	“Ölen kız mı bu?” “Is that the dead girl?”	Gathers her brows	Gathers her brows
98	Blanca and Angel talking about Adrian	Looked at his phone		
99	Angel: I’m gonna have to buy you a Long Island Rail Road express pass, Miss Honey.		Chuckles	
100	Blanca is filling a glass of water	“Net kötü bir şey olacak, biliyorum ya.” “I know for a fact that something bad is going to happen.”		
101	Angel: Ooh, mother you got a message.		Smiles	

102	Adrian's voice message	Smiles		Smiles
103	Angel: Ooh, his voice is so sexy. Blanca. Okay. Listen, mind your business.	Chuckles	Chuckles	Smiles
104	Angel and Blanca's interaction after Adrian's message	Smiles		
105	Text on the screen: Is solace anywhere more comforting than that in the arms of a sister? - Alice Walker	"Bitmedi inşallah." "It better not be over."	"Aww!"	
106	End credits	"Ama hayır! (...) Bitti." (Gülümser) "But no! (...) It's over." (Smiles)		
107		Lit a few cigarettes throughout the episode	Snacked on fruits throughout the episode	Drank tea throughout the episode

As the table shows, the participants showed similar reactions in certain scenes but also had unique reactions the other two did not show. Koray gave the least number of reactions while Candan gave the most. Seçil, on the other hand, was the only participant who did not give any verbal reactions. They all seemed like they were enjoying the show. They laughed at the jokes and funny moments in the episode and for the most part seemed to view the show attentively. Candan also showed that she was enjoying the episode as she danced along with the leading characters both to "Boogie Oogie Oogie – A Taste of Honey" and "Hip Hop Lover – En Vogue" when they were driving. Koray did not dance to "Boogie Oogie Oogie – A Taste of Honey" but danced along to "Hip Hop Lover – En Vogue" which might show that his appreciation increased as he watched the episode. Seçil, however, did not dance to either of the songs. Later in the in-depth interviews they all said that they, in fact, enjoyed the episode.

The reactions, verbal or non-verbal, were indicative of how they felt about the events and the characters in the episode. It was evident that the participants sided themselves with the

main characters of the episode. They showed approval by smiling, chuckling and laughing at the funny situations the characters found themselves in or during the interactions they had with each other and smiled or showed expressions of compassion in intimate moments and got upset when they were discriminated or in danger.

Koray gave negative reactions when the leading characters were discriminated. His verbal reactions were harsh and included vulgar and swear words. For example, in the scene in the aftermath of Blanca's nail salon burning down, after realizing that Frederica (the owner of Blanca's nail salon) might have burnt the shop down in order to have an excuse to kick Blanca out, Koray said *"I bet this bitch did it. The one in yellow..."* His reactions were similar in other instances where the black transsexual women were discriminated: He noticed the judgemental glance of the waitress at the restaurant and said *"Ah! Look at the look on her face!"*; he gave disapproving verbal reactions such as *"So?"* and *"Then fuck off"* when the white woman from another table came to theirs and discriminated against them for their transsexuality, and he laughed and approvingly said *"Oof!"* when Elektra started reading the woman who discriminated them. Although not an act of discrimination, he also reacted similarly, by laughing, when Elektra aggressively responded to the man who yelled at her for being a bad driver, which she actually was. This reaction was also shared by the other participants, as well, and can be interpreted as a sign of them identifying and siding themselves with the leading characters.

There were also other moments where Koray showed that he identified with the leading characters. For example, when Blanca was drowning, Koray showed signs of nervousness and said *"If she dies, I will be so mad and I will close the episode."* This was also the case for Candan and Seçil; they both gathered their brows and showed physical signs of worry during the scene. Along with the moments where he felt nervous for their wellbeing and rooted for them when they stood up against oppression, he also connected with the

leading characters in their intimate moments. For example, when Blanca and Adrian kissed, Koray exclaimed “*Aww.*” Also, when Blanca was talking about how great her time with Adrian was and how good that was for her, he did a compassionate facial expression and showed that he felt happy for Blanca. In addition, when Blanca thanked Elektra for taking them on this vacation, Koray again said “*Aww....*” In these examples, it is evident that Koray felt some connection with the leading characters.

Interestingly, despite Koray seemed to have formed some degree of identification or connection with the leading characters and felt happy for them when good things happened to them, he also had a feeling that something bad was going to happen to Blanca. He gave reactions such as “*I bet something bad will happen.*” and “*I know something bad is going to happen to her!*” and he specifically gave them when Blanca was happy or when the of the events in the story calmed down. Although, as will be mentioned in the findings of the in-depth interviews, Koray did not know much about the LGBTQ culture, he knew about the discrimination LGBTQ members and especially transsexual people face in their daily lives and this feeling Koray had that something bad might happen to Blanca could be related to his awareness about the violence trans women face in real life. However, it might also be related to how narratives of popular stories usually dramatically develop and reach a climax through unfortunate or bad events and ultimately resolve in a cathartic ending.

One of the prominent issues among Candan and Seçil’s answers in the in-depth interviews (which will be dealt with in detail below) were their attitudes towards Lulu. This was not the case for Koray. For him, Lulu did not stand out as she did for Candan and Seçil. Even though Lulu was not a memorable character for Koray, he did laugh at some of the things she said such as “*You’re right. I do look pretty tasty,*” but his comments about her weight and her insecurity and fear about being “clocked” or, in other words, the possibility of their trans identity being exposed did not catch his attention.

Lulu's fear about her trans identity being exposed also was not memorable for Candan; however, Lulu's comments about her body were. In the scene where the women were getting ready at Elektra's house and Lulu looked at her body and said that she felt fat, Candan replied with *"Sister, if you are fat then I should just go ahead and die."* This reaction indicates that Candan connected with Lulu through their shared experience of feeling insecure about their bodies. However, acknowledging that Lulu looks attractive to her, Candan made a comparison between Lulu and herself, and, through an implicit judgement, stated that her insecurity about her body is unfounded.

Similarly, some other comments Candan made also had a focus on the leading characters' appearance. When the women main characters were sweating and complaining about the heat in Blanca's house, Candan said *"Oof, look how beautiful her skin is. Even when she's sweating her skin looks wonderful"* and she chuckled. As Hall (2005) notes, racial discrimination does not always appear as positioning certain groups inferior to one's own but also as "an inexpressible envy and desire" (pp. 445-446). From this perspective, Candan's comment can be read as a reflection of this kind of distinction; although it is not for certain that she reacted the way she did because of the characters' colour, it is likely that it played some role in the way she looked at the characters' skin in that scene. On the other hand, she reacted negatively when Adrian mentioned his experience of racial discrimination. When Adrian talked about how he realized that all of the orderlies and some of the nurses in the hospital his mother stayed were black and brown but none of the doctors were, Candan adopted a sad facial expression and said *"For real though, fuck this."* Her reaction shows that she does not condone or support the racial system Adrian describes: the system which relegates racial minorities to lower class positions. However, it is important to note that during the in-depth interviews, the racial dimension of the characters' identity (with the exception of Adrian's story) was not as prominent as the other dimensions for Candan.

Candan's attitude towards discrimination in the episode was negative and she did not tolerate any kind of discrimination she saw in the episode. When the white women at the restaurant discriminated against the black trans women Candan gathered her brows and replied every sentence the women said with "*Fucking bitch*" and called her "*crone*" and "*half-pint bitch*." Similar to Koray's reactions, she used sexist slurs but she also insulted her physical appearance. The emphasis on characters' appearance in her reactions is apparent here, as well. She also approved the way Elektra "read" the transphobic woman by saying "*You go sister,*" which shows that she sided herself with the black trans women.

As mentioned above, Candan identified with Lulu through her own experiences, mainly her insecurity about her body. In addition, her experiences as a woman affected the way she identified with other characters. As mentioned earlier, male violence against women and femicides are dire issues in Turkey and women live in fear of the possibility that they might fall victim to violence or get murdered. When women go out, they feel the need to keep an eye out for possible dangers men around them pose (Çardak, 2016, p. 39) and feel limited and/or worried for their safety, especially at night (Şafak, 2020, p. 38; Şahin, 2019, pp. 57-60; Temurçin et al., 2020, pp. 9-11). When Blanca told other women that she is going out for a walk at the beach with Adrian and Elektra said "*You know you can't trust a man once the sun goes down*" to Blanca, Candan commented "*She is right.*" Candan's experiences as a woman living in Turkey enabled her to connect with the characters through their shared womanhood and to relate to their experiences. Her identification with the characters through their shared experiences and identities is also apparent in her reaction when she exclaimed "*Wow!* (laughs)" when everyone at the table handed Blanca self-defence tools to protect herself in case she needed. Koray and Seçil gave similar reactions to this scene, as well; Koray laughed while Seçil made a sad smiling expression.

Another point that should be highlighted among Candan's reactions is her Korey's appreciation for higher class living standards. When Joe mentioned that he has a beach house she said "*I wish I had a beach house I never went. (Chuckles)*" and when the black trans women approached Joe's house and the camera showed the entire double story villa type house from a higher angle, Candan said "*God damn, look at the house. Look at the house they had in the 80s.*" Her reactions indicate that she appreciates and enjoys having or wants to have properties which usually higher-class individuals can afford. Although, keeping in mind that later she condemns black people's confinement to lower class positions with lower paying jobs, at the moment, she does not recognize that Joe, as a white cisgender and heterosexual man, has a very privileged position and acquired his position by exploiting the labour of the people working under him, including people of colour. Thus, her reactions are contradictory because while condemning white supremacy, she does not recognize how the capitalist mode of production interacts with racial power dynamics. Even though her desire for having a nice house is a legitimate one, her admiration and desire for what could be considered a luxury property also shows that Candan has internalized the hegemonic values of the consumer society and it conflicts with her ideas about social equality.

Seçil was the only participant who did not give any verbal reactions throughout the episode; she only laughed, chuckled or made facial expressions. Similar to the other participants, her reactions to the acts of discrimination in the episode were negative. Similar to Koray's reaction, Seçil gathered her brows in disapproval when Frederica said "*You live and you learn*" to Blanca after implying that she might have a role in the fire which broke out at Blanca's nail salon. She also gathered her brows and grimaced when the white woman at the restaurant discriminated against the black trans women for their sexual identity, and when Elektra stood up (both literally and figuratively) against her and started "reading" the woman, Seçil widened her eyes and smiled. She also nodded her head approvingly when Adrian talked

about how he noticed the systemic racial discrimination in job opportunities at the hospital and then said *“I’m sure they did their best, but I think it helps to be looked after by one of your own, you know.”* Seçil’s reaction shows that she understands and relates to Adrian’s experiences as a black man in a white majority society. That is, Seçil seems to relate to the characters through the racial dimension of their identity. In the in-depth interview, she implied that she identifies more as a straight person and does not seem to feel a sense of belonging to the LGBTQ community despite her demisexual identity. Thus, it can be concluded that she mostly interacts and connects with the characters through her sexual identity as a woman and her ethnic identity as part of the Kurdish minority in Turkey.

In-depth Interviews

In the in-depth interviews, the participants were asked questions regarding their viewing habits, their opinions about the episode, the characters and their identity, what they remember from the episode and the relationship between the characters and how they see them. After analysing the results of the first in-depth interviews, a second series of interviews were conducted to ask the participants about the questions which arose from their answers and to ask them about their experiences with trans and black people and whether if they had any real-life interactions with them. The interviews were conducted in Turkish and transcripts of the conversations in their original language can be found in the appendix of this study; however, in this chapter, the findings will be presented in their English translations, translated by the author.

To present the findings, firstly, the viewing habits of each participant and their experiences with black and trans people will be laid out one by one. Then, their opinions about the episode will be presented in a question-answer format; each participant’s answer to a question will be presented together.

Viewing Practices and Personal Experiences

First of all, to learn about their viewing practices, the participants were asked questions regarding their program choices, their standards while choosing their programs and the environment and platform they watch their programs from.

When asked about the types of shows he watches, Koray stated that he usually prefers fantasy and science fiction shows and depending on his mood, he sometimes prefers programmes that would make him cry: *“I usually watch fantasy or science fiction shows. [...] Also, depending on my mood, things that would make me cry”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

His standards while choosing a program were their production date. He stated that he only watches older shows if they are very good or have been highly acclaimed. When asked about what he considered to be an older show, he drew the line at 2009. His standards were limited to that, however. He did not have a preference or a liking for programmes of a certain channel: *“They should not be too old. I cannot watch older productions. [...] I mean, maximum 2009. [...] I rarely watch them. Only if they are good or acclaimed... [...] Then I watch them. Very rarely, though”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

Koray stated that he watches his programs at home, in his room, on a computer and from Netflix or websites he finds on Google. However, he noted that, at night, he sometimes connects his computer to a television screen and watches his shows on that while laying down.

I mean, at home, in front of the computer. [...] From Netflix or Google and such. Platforms like that. [...] Right in this exact position that I am right not. [...] Or when [I am] lying down at night. [...] I connect the computer to the thing, the screen. Yeah. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

When asked to describe how he watches his programmes, he said that he sometimes binge-watches and sometimes spreads them into several days or completely stops watching them., depending on whether if the programme is riveting or not.

Now, if I am into them, I can finish one in one sitting. I can even watch two seasons or three seasons. [...] However, if I am not into them, I would spread them into three or four days. After that, would even forget about them... I would forget about them, I mean. I probably would not watch them. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

When asked about his rituals when he watched his shows (or if he had any), he stated that he likes watching his programmes with foods that he likes: *“If it is something I like, something I enjoy, I always eat something while watching it. [...] But something I like [eating]. I do not know... Like, sushi”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

After asking him if he watches his programmes once or enjoys watching them multiple times, he mentioned that he likes returning to the programmes he watched and watching them again: *“I do [watch them]. I do. Off, happens a lot (laughs)”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

Candan stated that she watches an array of genres except for genres such as thriller and horror and she watches fantasy, detective and comedy genres the most.

Like, I do not watch a lot of thrillers, horror and such. Um... Other than that, most of the time I might watch fantasy, thriller or comedy. Other than that, what else? What do I watch? I watch a lot of things. (Laughs) (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Other than her preference of genres, her only standard for watching a program was her finding it riveting.

My standards shape after I start watching a series or after I start watching any kind of show. If it is not riveting or I watched up to a certain point I might stop watching it in the middle of it. If it is riveting at first but not later, for example. [...] My standard is that I find them riveting. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Similar to Koray, Candan watches her shows in her room, alone: “*Here. Only here.* (Chuckles) [...] *In my room. Yeah. I only watch [my programmes] alone*” (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021).

When it comes to how she watches her programmes, whether if she binge-watches them or not, depends on her schedule. She stated that if she has a day off, she binge-watches television all day. However, if she is busy with work or school-work she watches her programs during her breaks.

For example, I am at home all day, I have no work to do, I wake up in the morning and put on [a program] while I am having breakfast. If it is interesting, I try to watch all of the episodes all day. If I get bored at some point, I turn it off. Maybe I open something else, squeeze one in or do something else. Look at my phone. If I have work to do, I cannot watch too many episodes. When there is work or school-work to do, like, I put one on during my breaks. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Her rituals when watching television paralleled Koray’s, as well. She mentioned that she enjoys eating or drinking something while watching her programs. However, she also added that, recently, she started looking at her phone while watching but she thinks it is because of the having to stay in quarantine due to Covid-19 pandemic.

I do [have a ritual]. Like, for example, first I start watching them with breakfast. After I finish my breakfast, if I finished the episode, I make my coffee before starting another episode. I take a chocolate along with it. (Laughs) After that, [I watch my program] along with them. For example, lunch time [came] (chuckles) (inaudible). I am eating fruits right now. [...] For the most part, my ritual is eating and drinking. [...] Other than that, recently, I think it is because of the pandemic, I get distracted a lot. [...] I did not do it today to watch the episode attentively. (Makes a hand gesture of tapping on a phone screen) I constantly watch the series like this. [...] It started in the recent months, with the pandemic due to feeling distracted, I think. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

She also added that she does come back and watch the series she already watched multiple times: *“I watch the shit out of them. If I could not find a series and I want to watch the series that I like, I watch the shows I watch in an endless cycle for 77 times or 150 times”* (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021).

Among the participants, Seçil watched the widest range of types of programs. She watches television series, documentaries or reality-shows from Netflix but also watches reality-shows from Turkish network channels as well but she usually watches them with her family. She also mentioned that she watches a high number of YouTube videos.

It is very mixed. I mean, I watch things that I see on Netflix like documentaries or sometimes programs like Glow-Up. [...] I also watch [network] television, as well. I mean, (chuckling) sadly. [...] My [network] television viewing time varies. I usually watch them with my family. [...] Other than that, when I watch [something] alone, I watch television series. The Office, Parks and Rec[reation], you know. [...] Even if it may not be every day, I definitely watch one of them

once a week. They are integral parts of my life. Other than that, ... It depends. I mean, it varies. I may [sometimes] watch documentaries. I consume a lot of YouTube, by the way, and on YouTube, I mean, if I have to mention, for example, I may be following more LGBTQ people than I do straight people. (Laughs) (Seçil, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

When it comes to her standards for choosing programs, Seçil stated that she has different standards for different platforms she watches her programs from. For network television programs, she mentions that she has almost no standards. She watches network television programs to wind down and “empty her mind,” so to speak. She avoids watching the news on television because she sees them on Twitter frequently and notes that they affect her mental health negatively. When it comes to series, she watches on streaming platforms such as Netflix, she mentions that she specifically enjoys the mockumentary genre the most. She also watches a variety of programs from other genres; however, she notes that, although she sometimes watches them, she does not like sit-coms and drama series because she thinks that the jokes in sit-coms can be offensive and dramas are not good for her mental health.

Yeah. I compartmentalize [the platforms]. One group is the one that I completely shut my brain down. When I something on television, no brain... It means that at that moment my IQ levels go down to one-digit numbers. I mean, zero. (Chuckles) [...] I completely shut down the switches. I am looking [at the screen]. Just looking. [...] However, I try not to watch the news as much as I can. Because, I see the news on Twitter a lot and my nerves cannot handle them anymore. So, I mean, I do not have a habit of watching news that much. The documentaries... Umm... I mean, I do not watch historical things that much. I mostly watch [documentaries] about art history. [...] I watch stupid programs on Netflix. Netflix originals programs and such... Nailed It... I watch them. Like

that. Mixed. Again, I kind of watch whatever I find. (Laughs) [...] [My standards] are not very high... From this sense I do have them: If something bores me... I mean, like this: I have specific, mockumentary... In terms of comedy, I love mockumentaries. [...] For example, I watched Friends or How I Met Your Mother and all but I would never go back and watch them again. [...] I mean, because it is an old series there are also differences. They irritate me a lot. I mean, having too many sexist jokes or, I do not know, Karenish situations, like, them making fun of Ross and such, they irritate me. [...] That is why I do not watch them, for example. I cannot stand them, even. They get on my nerves. [...] [From time to time] I watch dramas too. [...] But I avoid them because my mental state cannot handle them. (Seçil, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil watches her programs either on television or a computer. She watches her network television programs on a television screen and her other programs from a computer. Although, she notes that she sometimes connects her computer to a television screen, as well. She notes that when her family is at home, they watch their network television shows together in the living room. However, she watches the programs she streams online alone, in her room because she does not like watching them with her family.

If I watch [my programs] on television, it is regular television screen. [...] Always in my room. If... If we are all at home with my parents, we only watch [network] television programs together. [...] I cannot [endure watching] Netflix with them. (Laughs) But if I am watching Netflix or something I am always in my room. Sometimes I connect to computer to the television [screen]. In a spread-out position like (puts her tongue out and gestures a lying down position).

(Chuckling) I watch them like that. (Seçil, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Eating or drinking something while watching their programs was a common theme among participants and Seçil was no exception. When asked about her rituals while watching her programs, she, too, mentioned that she always drinks a beverage such as tea or coffee. She also noted that she watches the programs she is watching for the first time attentively but if it is a program she watched before, she watches them while doing something else and uses them as a background noise. Lastly, she also prefers binge-watching her programs rather than spreading them out into different weeks.

Yeah. I always drink tea, coffee or something. (Chuckles) [...] If I am watching something I have not watched before, if I am watching something for the first time, I watch them with my full attention. [...] But, if it is something I watched before, such as *The Office*, *Parks and Rec[reation]* or something, I may put them on in the background even when I am doing something else or if is YouTube, on YouTube, you know... I put them on in the background just to hear someone talking, even just to listen to them like a Podcast. (Seçil, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

She also added: “Binge. I always binge[-watch my programs] because I do not have the patience to wait for the next episode” (Seçil, personal communication, February 18, 2021).

To have an understanding about their experiences with trans and black people and their already established ideas about them, the participants were asked a few questions about their previous contacts with people from these marginalized groups.

Koray was the only participant who had no personal contact with trans or black people. However, his attitude towards them were positive and accepting. He remarked that he

would like to be friends or neighbours with trans or black people, that their sexual or racial identity would not make a difference for him: *“I would [like to be friends or neighbours with trans people]. I mean, it would be a normal friendship or neighbourly relationship. (Chuckles lightly) It is a normal thing.”* (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021) He also said: *“Sure, of course. Why not? I mean, it is a normal thing [being friends or neighbours with black people] (chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).*

When asked about what would it be like to be friends or neighbours with trans or black people and how he would feel in if he were to be in those kinds of relationships with them, he expressed that he finds the question meaningless because for him, someone’s identity does not play a role in his relationship with them.

I mean, I do not know. I find this a bit strange. Like, it is like this: Normal...

How can I put it? You are my friend. Asking me a question like “how would you feel being friends with Orhun” is... It is a stupid question. I mean, I would feel the same way that I feel [being friends] with you. [...] I mean, no difference.

(Chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

He added: *“Same. I mean, normal. [Being friends of neighbours with black people] would not be any different than my [relationship with] my current friends and neighbours. I mean, [I would feel] the same”* (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).

As mentioned, Koray does not know any trans or black person in real life. He stated that his path never crossed with a trans person and he never met one; he sees black people on the streets but again, as he stated, he never met one or even if he did it was a friend of a friend but he is not sure that he did because their race does not matter to him. He usually sees both groups of people on television series and movies: *“I mean, I never crossed paths or met [trans*

people]. Probably, like, I only saw them on television series or movies” (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021). Then, he said the following:

I definitely see [black people]. I see them on the streets or whatever but I never, like, met [them] or had something like that. [...] Just never had the chance. [...] Or maybe- [...] [If I did meet one] they were a friend of a friend. [...] That is probably the most likely [scenario if I interacted with them]. I mean, I think I did once but I mean, it really is not [important] for me that I do not pay attention. [...] I usually see them on television series. In television series and movies because [...] they [show them] more to raise awareness. They even intentionally show more black characters in many television series and films. [...] That is probably why I see them more [on television series and films]. (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

When asked about how often he sees black and trans people, he noted that while he sees trans people rarely, he sees black people more frequently: “*I never paid any attention but I mean... I do not know. I think about the things I recently watched but... I do not see [trans people] very often*” (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021). He also added: “*I see [black people] more, of course*” (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).

Koray consistently stated that having trans or black friends is “normal” for him, their sexual identity would not play a role in him being friends with them and he would not feel any different being friends with them or it would not be a different experience. However, because Koray did not know anyone black and trans, to have a better understanding about how he would feel in a meaningful interaction with them in a public setting, he was asked how he would feel or what kind of experience it would be for him if he were to hang out with them outside, in a public place like a café. Koray stated that, because he lives in Turkey, he would be protective and would keep his guard up for possible acts of discrimination that might come

towards his friend if he hung out with a trans person. If his friend was black, he said he would still be protective of them but not as much as he would be with a trans person because he thought that racial discrimination towards black people is less common than discrimination towards trans people, in Turkey.

Now, especially because we live in Turkey, I would be a little... Protective, let us say. I would have an eye out. So that if someone says something [...] Um... I would get involved. I would probably have an eye out all the time so that I can do something if something happens. But that is because we live in Turkey. [...] [For when I am with a black person] it would be pretty much the same but in Turkey, there is not much of, um... As far as I know, there is not much racism. [...] I would be a bit more relaxed with that one because I do not think it would be as much [as the other]. [...] But the reason I would be nervous is because of [the attitude] of society. Not because of the person I am [hanging out] with. (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

Candan's experiences were different than Koray's in some senses. Unlike Koray, Candan used to know a trans woman when she was a child, around the ages of 11 or 12. However, she, too, did not know any black people in real life: *"Yes. [...] There was a tailor shop under the apartment we used to live. Umm... She was a woman who used to come by* (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021). She added: *"Have I ever met a black person? Let me think. Not in my close circle. Umm... Let me think. [...] I do not think I had a face-to-face interaction [with a black person]"* (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

She mentioned that the trans woman she knew was a friend of the tailor under their apartment and because her mother was also friends with the tailor, they would sometimes hang out and chat together. Candan commented that she was a singer at places like casinos

and had a hard life and she and her mother would help her out with clothes and food, from time to time. Candan also mentioned that while the people around her would mention that she was trans, Candan was not familiar with the term at that age and she would see her as a woman because she looked like a woman to her. When talking about her, Candan spoke fondly, saying that she was a nice woman with a good personality and Candan would have a good time when she was with her.

Her father had not accepted her. And because he had not accepted her, for her operations, umm... I mean, she had sung in places [like casinos]. She had a perfect personality. Like, we used to help her out with my mother. Um... Food and such. Also, with clothes. She used to come to the tailor shop. There, she would sometimes order clothes for her job. She was a very nice woman.

(Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

She also said the following:

I was a child, actually. Because I was I child... How old was I? I was 11, 12 years old at most. [...] For example, people, like, umm... They would say that [she was] trans and all. However, when I looked at her, I would see her as a woman because she looked like one. [...] Because I was a child and did not know the different terms so, I would not see her any differently. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Then she noted:

Her personality was very nice. Umm... When I say with her, like, she would chat [with me]. At the tailor shop, she would try on very beautiful clothes. Like, she would have different clothes, sparkling clothes. And I would say, like... The tailor was a friend of my mother. I would say things like "Saw one for me too,

saw one for me too. Look, she is so beautiful.” (Laughs) I remember those. [...]

Yes [I would spend good times with her]. There was a beautiful woman.

(Chuckling) She would give my mother coffee cup readings. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

When asked if she would want to be friends or neighbours with a trans person again, she answered positively; saying that she would want to if they are a nice person. Her answer did not change when it comes to being friends or neighbours with black people, as well.

I would [want to be friends or neighbours with trans people]. I mean, if they have a good personality, why not? [...] I mean, if they are someone I get along with, in the end, it is not because of their transsexuality. Are they someone I can get along with or not? That is what is important for me. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Then she stated the following:

I would [want to be friends or neighbours with black people]. Again no... It makes no difference for me. Personality wise, umm... If they are someone who can get along with me, they are someone I can get along with, I would want to be friends. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

When asked how she would feel being friends with black people, Candan gave a similar reply. She said that she would feel good if they are someone she can get along with and it would not be a different experience just because of their skin colour and they would bring cultural diversity to her life. She also added that the only difference would be that they would talk about their experiences, their life in Turkey and talk about whether if the person experienced any discrimination or not.

Would it be a different experience just because of their skin colour? It would not be a different experience just because of their skin colour but let us say, umm...

If they came from the US or Africa or somewhere else, they would culturally contribute me by bringing diversity. [...] I mean, if they have a personality which I can get along with, they are someone I am friends with, I would feel good. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

She added the following:

Let us do it this way: Let us say they came from a different country; they are foreigners. They would talk about the place they came from. They would talk about their experiences or for example, like, in Turkey, umm... If they have been discriminated because of that we would talk about them. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Candan mentioned that she has not met anyone trans after the woman she met and currently does not know anyone trans or black. She usually sees trans people on television series, films and social media and black people on television series and films.

I do not see [trans people] frequently in real life, on the streets or in my circle.

Actually, the last [trans] person I knew and saw was the woman I communicated with. [...] Umm... Other than that, have I talked, umm... Or, like, maybe I have seen them on the streets but I have not talked and had a conversation with someone [trans]. [...] I usually see them on things I watch and on social media. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

She also said: “[*I see black people*] on television series and movies a lot” (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

When asked about how often she sees trans and black people on the programs she watches and on social media, she commented that she sees trans people when they become an agenda topic on social media but she does not see them often on television series and films and she sees black people frequently in the programs and films she watches.

I see [trans people] when they become an agenda topic. But, because they are a celebrity, for example, umm... Because of the algorithm, [let us say] a friend of mine looked at them that day, they somehow show up [on my screen], or if they liked their story. In a week... In a regular period, I probably see them once a week [on social media]. [...] Do I see them on television series and films a lot? They do not show up a lot. I see gay or lesbian characters more but seeing trans characters on television series or films a lot... [I do] not [see them] very frequently. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

She added: *"I see at least one [black] character in every television series or film I watch"* (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021).

Different from both participants, Seçil was the only participant who met and interacted with both trans people and black people; however, none of the people she knew were Turkish. She noted that she had met two trans people and multiple black people, one of the black people being one of her best friends. She met most of the trans people she knew during the times she spent in other countries.

Yes. [I met] the [trans] person who was a friend of a friend in Turkey, actually, and the person I knew, [I met them] abroad. She was a friend of mine during my Erasmus [exchange]. I mean, she was not a friend of mine but actually my friend's... She was a girl from our dorm. [...] She was a friend of my roommate but she would come to our [room] to hang out. [...] We had coffee, like, 5 or 6

times and hung out and chit-chatted. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

She also said the following:

I had [black friends]. Of course. They were a close friend of mine, even. [...] I mean, earlier when I went on a trip abroad, I met a few people at the hostels. [...] But, during my Erasmus, I met 4, 5... Like, knew 4 to 5 people in my friend group but I- One of them was a very close friend of mine. Actually, I mean, my Italian friend, Dila and that girl, we were very close. I really liked her. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Seçil talked about all of her encounters with both trans and black people in a positive manner. Not having many trans friends, she commented that she was happy that she met a trans person and she was “cool” about it but she was also careful about saying anything that could offend her. Although Seçil noted that she avoided talking about and asking her about her trans identity, when asked what kind of experience was that for her, it was evident in Seçil’s answers that she paid attention to her physical qualities and saw her through her trans identity. Although it might be because hanging out with a trans person was a new experience for her, the woman’s sexually transgressed body was an important element in how she saw her, nonetheless. Overall, her talking about her experiences with trans people had a few contradictions. In her comments it seemed like she was trying to act “cool” and treat her like she would with any other person and was trying to be supportive but also, she was trying to process the situation she is in and her trans identity.

I was very cool. I mean, I... Now, also, because they are from another country, actually... I do not know. [Dare I say] they are luckier [compared to] our ethnicity? I mean, a skinny male- Because it is easier for a blonde, skinny male

with a baby face to turn into a female. Also, I think she started her transition at an early age. I mean, I do not want to ask too many questions about this to not make them feel uncomfortable. [...] The tone of her voice was very... I mean, the tone of her voice was very womanly. It was not manly. However, umm... I mean... I do not know how far she is in her transition because she did not have breast implants. [...] [She] had a baby face. Eyeliner and such. Like, she had put on mascara and all. But, I mean, she had short hair. I mean, maybe when she takes off her make up, maybe as a man... She could even be perceived as a German man. I do not know. We talked about regular stuff I mean. It was not something extreme for me. Only, I mean, my roommate had told me that she is trans. [...] That is how I knew that she was trans. [...] I did not ask anything about it. For example, I mean, to be honest, I get nervous about it. Because I am not very informed about this subject, umm... Even If I do not ask something or when I say something straightforward, even If I do not use a wrong term, I do not want to say something that might hurt her. [...] I was careful about that. I mean, I was really careful about that. But I do that when I am with a friend of mine whose father passed away. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

She also stated the following:

It was normal. It was just normal for me. I mean, it is just that, like a villager, I was like (doing an imitation with an innocent voice) “oh,” like, “dear, how curious, I, too, have trans friend now, I know someone trans.” And then I thought: I mean, I thought “if my friend had not told me, if she had not let me know beforehand, would I figure out that she is trans?” Then I realized that I would not. Then I thought “what would it matter if I figured out or not.” If that

person is happy that is okay with me. If she wanted to share that with me, she would. If she did not, then she would not. It is that simple. [...] But it was good in this sense: Normally, like, some girls- I mean, I do get it. They mean well and say things like “oh, you are gay, wow, how nice.” (Chuckling) I tried not to do that. I fear that I might do something like that. [...] I mean, for me it is like [saying] “oh, are you a woman, how nice.” I mean, “So? What the fuck?” [...] For me it was not something extreme like “oh, I cannot believe it,” like, “I met a trans person” or something like that. It was like I met someone. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Unlike her comments about her interactions with trans people, her comments about her experiences with black people were consistent, positive and showed that she felt close to those people not only because of their personalities but also because of their racial identity and cultural background. She also noted that she felt a sympathy for black people and connected with them through her ethnic identity and the similarities between their ethnic racial background.

I already have sympathy for black people for some reason. I do not know. I sort of see it like this: They too... I mean, Kurdish people are actually somewhat similar to black people, you know? Inability to access education, having darker skin, being looked down on because of your skin colour and such. In terms of being looked down because of your roots. [...] I do not know. Maybe it has an effect. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

She added:

Actually, [my friend] was a daughter of a financier, a broker, a very rich family. I mean, typical... Stereotypical, maybe I should say. Whatever that is. She may

not be seen as a [stereotypically] black person. I mean, she, for example the way they dance... She would teach me [the dance] by the way. [...] It is similar to our belly dance. Hal- Or just like our *halay*, they have their own traditional dances. [...] She would teach them to me and in their culture, like... Very- It was a very nice experience for me because this is what I saw: I mean, for example, like, we are watching something while cooking or like... I cannot forget about it. One time in Dila's dorm room, in the kitchen, we were cooking with them. We were cooking for another friend. The girl did not put any spice. She put black pepper as spice. [When] the girl left [the kitchen] Tara was like "She thinks black pepper is a spice." (Laughs) [...] Especially when we were with Germans she would say "you guys have no taste, you do not eat any spice" and it was really cute. [...] I loved her for that. She is very blunt like that, by the way. She is bad. [...] It was very nice for me. It was a perfect experience. [...] I was incredibly happy. I would sometimes learn something but like, it was usually like this: "oh, we, like, okay I [am from] Turkey [but] I am from the eastern part of Turkey, we love spices in kebab or whatever," and [she would be like] "oh, we love spices too." [...] Seeing those similarities... Yeah. Seeing those similarities was very fun for me. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

However, while she was asked whether she is still in touch with her close black friend, she noted that they still follow each other on social media but they do not communicate very often, usually on special occasions.

Yeah, from time- From time to time, [like,] "how are you, what have you been up to" [or] we wish each other happy birthday [or] "are you still alive..."

(Laughs) [...] We still chat. [...] Yeah, yeah, [in special occasions]. We still keep in touch. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Although Seçil had more real life and meaningful interactions with trans and black people compared to other participants, she too noted that she usually sees trans and black people on media the most, rather than in real life. She noted that she sees trans people on social media the most and she sees them very frequently but when it comes to television series and movies, she pointed out that the frequency decreases significantly. She commented that, compared to trans people, she sees black people more in television series and films; however, she, again, encounters them on social media the most.

I encounter [trans people] more on social media because there are a lot of trans Youtubers and even if it is something I would not normally watch on YouTube, umm... If they are a small Youtuber, especially in Turkey- Actually, it is not just trans people, either. If they are aa small youtuber from the LGBTQ community, even if I do not watch them, I definitely comment on [their videos], like them and support them. Even if it is not a content of my preference. So, I can say that that is why I encounter them on social media the most. [...] Other than that, the usual, I mean. You know, I saw them when I went out at night to have fun or outside, when I am shopping. [...] Oof! Sometimes [on social media] I find videos of a rookie and watch them non-stop for a week. [...] For example, Nikki Tutorials uploads a video once a week. I do not watch them once a week. [...] You know, I give them a like or whatever. In terms of... To support them. I do whatever I can to monetize them. [...] [It] varies. [...] Yes, yes [I see them frequently]. Yes. [...] If you count [the people I see on my] phone social media as well, I probably see them every day. [...] Few. [The trans people I see] in television series are few, yes. [...] Because I watch the same television series all

the time, I do not watch a lot of new series and the new series I watch do not have a lot of trans characters. [...] [The ones that I watch on repeat] do not have [trans characters either]. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Then she continued as follows:

In television series and films. Seeing black people on the streets is rare in Turkey. There are not any [black people] in the area I live in. [...] Although, I did not see them in the city centre that much, either. [...] [Compared to television series and films] I see them more on social media. [...] I see them on television series too. [...] I see them on a television series and if I liked them on the series I watch, I follow them on social media. [...] [Then,] I see them on social media every day. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

LGBTQ Culture and Attitudes Towards Discrimination

Before getting into questions about the participant's readings of the episode, it is important to lay out their familiarity with the LGBTQ culture and how much they know about it and their attitudes towards discrimination and how they react to it.

Koray stated that he did not know much about LGBTQ culture but he was aware of the struggles LGBTQ people go through in their everyday lives. Candan's answer was quite similar to Koray's answer; she, too, did not know much about their culture but was familiar with their struggles and some of the terms she knew from people around her. Seçil was the most informed participant among them about the subject. Along with being familiar with some fundamental concepts such as sexual identity and sexual orientation, she was also familiar with some parts of LGBTQ culture such as the art of drag and drag pageants. She also noted that she grew up in a family environment which did not tolerate discriminatory behaviour towards sexually marginalized people: *"I mean, I was not very familiar. I was not*

familiar and I still do not think that I am that familiar. [...] I did not know things like [their cultural activities] but I mean, I knew about their struggles and all, of course” (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).

Candan said:

With their culture, I was not very, umm... I was not very familiar or did not have a grasp on [their culture]. Also, the series is not set in our time. Other than that, because it is set in another country, outside of Turkey, umm... I was not very familiar with their culture, either. I knew things like some terms I heard from you or like, people around me. Maybe I was familiar with those but, umm... I was not familiar with the things I saw in the episode. [...] I knew that, umm... Trans people were being discriminated on this scale. [...] [In regards to their culture] I only learned what I saw in the series. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated the following:

I mean, I knew [the definition of] sexual orientation. I have heard of sexuality and spectrum but I had a better understanding of it [thanks to] you. [...] Even though my family may not be well informed about this issue, they are aware that there are people who fall outside the categories of “woman” and “man”, people who have different physical, I mean, congenital or not, and instinctual differences. [...] Okay, there have also been times that my father has used the term “faggot” as an insult. Times he has made jokes [using the word] “fruity” but, umm... Like, one time, umm... At an airport my cousin, umm... We saw Fatih Ürek and my cousin said something like “(groans) uncle, look, there is a fruit passing by” [while looking at him] in a tone that he could hear and my father (Chuckling) was almost going to beat my cousin [for making fun of

him]. [...] But other than that some- I was not very familiar with some parts of their culture. I mean, for example, in drag queen culture, like... You know, they have something like a beauty pageant. I knew that [about] trans people. I knew that they participated in them. Or like, I knew that they perform in drag, [dressed] like women, with a specific form of clothing and make up or [I knew that] because some of them only feel comfortable dressed like that, umm... I knew that they walk around dressed like women, I mean, in wigs and wearing make-up but I was not very familiar with the terms [and] I still am not, I mean. [...] There were things I learned [from the episode,] as well. Yeah. I saw things like the house culture and mother culture in the series [for the first time]. I did not know that. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

When asked about how they would react to discrimination, all participants expressed that they would not tolerate it; however, the way they reacted to it varied from one another. While Koray and Candan expressed that they would react aggressively, Candan stated that she would react in a less confrontational manner. None of them stated that they would use physical force. However, Candan noted that she would use physical violence only if the other person uses it first.

If they are someone in my life, I would cut my ties. I cannot tolerate discrimination. [...] If I am involved in the conversation, I would defend the person who is being discriminated. If I am not, I would [find a way to] somehow get involved. [...] I would intervene. [...] Aggressively. (Laughs) [...] Because, discrimination is one of the things I hate the most. [...] I would not do anything physical [but] I would fuck them up with my words. [...] If the other party is [not rude] I would make insinuations towards them in a kind manner. [...]

However, because people like that usually are not kind, I would react aggressively, with insults but on the other hand, like... [...] I mean, I would

make insinuations, I would insult but I would do it in a respectful manner.

(Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

Candan expressed the following:

Because I am not a tough person, I do not know If I can say anything that would hurt that person but umm... [...] Like, I would have a normal, civilized conversation and try to learn what they think [about the subject]. Then, if they are someone whom I cannot change their mind, I could distance myself from that person. [...] [I would do that to,] for example, someone I recently met, someone in that group, a stranger [or people like that]. [...] I would try to cut the conversation short with that person. After I tell them that what they do is stupid. [...] Anything hurtful, like, (chuckling) I would say them in my head. [...] Or, like, I would say them to my friends when we talk about it after that person leaves. [...] I am not a person who gets heated quickly. [...] That is why I may not be able to say anything hurtful to them but for example, [if] there is a fight, someone raises their hand towards my friend or discriminates them in a way like that, someone on the street, umm... They hit [my friend,] in that moment I would let out all my anger. Then, I would try to intervene physically. Umm... I would say whatever comes out of my mouth, umm... to their face. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated the following:

I would fuck them up. (Laughs) [...] But like, when I see a young person, someone who is university educated [and] needs to be a little open-minded talk like that I eat nails and it makes me (Chuckling) mad. [...] I get incredibly angry but explain it to them like I am explaining it to a moron. [...] Oh, if a 90-year-

old, like, silly, old grandpa is [saying that,] I would be like “yeah, yeah grandpa.” Now, he- Because, I cannot teach anything to him and thank God he will be dead and gone. [...] [If they are someone educated] I start with something like “are you fucking ignorant you fucking donkey.” (Laughing) that is how I start the conversation. [...] I curse right away. Yeah. Because there is nothing acceptable about it. Excuse me but it is 2021. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

To better understand how they would react in the same situation, they were also asked to describe how they would react if they experienced the same situation the black trans women in the episode they watched experienced; that is, if someone came up to their table and discriminated them for their identity. Koray and Seçil stated that they would yell at the person and argue with them, while Candan noted that she would call the restaurant representatives and talk to them about it: *“I would argue with that woman. [...] Yeah. I would yell [at them]. The whole restaurant would probably echo [with my voice]”* (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).

If the owner of the restaurant accepted me [in their restaurant] and they are providing me a service, then it is none of that woman’s business. [...] I would tell her that. I mean, are we disturbing you? No. Are we talking loudly? No. I would tell her that it is not something she can meddle with [and] that I did not think that we did anything that could disturb her. If she keeps exaggerating, I would call the waiter. [...] [I would not do anything aggressive] because of my personality. [...] I mean, I would be cursing at her whole family on the inside, though. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that:

I mean, If I were an LGBTQ person living in Turkey, I may not be able to be as loud as I would be as a straight person. I could be a little afraid of the hate crime I would face. [...] However, from that perspective, If I were a man, I would be louder because women are second class citizens in Turkey too, I mean. [...] I would say something like “mind your business, leave me alone, go away.” [...] I mean, If I am not gay, I am my straight self on that table, like, something like that happens while I am having dinner with my trans friends I would pretty much (chuckling) attack her. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Reception of the Episode, Characters and Their Relationship

During the first interviews, after the participants watched the episode, they were asked their opinion about the episode, whether if they liked it or not and if they would like to watch the whole series.

Some of the participants stated that they have heard the series before; however, none of them had seen it prior to this study. In spite of that, all of them said that they enjoyed the episode and they would like to watch the whole series. Although Seçil previously mentioned that she does not like dramas, she liked this one, which was interesting. When asked why, she noted that she does not like tragic, grim and melancholic dramas but likes the ones that deal with social issues.

Yeah. No, I would watch it. This is how it is: When dramas are like, soppy, melancholic, love stories, things like someone’s arm getting chopped off... Them... They are both very agitating, I cannot watch them, and I cannot mentally put up with them. Although, if the dramas are nice, [if they] deal with social issues then I would watch them. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

None of the participants stated that they did not like a part of the episode or found something to be cliché or cheesy. When asked what they liked about the episode, Koray stated that he liked the ambiance, the characters, the acting and the messages in it; Candan stated that she liked seeing representations of trans characters on a television series, liked that they were strong characters, liked the bond between them, liked the way the series reflected their struggles and experiences and liked the characters' confidence; Seçil stated that she liked the that the series talks about social issues through its characters: *"I do not know, overall, the ambiance was nice and the characters were good. The acting was good too. Umm... The messages they gave here and there was also nice"* (Koray, personal communication, February 17 2021).

Candan noted that:

I really like that the series revolves around trans characters and I think all of them were strong characters, despite everything. [...] Although they might have small insecurities, they are strong characters and they seemed to have strong personalities compared to most people. I liked that a lot. [...] I mean, there was a "whatever happens we are a family" concept. There was a feeling of "after all, we are together even in this strange world." I liked that too. [...] Like, they conveyed that feeling [they have when someone finds them attractive] so well. Like, "is it real," "even if it is for a second, this [good] enough for me, I [can make do without having] the rest of it." But that feeling of things working out is like a (...) dream for them. Like, this... You feel sad thinking that "how did the world become like this." I get extremely sad. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

She continued with the following: *For example, I really liked that they were confident [characters], as well. [...] In fact, I also liked that they tried to make Blanca feel more confident.* (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that: *I think it is very, like... Like, the problems they go through.... Like, it tells a personal story but they conveyed the social part of it very well and on point.* (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

The participants also stated that they liked the leading characters for the most part. Koray expressed that he liked all of the leading characters and felt warm towards them. Candan and Seçil, however, did not like Lulu as much as they did the other characters. They both talked about her in reference to her being insecure about her body in the scene where the women are getting ready to go out at Elektra's house. Candan saw Lulu as an ordinary and insecure character and as it was apparent in the participant observation, she believed that her insecurities about her body were unfounded. Also, Candan looks at the leading characters from a stereotypical lens. It was apparent in her answer that she sees trans people as colourful and cheerful people who are fun to be around. It may not be rooted in hate but it is a stereotype nonetheless. Similarly, Seçil thought that Lulu was a shallow character and was insecure.

I liked the characters. Exactly. I mean, If I do not feel warm towards the characters when I watch something, I normally do not continue watching. It is very rare that I feel warm towards [the characters in a show] in one episode but I did. It was good. (Chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, February 17 2021)

Candan said:

Lulu is not a character that sticks out that much but characteristically and as a character she is really a kind of person who if you stopped someone on the street in Turkey, if you stopped any Turkish girl, you can find a Lulu. She is a straightforward character I mean but I am not going to judge her over her trans identity. I am going judge her as an overall human [being]. If I judge her personality as a normal person, they made her like a normal, straightforward character you can find on the street. As you said, she is not a character who sticks out. She is someone who is fun and just hangs around. [...] Overall, I liked the characters. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil expressed the following:

Umm... Wait. I did not like one of them that much. [...] Blanca, Electra, we stan. Definitely alpha. Blanca is very cute too. The one who is model [is cute] as well but who was the other one? [...] Yeah, Lulu. I did not like her. [...] She seemed like a bit like a shallow character. [...] For example, her physique is rocking but she says things like “I do not like my physique” [or] “I am afraid of going out into light.” I mean, what the fuck? You know? [...] Yeah. Yeah. Her insecurity was, like, a bit unnecessary for me. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

Candan and Seçil were then asked a few more questions to understand why they felt like that about Lulu. Also, they were asked to describe how they saw their own bodies to have an understanding about their own experiences and whether they somehow relate to how they felt towards Lulu.

When asked why she felt that way towards Lulu, Candan stated that it was because the episode did not focus on her too much and in a way, she blended into the backwards. Seçil, on

the other hand, thought that Lulu talking about her insecurities while she has no valid reason to be insecure was unnecessary and disrespectful towards Blanca because according to Seçil, Blanca has valid reasons to be insecure. She also noted that she usually does not analyse people's physical features and she did not realize that Blanca looked less feminine than other women until it was highlighted in the episode. In other words, she thought that because Lulu is more beautiful than Blanca, it was wrong of her to talk about her insecurities. Here it is important to note that in the scenes she mentions Lulu talks about her insecurities while Blanca is not actually present. She talks about her insecurity before Blanca arrives at Elektra's house and after Blanca goes swimming with Angel, at the beach. However, although she misrepresented the events, her answers show that she found commonalities between the characters in this particular case and judged them in relation to one another. In addition, when she was asked to imagine that, hypothetically, Blanca did not feel insecure about her body in the episode and asked to reconsider Lulu's insecurity from that perspective. Even when Blanca's insecurity was taken out of the equation, Seçil's feelings towards Lulu did not change.

They focused more on the other characters. There were different stories about the other characters or they were on the main characters status, for example, but Lulu was, like, shown less. Lulu was like friend who just stood around them. [...] In The series, in the episode I watched actually, they did not give [any] information [about her] either. It might have been because of that, too. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that:

Her insecurity, like, seemed a bit unnecessary for me. After all, actually, it also shows Blanca's insecurity on the other hand. [...] And when they showed Blanca's insecurity, Blanca, for example, entered with no makeup on. Or, like...

That is when I realized, like, she is physically different from others [but] more... That is when I realized she does not look as feminine as the others. I realized that in that exact scene. Up until that scene she looked quite feminine to me. [...] But when she entered and they went like “ah, what is up with your outfit,” then it stuck out for me even more. [...] I would not have understood by just looking at her face. [...] Also, there is no need. (Chuckles) I do not really examine [people like that] that much. [...] Yeah. Because of that, the contrast [between Lulu and Blanca] just bothered me. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

She added:

[Lulu] seemed unlikable because she did it in front of Blanca; because in the episode, Blanca is also... I mean... Something happened [in the episode]. Blanca also said that “I am not like the others; I look more manly” or something [like that]. [...] I mean, when this is stated [in the episode], the screenwriter putting a scene like that felt unpleasant. [...] It made me feel irritated by that girl. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

She continued with following after being asked to reimagine the situation without taking Blanca’s insecurity into consideration:

Then, it would still feel nonsensical. [...] Like, insecurity of what? Because, your physique looks nice. But because people would also tell me [the same thing] at that moment I would be like “Seçil, you do not like your physique either, people tell you that your physique looks nice, so, what you are thinking does not make sense.” That is what [would go through my head]. [...] Because, there, she would not be set in comparison to [and] would not be portrayed alongside someone who actually struggles in this matter. [...] [Even if there was

no contrast between them,] I would still feel a bit like “was that necessary,” (chuckling) you know. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

When asked how she sees and feels about her own body, Candan expressed she has days when she feels insecure about her body and days when she is more confident. She mentioned that one of the things she feels insecure about is her weight. Seçil, on the other hand, stated that she used to feel insecure about her body and has been bullied and judged during her high school years both by her peers and her family due to the way her body looked. She noted that she has gotten over her insecurities but her dislike for Lulu might be connected to the traumatic events she has been through.

I am occasionally content [with my body]. Sometimes I look at my flaw and like, say things like “I wish this was like that.” [...] For example, when I look at my body, let us say, I say things like “I wish,” like, “I exercised more and eat less, lose weight on my legs and waist.” Umm... I [sometimes] say “I wish I looked fitter.” [...] About my face, for example, like, I [sometimes] say “should I get my nose done.” [...] Sometimes, though, on the contrary, I look in the mirror and say things like “wow, I look so beautiful today, my hair looks so beautiful,” like, “my skin looks so beautiful.” But sometimes I also say things like “I have a pimple today; I look so ugly.” (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that:

Honestly, I have been bullied for [my body] for a long time, both inside and outside of my family. Like, in my high school years, in high school, I have been bullied for this a lot at the school. [...] Also, there have been times when I gained [and] lost weight. In the early years of my university [education] there

was a time when I was really skinny. [...] I mean, after that, I gained about 10 kilograms. I actually gained a lot of weight. But I am happy right now. I mean, yeah, I have a belly. Like, yeah, I have cellulite, my legs are wide, okay dude but I do not care at all. [...] At one point, after I accepted this, I started to be more confident about [my body]. [...] Maybe that is the reason why I say “I found Lulu irritating;” it may be connected to that. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Candan’s insecurities about her weight matched Lulu’s insecurities about her own body and when this was expressed to Candan, she commented that she related to Lulu’s insecurity about her body through her own insecurities. Similarly, when Seçil was asked that is it possible that she sound Lulu unlikable because she sees someone, she perceives to be beautiful and flawless being insecure while she feels confident in her own body which she finds flawed, she first agreed with this statement but then restated her previous point about finding Lulu unlikable for feeling insecure next to Blanca. She then commented on their trans identity through their femininity. She highlighted that Lulu has breast enhancements and has physical characteristics that better fit the traditional norms of femininity and Blanca can be perceived similarly to women who have smaller breasts and a smaller butt.

In that sense, for example, between Lulu’s insecurity and my insecurity, I found a... Umm... [...] Yeah, I saw [myself], in that sense. I cannot remember If she felt that way for different things but umm... Overall, it is the same. The issue is insecurity. She also had it the same. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil said:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, yeah [I found Lulu unlikable because is insecure in her flawless body while I am confident in my own]. [...] Well, actually, not exactly like that. [...] I looked at her as a trans individual. As a trans person, someone who has [breast] implants [and] physically in no way, umm... Like... At least when compared to Blanca. Because this woman... Well, Blanca can also be seen as a random woman, as well, because girls who do not have breasts [and] ass (chuckling) look like Blanca, I mean. I personally do not think that there is a huge difference in this matter. Physical form, I mean. Also, I have seen many [different types of] human bodies because I used to work in retail. (Laughs) (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Seçil also found a connection between Lulu's actions and her own experiences. Said that she resembled Lulu's actions to her older sister's comments on Seçil's body.

Before, like, my sister's, umm... When I used to exercise and, umm... She did not like her own physique and then to me, like, when I said something- For example, I have some extra weight and at that moment I am... Even if it is something I would not actually mind she would constantly tell me things like "you are fat, you need to lose weight, you need to lose weight, you need to lose weight," like, "you eat too much, you are 20 years old," like, "this cannot go on..." My father constantly saying "exercise, go for a run, exercise, go for a run..." By the way my father would continue pressuring me by say "exercise, go for a run" even if I am 45 kilograms. Because he is a sportive guy and [for him] everyone needs to be sportive. His comments were not about [my] physique but that, combined with my sister trying to load down her own insecurities on me, would extremely irritate me and like, actually, she was trying to- I felt like Lulu was trying to do that, a little bit. You feel me? [...] When she should not be

having insecurity problems when there is- Or [although] she has insecurity problems, saying something like that when there is someone with a more serious case seems a little disrespectful for me. [...] Can I be comparing myself with her? I do not know. I saw that as a more personal thing but maybe it really is like what you said. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

As it is apparent in her answers, Seçil, similar to Candan, only focused on Lulu's insecurity about her body, in her actions. They both looked at Lulu's actions from the perspective of their own experiences as cisgender women. Seçil also expressed that she finds Lulu having insecurities as a trans individual and as a woman ordinary. However, another element of Lulu's actions in those scenes were her concern about getting "clocked," their trans identity being noticed by the people at the beach. When this was brought up to Seçil, she said that she did not realize that and she found her actions justified.

Because she is a trans individual, like, as a trans individual she is insecure about [her body], of course, but even if she was not trans, as a woman, it is normal that she feels about [her body] as a woman. I am not surprised. It is related to the beauty standards pushed unto us by the society; it is about perceiving that. [...] No, I never paid attention to [Lulu's concern about getting "clocked"]. I guess she worked as a stripper, right? [...] I thought it was related to that. [...] I mean, I did not consider it as a trans fear- I never thought of it like that. [...] I actually thought that, like, she could say something like that as a straight woman who works as a stripper. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

What was interesting is that while Lulu's insecurity was a major topic for both female participants, as the only male participant, it did not even grab Koray's attention. Just like other participants, he was asked questions about Lulu in the second interview, so, at first, he could not clearly remember who Lulu was and asked for reminding information through the events

in the episode. He was described both of the scenes where Lulu felt insecure and concerned and then was asked his opinion about her actions. Although being specifically asked with suggestive information, he still could not figure out what was special about her actions: *“There should be something [about her actions] since you say things like that but I did not get it. [...] Nothing grabbed my attention. What happened? What? What is it?”* (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021).

The participants’ answers were almost identical when it came to their favourite characters. Koray’s favourite character was Blanca while Candan and Seçil’s favourite character was a tie between Blanca and Elektra. Koray did not know why he liked Blanca the most but Candan said that she liked Blanca and Elektra because they were strong characters who could stand on their own two feet and support the people around them. Seçil, on the other hand, noted that she liked Blanca and Elektra because she could find herself in them: *“I do not know. I just took a liking to her. [She is] very cute. (Chuckles)”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

Candan stated that:

They are both strong characters and because they are strong characters...

Umm... They are trying to achieve certain things. For example, Blanca is running her nail salon. She is standing on her own two feet. The fact that she says to people in her own family that they either have to get an education or have to work shows that future generations... On the other hand, it is good for their own community that she does not only think of herself or people in [her] house but also the next generations. I mean, not just as sex workers or... Off, I am out of breath. Like, not being judged for their trans label, not as unemployed [or] starving but she wants them to advance in other ways, with other labels. Like, her supporting [Angel] to become a model. She is a really good character in that

way. The other... Elektra, I think, even though she shows though love to her children she is someone who shows she supports them. It is apparent that she is older compared to others. (Chuckles) (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil said:

I am torn between Blanca and Elektra. Although, now, they were more dominant in this episode. It may be related to that. [...] The scene where Elektra puts [the woman] in her place... (Chuckling) I saw myself in that scene a lot. [...] (Chuckling) I mean, it is exactly something I would do. [...] That is why I liked her a lot but I also understand Blanca's insecurity problems. [...] That is why [I liked them] both. I liked both of them very much. But I also think that maybe if I watched the whole season or watched the other episodes maybe I would not be irritated by Lulu. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

Koray felt concerned for Blanca's well-being and thought that something bad was going to happen to her. When asked why he felt that way he expressed that he did not exactly know the reason but he believed that it may be related to violence trans people face in real life. When asked if the television narratives usually developing through unfortunate or bad events may have had an effect on his reaction, he believed that it might, but its effect would not be as strong as his awareness about trans people experiencing violence in their lives.

Well, I do not know. I felt like that in that moment. (Chuckles) [...] I mean, it might be because, umm... A lot of these events of violence, because of the experiences... I do not know, psychologically, like, [maybe] they seeped into my subconscious. [...] Of course. They both [the conventions of television narratives and violence trans people face] probably have an effect, separately. I do not

know. Probably because of both. [...] Umm... The effect of television series and films is probably less. [...] If it is 80 percent that, it is 20 percent television series and television. (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

The participants' attitudes towards the leading characters were, as stated above, positive for the most part. When they were asked why they liked the characters, in general, Koray stated that he does not know why he liked them but noted that it might be related to his identity as a gay man and a member of the LGBTQ community. Candan and Seçil, on the other hand, liked them because the characters were hopeful, they supported and had strong bonds with each other and gave empowering messages. When they were asked if they connected with the characters, they both expressed that they connected with them through their womanhood and the struggles they experienced as women. Seçil also mentioned that she especially identified with Elektra because of her protective nature, especially when she put the white women who discriminated them in her place. In short, all of the participants connected with the characters through a part of their own identities.

I mean, I do not exactly know why I warmed up to them. Maybe, like I said, like, the things they go through... I me- Like, they are things that can happen to me, as well. Like, for example, umm... That discrimination, for example, is [probably] something I experienced at school. For example, that may be why I felt a closeness to them, I mean. [...] Think of it like this: For example... [...] If two people are going through the same struggles, like, they get along better. [...] Uh-huh, it is something like that. [Having shared experiences.] (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

Candan stated that:

They protected each other, their communication was good, even though they might argue, have a rivalry between them, they were in every way, umm... They got each other's backs [and] they were warm to each other. [...] They were at least together, despite everything. [...] I liked that. And their personality was good in this way: Um... They were fun, their conversations were good... I liked them in every way. Of course, they have flaws like every person but at least together, umm... They had something that they could ride the storm, umm... They had hope. I liked that, for example. [...] Umm... Because they are women... Us, as women in Turkey, experience a lot of discrimination. I felt a connection in this sense. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

Seçil noted the following:

I mean, I think, generally, they reflected the struggle of having to deal with life really well. I mean, we always struggle with something in our daily lives as women or people living in Turkey. [...] For example, [Blanca] was a harmless manicurist but... She had a nail salon but they were even attacking that. I mean, no matter what you do they somehow found a way to attack and this struggle was conveyed really well, I think. That is why I connected with the characters in this sense. [...] Yeah. I mean, them putting up a fight and doing it together. I liked [them being] together, having the security [of] sisterhood. [...] Yeah [the message of empowerment]. [...] Elektra looking after and protecting others- I mean, there, I identified with her protective side. Because, when something like that happens, I mean, I usually step up and be like "what the fuck is up with you" [and]... (Laughs) [...] Even if people, people around me, stay quiet and not say anything I am usually the one who says something. I identified [with her] in that way. Other than that, ... Let me think. I mean, in terms of insecurity problems, if

I look at it overall, I may [be able to find a connection] with my high school self.

[...] Yeah, it comes down to empowerment. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Seçil also found a cross-connection with her Kurdish identity and Blanca's trans identity and established an identification through that. She mentioned that Kurdish women who have not been completely assimilated into the dominant culture experience discrimination similar to what Blanca goes through and she drew a parallel between Blanca's nail salon being burned down in an act of discrimination for her trans identity and shop owners not wanting to rent their shop to Seçil's father for his Kurdish identity.

Blanca trying to start a business while being marginalized for her trans identity happens to a lot of Kurdish women who have been assimilated less than I am or are not as assimilated as I am. I may be able to find a connection in that. [...] Because, my father had also struggled a lot while trying to start a business as a Kurdish person. Umm... I mean, the rent... They did not want to rent [their] shop. Like "you cannot rent a place to a Kurd" or whatever. [...] I can understand or [find] a connection in that way. [...] Even if not through sexual identity, I can connect [to them] through these. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Except Seçil who did not like Lulu, neither of the other participants stated that they did not like any of the main characters. When asked if they had any characters they did not like Koray and Candan counted the characters who discriminated against the characters who discriminated the. Koray said he did not like the shop owner, Frederica, because she burned down the shop and the white woman who came to the main characters' table for her attitude and discriminatory actions. Candan on the other hand stated that she only did not like the white woman because of her actions: "*Her attitude, her actions, her personality, her*

characterlessness...” (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021). Candan said: *“Well, you cannot call her a character but the woman... The disgusting, homophobic, disgusting twat”* (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021).

The identity of the leading characters in the series are located in the intersection of multiple identity groups. When the participants were asked which part of the characters’ identity was emphasised in the episode, Koray stated that the episode emphasises all parts of the characters’ identity. However, when he was asked to give an example to where does the episode emphasise those sides of the characters, Koray was unable to give an example because he could not remember one. However, one scene he was trying to give as an example could be the one where Elektra mentions that men do not kill trans women because their identity but because of what it implies for them when they find trans women attractive. Candan, on the other hand, expressed that the emphasis was on the leading characters’ womanhood. She accepted the womanhood of the leading characters and saw them as completely and irrefutably women to a point where she almost neglected their trans identity. Seçil made a more detailed categorisation in how she saw the characters and while she thought that all parts of the characters’ intersectional identity have been emphasised in the episode, she also stated that for Angel and Lulu, the emphasis was on their womanhood, for Elektra it was on her motherhood and her trans identity and for Blanca it was on her trans and black identity. However, when she looked at them from a distance, she noted that their blackness was a prominent part of their identity, as well. In the end, though, she concluded that the emphasis was on the characters’ transness, first and foremost, and their black identity came second in terms of the emphasis put on it.

Actually, it is like, when you think about it, they emphasise all of them separately. [...] I mean, equally. [...] Ah, I do not have [an example] right now. I cannot remember. Umm... Hold on. For example, at one point she said

something if I am not mistaken. Umm... Something happened and [she said] “both as women like us and on top of that black ones...” Umm... Would cause trouble for us... I think they said something like that. [...] Well, could be [the scene where they hand Blanca tools for protection]. I do not remember right now. (Chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan said:

There is an emphasis on them being women. [...] Because they are women. They are not trans. I mean, they are trans but they are women now. Their identity is a woman and the series tries to show that they are women in every way and it reflects that they have an identity, they are human, they are a person and a woman. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil expressed that:

I think it was an episode which Elektra’s motherhood was more prominent than Blanca’s. [...] I do not think Lulu was very prominent in the episode. [...] Lulu and Angel were not much present but they were more... More... Umm... They were chars [characters] who supported the two mothers. [...] Angel, actually, was kind of completely living a straight life. I mean, physically doing modelling, having a boyfriend and such. She was flat out living a straight life, kind of. [...] Like, she may be representing transitioning, being trans, completely going through it and completely transgressing to the opposite sex. [...] Angel definitely [stands out] as a woman. As a woman. I do not think she [stood out] as black. [...] Honestly, Elektra... Umm... She stood out as a mother first. Being trans... Like, [she stood out] as a trans mother, let us say. [...] Blanca, I think, stood out completely, completely with her transness, with her trans identity, being a black

trans woman. [...] Actually, all of them, in that restaurant scene, even if they were not trans, like, they would stand out as a black group, as a cheerful group of women. Even their black identity alone would stand out because everyone in that scene were white, male supremacist types. That is why I can say that all of them stood out with their black identity but definitely except for... Angel. Angel completely stood out in the episode with her femininity. Umm... I think Lulu stood out with her femininity as well. [...] I mean, being a black female. [...] I mean, now, I am going to say [that the emphasis was them] “being trans, black women” but (laughing) that will cover all of them. [...] Actually, transness- Transness is emphasized more, you know? [...] Because, this is what I think. Like, I imagine it like so: If a white woman was trans in the same situation, the same thing would happen to her in the restaurant scene. I thought the same thing in the car scene, as well. In the car, even just as women... Or actually, maybe, in the restaurant scene, if they were just women that may not have happened but other than them being black, again, they were things that they could stand out. [...] Yeah, [their black identity did not play a role in their discrimination] yeah. I think it was secondary in importance. [...] It definitely must have had a role but a secondary... First and foremost, I would definitely say [that it is] their transness. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

Candan was the only participant who did not state that the blackness of the leading characters in her answer above. So, she was asked if the black identity of the leading characters grabbed her attention at all. She stated that all of them being black was something which grabbed her attention; however, she did not realize that their black identity could have played a role in their discrimination while she was watching the episode; she realized it after the question was asked.

Actually, it is like so: All of them being black grabbed my attention. There was not anyone who, like was not black. [...] When I think about it, actually, in certain places they may not be recognized with their trans identity but maybe [people] see that they are black and they may be judged [by them thinking] “woman but black.” [...] Earlier, I did not think of that when I was watching the episode. [...] I mean, either way [discrimination towards black people] is still present but in the US, compared to 70s, bigotry towards black people, was not as much in the 90s but still, them being both black and trans would make their life extra hard. [...] [It would] enhance [the scale of their discrimination]. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Candan also added that the only time she saw messages about racial injustices and racial discrimination was when Adrian talked about his experience when his mother was in the hospital. She noted that she did not get messages like that from black trans women characters.

It grabbed my attention in one scene; it was not about the women. Umm... When the man who is the lifeguard was talking about his mother and among doctors, like mentioned that... When he was talking about his mother being put in a secondary position and not being able to recover, when he mentioned that him becoming a doctor, when he was talking about himself becoming a doctor, then it went “ping” [in my head]. Other than that, when I was watching the women there was not many... I did not think about it that much because I saw their trans identity more than their black identity. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

When the participants were asked their opinions about the characters’ appearance, Koray and Candan stated that they thought that the characters were beautiful. Seçil, on the

other hand, gave a more detailed answer and noted that grabbed her attention that Lulu and Angel were cisgender-passing while Elektra and Blanca were not. In addition, Seçil commented that she noticed that during the scene(s) where Blanca did not look “feminine” or her transness was more visible in her body, it was an intentional choice made by the producers and costume designers: *“About their looks? They were all beautiful. (Chuckles) [...] No. Nothing specifically grabbed my attention”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

Candan expressed the following:

They are very beautiful. Incredibly beautiful. They could take it down a notch in the series, (chuckling) really, they could take their beauty down a notch. I do not know if this much is normal. Normal, standard, I mean... We all thing that “how come every time all these beautiful people are together.” (Chuckling) So, all of them were more beautiful than the other. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that:

I think Lulu and Angel definitely look womanly. Feminine. I think they look completely feminine. [...] Umm... Actually... Umm... Elektra’s face also looks quite feminine but her physique, I mean, maybe it was because her shoulders were broad but like... Also, there is also that... Umm... I... My black friends when I was abroad and my black friends here, generally, like, because they were hourglass shaped people, I may be comparing her to them. [...] On the other hand, I am also trying to imagine them as being white and compare them to other white trans women or other white women, hetero women. Because, after all, black people, because they are different [from white people] as a race, their

physical qualities are different from ours. [...] Because of that, like, maybe because her shoulders look broader, I thought that she would look more trans than feminine. [...] By the way, I cannot tell from any one of their faces that they are trans. I also do not look [at people] that closely. Like, I notice them right now because the series is about trans women. When I see them in public, I really do not pay attention. [...] I do not look at people and say “this person is definitely trans.” At the most, what I would think [would be] “does this woman has had a nose job” (chuckling) or things like that. [...] But, yeah, I mean, Blanca was a little more, like, among them, Blanca was the one whose trans identity was more prominent compared to her femininity. [...] They had arranged the costumes so well that, in the first scene, was Blanca wearing a romper? [...] In that outfit, in that costume, she looked completely feminine. But then, as I have said, she enters [Elektra’s house]. [...] Even I, when they said it in that scene, that is when I really realized. Probably she chose a costume that would define those, her physical feature’s... Umm... It was apparent because they chose a costume that would not make her look feminine. [...] It was not like how it was in the other scene. She carried that outfit really confidently. And like, her shoulders are broad. Okay. Or for example, in the scene where she was wearing a swimsuit, as well. Her shoulders are broad. Okay. Like, she does not have breast implants. Okay. She looks manlier. [...] But... Umm... Vague... Or it was apparent that she carried that with confidence. [...] If I saw her like that [in that swimsuit], like, I would say [she looks] womanlier. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

The leading characters’ physical appearance grabbed Candan’s attention during her participant observation, she was asked the reason why she noticed those. She expressed that it

was because of their energy and physical beauty. When she was pointed out and asked why she found the characters' skin to be beautiful during participant observations, she stated that it was because their skin looked healthy and vibrant.

I mean, their physiques are very beautiful, their faces are very beautiful, their skins were glowing. [...] Their energy was reflected unto their faces. They were beautiful in every way. [...] Their skins were flowless. Like, [they were] glowing. I mean, okay, [they have] make-up on, that probably has an effect, as well, but their skins were really beautiful. [...] The vibrancy [of their skins] was beautiful, yeah. [...] [Their skins] looked healthy. (Candan, personal communication, March 18, 2021)

As it was stated earlier in the literature review chapter, under the “Representation of Transgender Women” section, audiences' already established ideas and previously formed perceptions about certain groups of people, through their interactions with them and through the media content they consume, can affect how they view the characters in the series by setting a reference point or a framework. To understand what kind of framework the participants viewed the characters form and how they related these characters to the representations they saw before, they were asked to describe if they saw any similarities or differences between the two. While Koray could not find any similarities or differences because he does not have a reference point he can compare the characters with, Candan stated that the characters were more beautiful than the image of trans women she had in her head. Seçil, on the other hand, stated that although she makes many different categorizations because human bodies come in many different shapes, she found similarities between the characters in the episode and different categories in her head. She also specifically stated that Blanca reminded her of Nikkie de Jager (a transsexual, YouTube content creator from Netherlands): *“I do not have a vast culture on this [subject]. I have not come across them that*

much, so, because I do not have an established thing in my head due to that... Umm... There was not anything different” (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)”

Candan said:

Well, I am thinking about the [trans woman] I knew back then from Bakırköy... [...] Like, they were more beautiful. They were much more beautiful but generally... Umm... Compared to the image in my head, many of them are like this but these [women] may be a notch more beautiful. They were still beautiful compared to normal, all of our standards, as well. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil stated the following:

I mean, I do not know if she counts as a trans character. There is [a content creator] Nikkie on YouTube. Nikkie Tutorials. You might know her. [...] For example, I found connections between her and Blanca because Nikkie tutorials... [...] She is quite large. [...] And she has had operations on her face as well and you cannot tell from her face that she is trans. [...] I think Blanca is like that too. It is not apparent in her face that she is trans. [...] Like, there is a group who have extremely... Umm... Gone through surgical operations. There is also a group of trans people with little operation [done], very natural and [their operations] are not apparent in any way. But, of course... There are also women we see more often around Taksim who have broad shoulders, thin, long bodies, bonier features... When I say “broad shoulders” what I mean is actually there are people who have bonier features, as well. Like, Elektra, for example- Like... Yeah, Elektra has bonier features. In that sense she looks like them. Having bonier features. But facially... Umm... She looked like a beautiful (chuckling)

woman who had operations. [...] Because of that, there are different categorization in my head. Like, I do not thing [of them] as one thing. [...] Yeah. Every. (Chuckling) I fit every one of them to one of the categories on my head. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

As presented above, Koray stated that the episode emphasises all three intersectional parts of the black trans women's identity. However, because he could not remember where the episode emphasised the blackness of the characters, he was asked whether if the characters' black identity grabbed his attention in relation to the previous images he saw of trans people. He expressed that if their black identity was not emphasised, it would not have grabbed his attention. Although, when he was also asked to point out where the episode emphasised that, he, again, was unable to give an example because he could not remember: *"If they did not emphasise that they were black, I would not have paid attention. [...] There was a scene but I cannot remember. (Chuckling)"* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

The participants were also asked what they remembered from or stuck out for them the most in the restaurant scene. Koray stated that he remembered the waiter's judgemental looks towards the black trans women, the discriminatory actions of the white woman who came to their table and the scene where Blanca saw Adrian. Candan stated that she remembered the white woman's discriminatory action and when Elektra, Lulu and Angel gave Blanca tools weapons to protect herself. Lastly, Seçil noted that she remembered Elektra standing up against the discriminatory actions of the white woman, Lulu and Angel supporting Elektra while she's "reading" the woman and when Elektra said to Blanca that men murder them not because of their sexual identity but because of what they think it means for them when they feel attracted to trans women. She also found connections between Elektra talking about men murdering trans individuals for realizing the fragility of their sexuality and other characters she watched in a different show.

Oh, the woman coming to their table. [...] Oh, there is also one more thing. Like she came, like, she saw the lifeguard. I remember that scene, as well. [...] Oh! The scene, the scene... I was really irritated in that scene, too. Umm... Then they entered a woman greeted them. [...] Gave them a look. [...] That got me riled up, too. (Chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan stated that:

In the restaurant scene what I remember the most is my anger towards that woman, that disgusting woman. Also, other than that, when they all pulled out their weapons and handed them to [Blanca] because “you cannot walk around with a man in the middle of the night having [an] identity [like yours...]” (Chuckling) Classic Turkey, actually. [...] I mean, it is the same as [our experiences]. [...] Yeah, [I am talking about the struggles women go through,] yeah. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil said:

I directly remembered the couple from Parks and Recreation. [...] The woman was a total Karen. [...] [Her husband had] a face like a baby doll. Extremely like... lip done, nose... He looked like Samet Liçina. (Chuckles) [...] The man is probably a closeted gay [man]. [...] And he, for example, actually hated LGBTQ people. [...] Like, the reason he hated [LGBTQ people] was because he knew that he belongs to that group. [...] I mean, [men’s] fear about facing their own sexuality when they feel attracted to someone from the LGBTQ community or a trans person and that turning in to transphobia... That, very specifically, stuck with me. [...] Also, when there... Umm... In the scene where Elektra puts the woman in her place... I felt, like... The woman’s... If I were there... Even if I

was sitting in the next table, I would definitely get involved. Because, I am not a person who can keep their mouth shut. [...] Also, the girls supporting [Elektra]. I girls supporting her stuck with me, as well. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

When the participants were asked why did these scenes specifically stuck with them, Koray said that he got angry to the discriminations the women suffered and thought that Blanca and Adrian's scene was cute. Similarly, Candan stated that she remembered those scenes because of the discrimination the women had to face and she saw her own experiences in one of them. Seçil also said that she remembered those scenes specifically because she felt angry for the discriminatory actions of others and because the women stood up against their oppression together.

Probably one of them stuck with me because I got really angry to that woman. (Chuckles) And in the other one is because I felt like "aww." (Chuckles) [...] [The white woman's] attitude [and] her behaviour and such [stuck with me]. [...] The other one is because it was a very cute scene. I liked it. (Chuckles) That is why. [...] Well, [the waiter stuck with me] because of her look. She gave a dirty look. [...] [Because of her discrimination,] yeah. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan expressed that:

Anger is one. [...] The reason I got angry at the woman was her discrimination and definitely, like, it was a lie that she was only disturbed because of the noise. [...] When the woman came, I got really angry because of this discrimination. In the other one, they take out their weapons and (laughing) they all give them to her. On one hand, it is actually funny but its tragicomic. It is extremely sad that

they have to deal with that. When I think about it from my experience In Turkey, I mean, walking in a street at night as a woman is very dangerous and it is sad, and in that way, because this discrimination still exists, these problems have not been eliminated in 21st century [and] security cannot be provided, these [scenes] stuck with me. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil stated that:

Because... I mean, I am the kind of person who, if I had the power and if I was given enough energy, I would make it my mission to put people like that in society in their places. Like, really. (Laughs) About this, too... Like... About gender discrimination, as well. General, in terms of gender. They [are things that] make me angry. [...] Because of that, like... Umm... It did my heart good. [...] That is why it stuck with me. [...] When I said the girls support, as well, this was what I meant: [...] It was like as if they became one and they were spitting all racist and like, all homophobic types in the mouth for all trans women. I mean, it was like a bouquet. (Laughs) [...] Like, that grabbed my attention and when that person got an answer like that and others [at the restaurant] received that “know your place” message through that was good, I think. [...] They showed that everyone watching and like, turning red in that scene, for example. I think that was good, too. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

In addition to that, Seçil noted that it grabbed her attention that everyone in the restaurant was white except the main characters.

Of course, [I noticed that everyone was white]. Directly. Directly, when they entered the restaurant, repulsiveness of the waitress’ attitude but trying not to show it because she will get money. [...] Like, [her] “I cannot disrespect them

because I will earn money from this” manner. [...] And like, everyone being whit- Everyone dressing the same style. I mean... (Chuckles) Because, the beginning of 90s is a very funky era in terms of clothing style. [...] This... Costume wise, is not a place where it is 90s. Really white supremacist... Like, they intentionally painted white supremacist types. That... As I have said, [that] put together clothing style. [...] Shirt. Like, everything is in place... Everything is very ironed, very hygienic. There are only soft colours. Everything being very put together... [...] That grabbed my attention a lot, as well. [...] Yeah. Yeah, [that class distinction] was clearly laid out, I mean. It was very clear. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

The participants’ answers showed that they could see the different dimensions of the leading character’s intersectional identity. So, it was important to see what they thought that was the reason for the discrimination the leading characters faced in the episode. Koray and Candan expressed that the characters were discriminated because of their trans identity but Candan also stated that the woman who came to their table discriminated them because she felt insecure because of them. Seçil, on the other hand, noted that although it was mostly for their trans identity, their black identity played a secondary part in it. Candan also stated that their black identity could play a role in their discrimination but she stated that she did not realize it while watching the show but realized it after, when the question was first asked in the in-depth interview.

Oh, well, because of the person they are, really. I mean, because of the situation they are [in] that they are discriminated the most. Other than that, I cannot really remember in the series. [...] LBG- (stuttering sound) (Laughs) [...] LGB- Pff, well, you know what I mean. (Laughs) [...] I cannot speak at all. Yeah [because they are trans]. (Koray, personal communication, March 20, 2021)

Candan noted the following:

One, she is a rich snob. She sees them below herself. She cannot bring herself to accept that she is dining in the same place as her and because of that she feels the need to belittle them. [...] Because they thought tha- They were trans... I mean, they looked down on them because they were thinking that “you are men,” like, “you cannot come in here like women and act like women.” [...] And actually, they are glowing there. They are incredibly beautiful, they are happy. Like, she compares herself to them. She is thinking “they are not even women” and she gets into an inferiority complex and feels the need to belittle them. I think it is because of the own lameness. [...] Now, I did not think [that their black identity could play a role in their discrimination] but I guess they were the only black people in the place. [...] Like, it might be because of [their black identity] but also, I thought it was mainly because of their transness but them being black may also have caught their eye- Like, maybe they did not think that they were men because they really look gorgeous. Like, maybe they figured it out from their height, them being very tall, them being large but maybe, actually, they grabbed their attention because they were black. They started examining them afterwards. After they examined them, they came together and their hate came out. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil said:

Well, I think, [it is because] they were trans women who were having fun there. [...] I mean, because they were people having fun. Actually, if they were women or white women, they may not have drawn that much attention. But if they were white trans women having fun, they would still draw attention. If they were black women having fun, they may have still drawn attention. I am not sure

about that part. It is because I am not very familiar with the American culture. [...] However, them being trans, having fun, umm... And I do think them being black is one of the reasons. They are white... I mean, to white supremacy, “you are white,” umm... Like, “you are black, you cannot be in the same place with us, you are below me, you are trans, you are below me, you cannot be in the same place as me.” They feel discomfort [because of this]. [...] That is why I think that them being trans is a little more prominent [in their discrimination], actually. (Seçil, personal communication, March 24, 2021)

Family is one of the major themes in the series. So, it is important to examine how the participants saw the leading characters’ relationships with one another to see if they saw them as a friend group or as a family. When the participants were asked what they thought about their relationship, Koray stated that they looked like an established family. Candan, on the other hand, stated that although when they called each other “mother” it sounded weird because they do not have big age gap between them like a mother and a child generally would, she saw them as a family but also as a friend group at the same time. Similarly, Seçil stated that she saw them both as a family and a friend group but noted that she saw them more as friends. She noted that the reason she did not see them as a family but more as friends may be because of the dynamics of their status in their relationship and because they could replace each other’s position. Although, as presented above, Seçil’s knowledge about LGBTQ culture was limited and she was not familiar with the ballroom culture and houses. In her answers, it seemed that she interpreted the title of “mother” almost like a title of status and respectability and she, along with her limited knowledge about the series, did not see in her interpretation that the characters actually built a mother-daughter connection: *“They look like they have established that concept of family in this series. When I watched [them], I really got the feeling family”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

They see themselves as family. They are a family. In terms of mother and father, like, I am thinking about it [in terms of] our own families. When I think about it like that their own children... I mean, because there is not a big age gap between them, for example, like, Blanca and Lulu, for example, Angel did not have a big age gap [between them]. Like, when she called her mother, it looked a little out of place. After all, what we know is that parents have an age difference. [...] Umm... Like, they are very close friends who support each other every time but at certain points... I mean, for example, Elektra was very... Umm... She was the one who gave mother vibes because she is older and more authoritarian. [It was like as if] the others were her children and the compassion she showed them was in [a motherly] manner. [Their relationship] with each other was, like, familial but very close friendship... They looked like they always had each other's backs. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil remarked that:

I cannot tell [whether if they are a friend group or a family]. It could even be a romantic connection. (Laughs) [...] They look like friends but family... As a family... Well, the reason I did really not feel like they were a family may be this: For example, if Elektra was clearly the mother in the earlier episode and she had always protected and defended the girls, then the girls would be in a position where they are sisters. I would call [them a] family. However, Blanca is a mother, too and the others as well. Like, because they have a potential to become a mother, for example, let us say, Angel... Like, because Blanca stated this. Like, I see all of them on an equal level. [...] That is why I would probably [call the relationship between them] a friendship. I cannot [call it] a family. Friendship would probably weight heavier. [...] Although, actually, all of them

dynamically... Umm... Because they can replace one another, I mean, they can all become mothers... For example, right now, all of them are... For example, Elektra became a sister of Blanca, for example. Like, as you have said that at one point, she became that and such. Because something like that happened, I can only see them as sisters. [...] I see them as sisters without parents. That is why they make each other into parents. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

In their descriptions, all of the participants stated that they saw the characters' family as one that always supports each other through their tough times and they are there for each other. Other than that, Koray described them as happy, Candan described them as fighter and Seçil described them as troubled.

They are definitely not incompatible. [They are] compatible. I would say happy but they all [people who] have their own struggles, their own problems but they still support each other all the time. For example, that one scene was very emotional for me. Umm... Was her name Blanca? [...] Blanca. When she came to the house, she had not brought a swimsuit with her. Like, "I am not like you" and whatever. [The women] supporting her and all was nice. Sincere. (Chuckles) (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan stated that:

They are a family who try to clutch onto life and goes through struggles. [...] They have struggles but like, they have that thing about achieving things together and "we will go somehow prevail" thing. Like, "we persevered to this day, we have accomplishments." That is what they say, like, when the salon is burned down. They say things like "we will do it again, you can save the money,

we can overcome anything, this is nothing” and they support each other. They are this kind of family. [...] Uh-huh. Exactly. The only difference between our current norms about being a family might be the age difference [between them]. Like, there is not a big age difference between them. Two, there is not a male figure. [...] There is not a father figure. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil expressed the following:

I mean, (chuckling) I would call them distressed. They are a family that suffers. That is why I called them Little Women. I mean, the struggles that life brings... Because, they have a really tough life and along with that... They try to overcome those by supporting each other and are trying to stay alive. Despite those, they are trying to stay cheerful. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

When they were asked if the leading characters had hierarchal relationship or not, all of the participants stated that they did not feel that they had a hierarchy in their relationship and they were all equal. Although, Seçil noted that among them, Elektra was the natural leader of the group: *“Oh, no. I never felt something like that, a hierarchy. [...] I mean, I think they were equal. [...] In this episode, at least. (Chuckles)”* (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

You know, [there is the conception that] family members, the older family members always do best and the children are the ones who do wrong. Here, you actually somehow see that they are all equal. There was the image that when someone makes a mistake, another one [supports them] and when that person

makes a mistake the other one supports them. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil noted the following:

In terms of relationship dynamics, umm... Like, Blanca is like a mother. Blanca is a mother, too. The other girl wants to be a mother as well, for example. [...] But, among them, the one who really had the leadership... The natural leader is Elektra, I think. [...] I mean, of course, Blanca's insecurity... Actually, not an insecurity problem but it is an episode which she goes through bad stuff. [...] Actually, like, motherhood and there is not a hierarchal concept between them. There is the concept of motherhood. [...] I think the leader among them is definitely Elektra but... How can I put it? Well, Blanca... For example, it is not like she is oppressed under Elektra or oppressed because of her natural leadership. [...] They had already accepted her as a mother. She is the mother. But, like, apart from that... How can I put it? I mean, anyone can become a mother at any time. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

In the episode, all women except Angel are mothers of their own house. When the participants were asked what they thought about the parental figures in the episode, Blanca and Elektra emerged as the most prominent parental figures in the participants' answers. Koray stated that he saw Blanca and Elektra as the parental figures because they were supportive and there for others when they needed them. The support between the leading characters was also present in Candan's answers. She noted that, as also presented under the previous question, she sees all of the leading characters as equals but she thinks that the parental figure in the episode was Elektra. In terms of the characters being equal, she also noted that Elektra was able to accept their failures and ask for help and Blanca was there for her when she needed her. Seçil, on the other hand, noted that she only saw Elektra as the

parental figure because she was there for the other women and she did not see Blanca as a motherly figure because, in the episode, she is going through a vulnerable stage in her life.

Like, there, like maybe. There is a figure who protects and supports the others.

[...] Umm... One of them is Blanca. Like, there in that one scene she did something. Umm.... One of them said “I do not do drugs.” I cannot remember her name right now. [...] Yeah! Angel. Like, there, “I have eyes and ears everywhere,” like... There was a conversation like that. I cannot remember the exact words but there... [...] I felt that concept. (Chuckles) [...] [The other one] is... Can you count me the names? (Chuckles) [...] Elektra. [...] Exactly [because of her behaviours]. Exactly. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan remarked that:

About the parental figures... Elektra, for example... She is a mother but in occasions [where needed], when she makes mistakes Blanca... How can I say it? She gets help from Blanca. Like, she is actually her child. Blanca becomes a mother as well but when you think about it, of course, in the beginning, when you think of her as a child of Elektra, in terms of classical norms, like, it becomes... [...] You know, [there is the conception that] family members, the older family members always do best and the children are the ones who do wrong. Here, you actually somehow see that they are all equal. There was the image that when someone makes a mistake, another one [supports them] and when that person makes a mistake the other one supports them. [...] Because... Umm... You know, the man, like, had done [drug overdose]. Umm... [...] Died. [...] In that part, the only person who knew this was Blanca. Blanca helps her and they keep it a secret together. She had helped her because of that. [...] The

character who stuck out the most as the mother was Elektra. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil said:

Yes, [Elektra was the parental figure]. [...] It may be because she looked more experienced. [...] Also, she was the mother in the beginning, [because of that] as well. [...] I mean, Blanca is a mother, as well, of course. But like, because her business is burned down, because we see Blanca in an episode [where she goes through] turbulent [events] I could not see her as [a] mother, to be honest. [...] I mean, for example, even Elektra's relationships there, she is protecting and supporting the girls and taking them on a holiday. [...] Or, for example, before, she used to financially support the girls through her sugar daddy. [...] That, for me, seemed like something a mother would do. Blanca, of course, tried to stand on her own two feet. [...] But because she could not, she failed (...) and Blanca is zeroed out right now, it did not seem like Blanca is [the] mother that much.

(Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

The definition of concepts, even the ones we perceive to be very simple, can vary from person to person. So, in order to understand how the participants see the relationship between the leading characters in relation to their understanding of what a family is, they were asked to define what does the concept of family mean for them. For all of them, biological ties were independent of whether if a group can be considered a family or not. Koray and stated that a family is people who are there for you in your hard times, people who love and support you unconditionally and people you can trust. Similarly, Candan stated that, for her, family is people who love and support you unconditionally. Seçil's definition was not drastically different from other participants, either. She stated that a family, for her, is a group of people who share a part of their lives together and care for and support each other: "*As I have just*

said, *[a family is the] people who are there for you in your hard times, who love and support you unconditionally, like, people who you can depend on*” (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021).

When I say “family,” like, in my head, they are people who unconditionally love you, unconditionally support you and that is what I saw [when I looked at] them. [...]

Unconditional love, unconditional support. That is it. They do not have to give birth to you necessarily or they do not have to be your biological parents. [...] Exactly.

Exactly. For example, you and I, as friends, we love each other unconditionally and support unconditionally. This is a family in the same way. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil stated the following:

(Chuckling) It is a hard question. I mean, I think [a family] is people who are gathered in a house. [...] They are people who spend a period of their life together. So, my concept of family is not completely connected with people who you have a blood tie. [...] I mean, they could be your close friends. Like, if that person is in your life... Of course, completely, maybe they did not take care of you when you were a baby and cleaned you, they, especially in your adult life... Or it could be during your childhood, as well. From the age when you are conscious of your own ideas, they psychologically... Umm... If they look after you, give you that protection, I believe that that person belongs to your family. I mean, I do not think that the concept of family is just... When you look at it, they could share blood tie or not but like, being a mother or a father... And I think that these concepts are very changeable. [...] Like, I do not think that there is such a thing that it is fixed that one person is a mother and she acts as one. [...] But one life... I think [a family] is a group of people who share a big part of their lives together. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

Candan was also asked if there should be a male or a father figure in a family because she pointed out in one of her previous answers that their family did not have one. She expressed that although that is the norm she was thought growing up, she does not think it is necessary that a male or a father figure should be present in every family. She noted that sexual identity is not important when it comes to being a family or a parent but expressed that love and support are their core elements.

The concept of family as it was shown to us since childhood, as we have been thought, as we have seen ourselves, is like mother, father, child or children but like, this is not just like that. It can consist of as we have seen in the episode or [it may come] in many different combinations. After all, this is... Family is something that becomes through your love and support. Like, it does not mean anything that it is built on sexualities alone. In reality either... When we think about it in real life, as well, whether if they are a new-born child or an adopted one, they do not necessarily need a father figure or a mother figure. Similarly, as long as you raise them by giving them love, they do not need that in any way.

(Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

It is important to understand from what context or framework of previous experiences they are looking at the images they see in the episode. In order to explore that, the participants were asked if they saw any similarities or differences between the characters and the parental figures around them. Koray stated that the parental figures he saw were similar to the ones he sees around them; they were supporting and loving. Candan also stated that they were similar to parental figures she sees because they wanted best for their children and they supported and loved them. However, she noted that they were different from the parental figures she encounters in her life because she noted that people do not have an honest relationship like that with their parents. Seçil, on the other hand, stated that Elektra is similar to many of the

parents in Turkey because of her dominance and abusiveness but also because she cares for her children. She also noted that she saw that side of Elektra when she “read” the white woman who discriminated them. Although, she expressed that because Elektra is “not actually their mother” she forms friendly relationships with them and can support them better.

No but there are similarities. Like, as I have said, they are there for you, they support you, they protect you, they want what is best for you, they are there for you in your good times and when you are struggling. [...] There is no difference. It is as it should be. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan noted the following:

When we say similarities, in terms of similarities, both Elektra and Blanca want their children to be in better places. These are their similarities. In terms of differences... I mean, when you think about it, what is necessary is support and love. Money, up until a certain age. They do all of those, as well. [...] Ah! Well, people cannot be comfortable when they are with their parents. They were very comfortable in any way when they were together. [...] There is that. They can share anything [with each other.] [...] That is when they become friends. They stop [being a] family here and start [beings] friends, I think. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil remarked that:

[Elektra] does. Definitely. Umm... Getting involved in things too much and becoming an abusive mother at one point... [...] Is something I see in 80 percent of Turkish mother and helicopter mothers, actually. [...] The mother of a friend of mine is like that. [...] I mean, she is actually trying to support her daughter and show her a path. [...] But does her daughter want the path she chose for her?

Or the girl does not really have a say. (Chuckles) [...] Elektra is not like that in that sense because she is not a mother in a complete sense. She does not have children. She is being a mother, yes. She is like a parental figure. Yes. But on the other hand, like I have said, she can be more logical because she is also like a friend. Like, more of a sup- She can support them in a more correct way in that subject. [...] But getting involved and something... [...] Dominating, taking the lead, forcing, pressuring about something... [...] Reminded me of a random, dominant, Turkish mother, to be honest. (Chuckles) [...] Yeah. [I saw that side of her] when she put [that woman] in her place. [...] Oh, by the way, her taking others on a holiday, finding them a place where they can go on a vacation is also a motherly thing, I think. [...] Going like “for my children’s happiness” and (chuckling) doing a little cunningness and self-sacrifice but in a way, not actually [doing those.] (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

The participants were also asked if they say any similarities or differences between their own families and the relationship between the characters. None of the participants made a distinction between their parents and their family. Koray stated that his answer is the same as the previous one; that the family in the episode was similar to his own in that they love and support each other unconditionally and are there for each other. During the interview, Candan was at home, in her room but her parents were also at home and it was apparent in her behaviour that she did not feel comfortable talking about the differences she saw between the characters and her own family in detail but she noted that she is not as close with her family or has a friendly relationship with them like the characters do in the episode. Seçil’s answer was also similar to her previous one. She noted that she saw similarities between the family in the episode and her family for her family can get involved in her life too much without realizing and become abusive in the process.

As I have just said, they are people who are there for you in your hard times, who love and support you unconditionally, like, people who you can depend on. [...] Well, the concepts I have just listed are the similarities. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan said:

Umm... The differences are like this: Their friendship comes up to surface. Like, this, with my own family, (lowers her voice) because I am not friends or as (inaudible)... I cannot speak comfortably by the way. (Chuckles) Umm... This is the main difference. [...] In terms of similarities, the same things come up again. Love and umm... Support. (Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil noted that: *“Getting involved too much and without real... Well, I do not know. My parents have that being a little abusive without realizing thing, as well. My mother has that, too”* (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021).

Lastly, the leading characters in the series have a very dynamic relationship. Their roles and status are open for change at any time. For example, while Angel and Blanca used to be sisters under Elektra’s house in the beginning, after Blanca started her own house and Angel joined hers, Blanca became Angel’s mother and she started calling Blanca “mother.” To understand what the participants think about a dynamic relationship with shifting roles like this one, they were asked if they noticed this situation between Angel and Blanca and what they thought about that. Koray stated that he did not notice it and noted that he did not find the fluid dynamics of their relationship strange. Candan noted that she did not mind it because for her, it was just a word. When it was pointed out to her that in one of her previous answers, she commented that it sounded weird when Angel called Blanca “mother,” she expressed that it

was just a word and how they treated each other was more important for her. Candan also noted that she saw Blanca more as a sister for Angel, rather than a mother. Seçil expressed that Blanca's behaviour fit her idea of what a mother is. Because of that, she does not mind it. However, similar to Candan, Seçil noted that she did not really see Blanca as a mother but as a big sister who took on the role of a mother.

If I had watched the previous episodes, I could clearly notice it but I did not at all. [...] I mean, it can happen. I do not really, get caught on the concepts. I mean, after all, when you talk about a family, it includes a mother, a sister and both of them are already... Umm... When you look at it, the feeling they have for you are the same. The feelings they give are the same. They both are always in your life and are people who will love and protect you. [...] So, [it looks like] there is not much difference, actually. [...] No, I did not notice it. (Koray, personal communication, February 17, 2021)

Candan said:

Actually, this a fluid family structure like is okay but... Like, saying mother... I do not know, saying daughter, child, father... These are actually are just words. Here, what they have in their lives is the love, respect and support they have for each other. Other than that, when they move to another house, these are not things that change. Like, maybe when they were at the other house, they would have a fight and cut off their ties completely. That is... That is something that can happen to any family. These are things that can happen in any friendship. So, everyone in the world has this fluid family structure, I think. [...] When [Angel] called [Blanca "mother"] is sounds weird but actually, when you think about it, it is just a word. Maybe Blanca looks a little more like an authority figure. Was she like that...? One second. I do not know if she was like that when they were sister

as Elektra's children, when they were under Elektra's protection [...] [Blanca looked more like Angel's] bigger sister. I mean, because, physically, their ages look close to one another, bigger sister... I see [Blanca] more as the authority figure, a bigger sister who wants to raise her and get her to a good place.
(Candan, personal communication, February 18, 2021)

Seçil remarked the following:

Well, it is like this: When the motherhood goes... I mean... Umm... At one point motherhood cons- I mean, because her motherhood is refused, because Elektra's status of motherhood is refused, it is like (chuckling) the responsibility falls unto the person under her. [...] Oh, it is, again, like... For example, in a family with a single mother with three girls, four girls, when the mother dies, too, the biggest sister, even though she is a sister, she takes on the role of the mother. [...] It is more like something that forms through the persons behaviours rather than assigning [a title.] [...] Motherly behaviour, like, is different than being a mother. That protection, looking after being more dominant and that person being motherly is what defines motherhood. (Seçil, personal communication, February 19, 2021)

Overall, the participants' perception of the leading characters has been influenced by their own experiences and identities. Though, the participants did not read the representations of black transsexual women in the episode from a fixed identity point but a fluid one. They also related to the racial, sexual and gender identity of the characters differently and from the point of view of their own identities and framework of references. For example, while Candan and Seçil could relate to the leading characters' gender identity and experiences from the point of view of their own identity as women, Koray's answers and reactions did not indicate that he related to the leading characters' gender identity in any way. The participants'

reception of the relationship between the leading characters also differed from one another, as well. There were common themes in their answers in regards to how they defined the concept of family. However, the way they perceived their relationship differed; they either saw them as a family, a group of friends or both and their own experiences and their relationships with their own families had an effect on their receptions.



5. Discussion

The analysis of the episode by using John Fiske's (2001) semiotic analysis method demonstrated that, on reality level, the leading characters' appearance, outfits, makeup, speech, and behaviour and the environments in the episode have presented the characters as belonging to subaltern identities and lower classes and as hyperfeminine. Here, their subaltern identities and social status are most prominent in their physical appearance, the way they speak and their environments. Their racial identity combined with their accents, the way they talk and their environments indicate that they belong to one of the oppressed groups in the US, come from a lower-class background and are still marginalized within the time period they live in.

The hyperfeminine and cisgender passing appearances of the characters visually reinforce their identity as women and challenge the stereotypical representations which delegitimizes transgender women's gender identity by presenting them as deceptive individuals who are actually men. While this presents a progressive representation that challenges harmful ideas about trans women, they also might carry the risk of reproducing normative perceptions around womanhood while also challenging them. They challenge these perceptions because they subvert the cisgender-normative definitions of womanhood but they also reproduce them because their hyperfeminine representations present them from a patriarchal lens and sexualizes the women's bodies. Because, as Serano (2004) notes, hyperfeminine representations of trans women do not actually reflect the values of what it means to be a woman but is an extension of media's sexualization of women in general (p. 45). In other words, trans women are women because they identify as being so and not because they necessarily fit the normative and traditional physical standards society set for women and hyperfeminization of trans women on media is inherently linked to sexualization of all women.

The episode authentically represents cisgender-passing transsexual women but falls short on representing transfeminine identities who do not pass. As mentioned in the “Representation of LGBTQ Members” section, when a group has limited access to being represented to the general public, their representation carries “the burden of being representative” (Mercer, 1990, p. 63), meaning that their qualities (positive or negative) can be generalized to the entirety of the group. As a highly acclaimed and popular series which re-establishes its status as a quality television program and as an extension of our own reality by taking inspiration from 1990s popular documentary *Paris is Burning* and other real-life events, *Pose* builds itself a sense of credibility. In addition, it establishes itself as a production with a certain level of authenticity and credibility when it comes to representing transgender individuals by enabling transgender and other queer people to tell stories about their own community themselves. As a result of that, while it can be argued that representing only cisgender-passing transsexual women may not be a threatening issue on the basis of this specific television series because it challenges previous stereotypical representations, *Pose*’s popularity and recognition in the industry might contribute to the creation of an industrial trend in representing transsexual women only as cisgender-passing individuals to legitimize their gender identity, and if it does, it would reduce the validity of transsexual women’s identity to how successfully they pass as cisgender women. In addition, this could have an effect on how other transgender or transfeminine identities are represented on media as well. As a result, this may carry the risk of pushing cisgender-normative aesthetics on transgender women and would contribute to the domestication of transgender identities within the gender binary system. In short, the episode reinforces the leading characters’ gender identity through their cisgender passing and hyperfeminine appearances in a progressive manner that challenges stereotypes but it might also carry the possibility of having concerning effects on how transgender individuals may be represented in the future.

The episode deals with the transsexual characters' bodies in a progressive manner. They use the cisgender passing looks of the women to further validate their gender identity as women and challenge harmful stereotypes that delegitimizes transgender women's gender identity. In addition, the story does not put additional emphasis on the characters' bodies or what stage of their transition they might be at and does not reduce the validity of the characters' gender identity to their bodies, genitals or the operations they may have gone through. The only time the characters' genitals or the stage of their transition is vaguely mentioned is when Angel says "If this is about tucking, I got some extra duct-tape." when Blanca expresses her insecurity about wearing hyperfeminine clothes. Thus, the episode deals with the representations of its characters and their bodies in a progressive way.

When the characters were examined on reality level by focusing on their black identity, the findings showed that their appearance and speech reflect their racial background and presents the intersectional nature of their identity. In addition, the characters' physical appearance gives messages oppositional to white supremacist ideals on female beauty by presenting queer women of colour as conventionally attractive characters. The oppositional messages against white supremacist ideals are also enhanced by the appearance of the woman at the restaurant who discriminates the leading characters. The woman fits these ideals with her blonde hair, fair skin and petite build but the black transsexual women look conventionally more attractive than her. In addition, the leading characters in the episode are discriminated or experienced maltreatment by the hands of white individuals. They not only create contrast with the black characters in the episode with their skin colour but with their behaviour as well. The findings in the analysis suggested that the black characters in the episode (both cisgender and transgender) embody mostly positive attributes such as compassion, virtuosity, sincerity, confidence and kindness, whereas the white characters embody negative ones such as insincerity, arrogance and rudeness. Thus, the critique on white

supremacist ideals becomes more prominent and the episode reinforces the audiences' identification with black transsexual women.

Representations on western television usually appeals for the audiences to identify with the white, cisgender, heterosexual, middle class characters on the screen. The episode not only challenges this convention on reality level but also on representational level, as well, by encouraging audiences to identify with characters who belong to three different oppressed groups through the use of technical and conventional codes. The analysis of the episode on representational level demonstrated that the by using medium range camera distances, high and low camera angles, soft or natural lighting, giving most of the screen time to black transsexual women, reinforcing the emotions of the scenes and creating warm environments with music, using back-and-forth dialogues and showing the leading characters doing mundane and fun activities, the episode further encourages the viewers to sympathize and identify with the leading characters. Thus, by presenting the characters through these representational codes, the episode offers identification points alternative and subversive to the status quo.

When we focus on the conventional codes of representation, the evaluation of the episode indicated that the dialogues, characters, action, settings and conflict in the episode and casting choices convey ideological messages which both are subversive to and reproduce the discourses of dominant ideologies. The conventional codes of representation play a mediator and supportive role in the episode to convey the contradicting messages. In addition, while doing so, the episode fails to sufficiently adopt an intersectional approach. The conventional codes used in the episode present subversive messages about racial inequalities in society however the only instance of an explicit and direct questioning of racism in the episode is Adrian's story about him realizing the racial stratification among hospital employees. The trans characters' references to their own racial identity in their dialogues, however, are almost

anecdotal and other conventional codes are never used to explicitly emphasize their racial identity. Thus, the episode falls short on equally highlighting the different dimensions of the leading characters' identities and being intersectional. Besides, the episode reproduces harmful discourses, such as that of patriarchy.

The analysis of the episode on ideological level yielded abundant results. The findings demonstrated that the episode presents subversive ideological messages in terms of patriarchal, misogynistic, white supremacist, cisgender-normative and heteronormative discourses in society and challenges normative definitions of womanhood and the concept of family. However, on the other hand, the critiques the episode presents might carry the risk of reproducing some other normative standards such as for female beauty and the bodies of transsexual identities in the same instance where it criticizes them. While it can be argued that the risk of contributing to the formation of an ideal for transsexual bodies is not a prominent risk for the time being and the series uses the cisgender passing bodies of transsexual women to present progressive representations that sharply diverges from stereotypical ones, the possibility is concerning and the risk cannot be neglected. In addition, although the episode presents subversive messages in its dialogues in terms discourses such as of patriarchy, white supremacy and cisgender-normative ideas, they are never presented from an intersectional perspective on the surface level. Rather, when the episode gives explicit messages oppositional to white supremacy, they are uttered from the mouth of a black, cisgender, heterosexual male character. To see intersectional messages, one has to pay attention to smaller details or read between the lines. Thus, it can be argued that the representations in the episode fail to be sufficiently intersectional. Though, the presence of such messages, even though they are not intersectional or implied when they are intersectional, are valuable nonetheless.

The lack of explicit messages that highlights the black transsexual women's identity in an intersectional way is concerning. While the series highlights the characters' trans identity explicitly in multiple occasions, their racial identity as black women is not as prominent and that may create problematic results. One of the most prominent examples of this inequality in emphasis on the different dimensions of the characters' identity is through their discrimination. The characters are repeatedly discriminated for their transsexual identity but are never explicitly discriminated for their racial identity. As a result, the episode (intentionally or unintentionally) may give the message that racism is not a prominent issue in the US because not even people who discriminate the leading characters solely based on their identity discriminate them for their racial identity. As another outcome, the episode disregards the leading characters' double minority status and the fact that they may be discriminated for either or both their trans and black identity.

As mentioned in the "Development of Television Studies" section, television, as a narrator of a symbolic reality (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 177) or a bard of our contemporary society, allows society to "communicate with its collective self" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, p. 64) and demonstrate its norms and values through myths and rituals (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 173). Thus, it creates a framework of assumptions about "what things are, [...] how they work or should work, and why" (Gerbner & Gross, 1976, p. 179). Present western mainstream televisual environment conventionally invites audiences to identify with characters that fit Eurocentric and cisgender-heteronormative standards and contributes to the marginalization of minority and oppressed groups by reproducing normative standards of dominant ideologies in society. Presenting alternative and subversive representations that call audiences to identify with marginalized groups challenges these hegemonic ideologies and props progressive social change in society by giving marginalized groups symbolic presence, creating opportunities for symbolic interaction and allowing audiences to see the marginalized groups experiences from

their point of view. Because, as Bourdieu (1996) notes, individuals' habituses are shaped by and in return shape the environment they live in (p. 170). Thus, these representations can guide audiences in their attitudes towards marginalized groups in society and create positive change.

As discussed earlier, television is a complex medium which embodies many contradictions and contradictory ways of seeing (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, pp. 91, 92). In light of all of the findings presented above, overall, the episode supports Fiske and Hartley's claim by presenting contradicting ideological messages together. However, which one of these contradicting messages the episode might actually convey to its audiences, or, rather, what messages the audiences might actually receive from them, would depend on which perspective one might adopt while viewing it. As mentioned earlier, media texts are polysemic and can be viewed from different perspectives and the meanings derived from them would differ. In this case, to answer the question I presented under the "Representation of Black Women" section, the representations in the music video of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's *WAP* and in the song itself can be read both as a progressive message that highlights and prioritizes black women's sexuality and sexual pleasure (Kayembe, 2020) and as a reproduction of the hyper-sexual jezebel stereotype that objectifies the bodies of black women (TheoBlack, 2020). Regardless of which one of these meanings the song might actually aim to convey, both of them are among the possible readings the audiences can make and would be valid. Here, the importance of audiences' reception of any text and the possible meanings they may produce is apparent. This also means that not only television is full of contradictions and contradictory ways of seeing but audiences can make meanings that may contradict each other.

The reception study part of this thesis was conducted to investigate what meanings audiences from different identity groups can make from the representations of the black

transsexual characters in the episode. The survey results showed that the participants came from similar backgrounds in terms of economic status and educational level. Though, the participants showed in their answers that they diversified when it came to their ethnicity, sexual identity and sexual orientation. Koray indicated that he is a Cherkes, homosexual, cisgender man; Candan stated that she is a heterosexual, cisgender woman who does not belong to an ethnic minority in Turkey; and Seçil noted that she is a Kurdish, demisexual/heterosexual, cisgender woman. The results also showed that the participants' experiences with black and trans individuals separately varied from one another as well. While Koray had no meaningful interactions with black or trans individuals in real life, Candan noted that she did have close interactions with a trans women but she, too, did not have any experiences with black individuals in real life. Seçil, on the other hand, stated that she had both black and trans friends.

The participants' receptions of the leading characters in the episode have been influenced by their own experiences and identities. In the study, Koray remarked in his statements that he saw the characters from an intersectional perspective. He noted that the episode put emphasis on all black, trans and woman identities of its leading characters. However, his reading of the characters in the episode was mainly through the lens of his homosexual identity. This was apparent in his answers when he noted that the reason for the characters' discrimination was their trans identity and when he thought the discrimination they faced were similar to his experiences in middle school. In addition, it was also a sign that he connected with the leading characters in the episode through his marginalized identity as a gay man in a patriarchal and heteronormative society when he could not find any other reason for his sympathy towards the characters other than he found them sincere or warm. Thus, it would not be wrong to argue that Koray read the oppositional messages in the episode through the perspective of marginalized identity as a gay man.

While Koray could relate to the characters mostly from a mono-dimensional perspective and through his homosexual identity, Candan was able to read the representations of black transsexual women in a more multi-dimensional perspective, both as women and trans individuals; however, for her, the characters' womanhood was more prominent for her. In fact, the characters' womanhood was so prominent for her that she almost disregarded the characters' trans identity altogether when she answered to the question about which dimension of the characters' identity does the episode emphasize with "*Because they are women. They are not trans. I mean, they are trans but they are women now.*" Her interactions with the trans woman she knew when she was a child may have played a role in the way she saw the characters in the episode almost only through their gender identity. In addition, she found similarities between her experiences as a woman living in Turkey and the struggles the leading characters go through and related to them through her own gender identity. For Candan, the characters' black identity was not as prominent as their identity as women and transsexual individuals. She remarked that she saw the leading characters as strong women who can stand on their own two feet, face their struggles and help and support each other along the way. In light of all this, it can be argued that Candan's reading of the representations in the episode contained oppositional messages, mainly feminist ones.

Despite making oppositional meanings, Candan sometimes used words that could be deemed transphobic, even though she stated that her attitude towards LGBTQ individuals and trans women were positive. Specifically, her use of the word "normal" created problematic moments. When she said "*If I judge her personality as a normal person, they made her like a normal, straightforward character you can find on the street.*" she implicitly and unintentionally put trans women in the position of "abnormal." The same also happened in two occasions, as well, when she was talking about the characters' physical appearance. Her remarks "*I do not know if this much is normal. Normal, standard, I mean... We all thing that*

'how come every time all these beautiful people are together.' (Chuckling) *So, all of them were more beautiful than the other."* and *"They were still beautiful compared to normal, all of our standards, as well."* contained transphobic statements because they implicitly positioned beauty as a concept far from trans women's reach. Although these may not have been her intentions, her lack of knowledge in regards to LGBTQ issues and discourses caused her to reproduce harmful messages.

The characters' physical appearance, more specifically their beauty, was one of the elements that grabbed Candan's attention. While she found mainly feminist meanings within the episode, in this regard, she also made remarks that could be deemed patriarchal. In the 7th scene where Lulu was feeling insecure about her body, Candan's attitude towards Lulu was judgemental rather than empathetic. During the participant observation stage of the study her reaction when she said *"Sister, if you are fat then I should just go ahead and die."* shows that she viewed her from a judgemental perspective by indicating that she found Lulu attractive and for her Lulu's insecurities were unfounded. In addition, during the in-depth interviews she made remarks about her own insecurities about her own body, which may indicate that her attitude towards Lulu could be related to her insecurities. Although, it should be noted she had a judgemental attitude towards Lulu's insecurity despite sharing a similar experience with her, which is interesting. However, she also stated that she found a connection between Lulu's insecurities and her own. In this sense, her attitude towards Lulu contained contradicting readings. Overall, she found feminist meanings in the representations of the leading characters and connected with them through her identity as a woman but in terms of her attitude towards the characters' bodies, she adopted a judgemental outlook.

During the in-depth interviews, another participant who commented on the characters' appearance was Seçil. Though, different from Candan, her comments' focus was not on the characters' beauty or attractiveness but on the femininity and masculinity of their bodies. In

this sense, it can be said that Seçil read the representations of the leading characters through the lens of their trans identity. For her, the characters' trans identity was the most prominent dimension of their identity but she was also able to look at the characters from an intersectional perspective and evaluate them through their black identity and womanhood as well. Unlike Koray, she could not relate to the characters through her LGBTQ identity. In fact, during the interviews she noted that she does not feel a sense of belonging for the LGBTQ community and she described herself as heterosexual. So, she could not relate to the characters through her demisexual identity. However, she noted that she empathized with Elektra through her protective and aggressive attitude because she found similarities between Elektra's behaviour and her own.

Seçil was the only participant who could clearly relate to the characters' racial identity. She was the only participant who pointed out that, along with their trans identity, the leading characters' racial identity could have played a secondary role in their discrimination and was able to give clear examples from the episode. Other participants were either unable to give a clear example on how the characters' racial identity was emphasized or could have been a factor in their discrimination or simply did not pay attention to their racial identity until they were asked about it. In this way, Seçil was distinguished from the other participants. Thus, it can be argued that Seçil's own ethnic identity as a Kurdish individual living in Turkey enabled her to connect with the characters as individuals of colour. Her remarks about her having sympathy for black individuals and finding similarities between the experiences of Kurdish people in Turkey and black individuals in other countries is a significant sign in this regard. In addition, she was able to relate to the characters' experiences as trans individuals through her ethnic identity. This was observed in her statements about her own experiences, specifically when she found similarities between Blanca's nail salon burning down and people not wanting to rent their shops to her father because of his Kurdish identity.

Similar to Candan, Seçil also saw the leading characters as strong characters who push back against the adversities they face and support each other in the meantime. In addition, she was able to make oppositional meanings out of the images she saw through the lens of her multiple oppressed identities. She found similarities between the resistance women and other marginalized identities in Turkey show towards their oppression. In this sense, she related to the characters' experiences and her own and like the other participants, her reception of the episode included feminist and subversive readings.

Despite the oppositional messages she produced from the episode, Seçil, like Candan, perceived Lulu's insecurities in a negative way. In fact, she remarked that she did not like Lulu and found her to be dislikeable. She noted that she perceived her actions as disrespectful towards Blanca. Similar to Candan, it can be argued that she, too, found her insecurities to be unfounded because of her conventionally attractive appearance. Whereas, in the same scene, Blanca had a more casual look and she was not presented hyperfeminine, which the participants deemed less attractive compared to Lulu and found justification for her insecurity in it. However, when Seçil was asked to reimagine the scene with Blanca's insecurity taken out of the equation, Seçil's attitude toward Lulu did not change. Thus, similar to Candan, Seçil did not approach Lulu's insecurity with empathy but with a judgemental look and in away, though that Lulu did not have the sufficient reason to feel insecure because she looks attractive. In this situation, the blame is put on the woman for her own insecurity about her body and the patriarchal and capitalistic system which profits from women's insecurities about their bodies and are the actually culprits of it are disregarded. In other words, the reason behind the participants' attitudes towards Lulu is the internalized misogyny which operates in the subconscious and is imposed upon every individual living under a patriarchal and capitalistic society. In addition, the verbal and psychological bullying Seçil had endured about her own body in her childhood, which was inflicted on her by her peers and family members,

is one of the factors that triggered her attitude towards Lulu and should not be neglected. Although, Seçil also noted in her answers that she was able to relate to and understand why Lulu felt insecure, especially as a trans individual and a woman. However, despite being able to take her trans identity into account and adopt an intersectional approach, she noted that she could not notice that one of the factors that Lulu was insecure about was their trans identity being exposed to the people at the beach and the fear of being discriminated that comes with it. In light of all of this, it can be concluded that Seçil, too, made contradicting meanings that both included oppositional messages that contain feminist readings which she made from the perspective of her own gender identity as a woman and ethnic identity as a Kurdish individual and messages that were shaped by the hegemonic misogynistic discourse within patriarchy.

The findings of the in-depth interviews showed that, while Candan and Seçil could connect with the leading characters through their gender identity as women, in scenes such as where they disapproved Lulu's insecurity in different yet similar ways and where the leading characters at the table gave Blanca self-defence tools before she went out for a walk with Adrian, Koray was unable to find that connection with the leading characters. In this sense, Koray stood out among the participants. The scene where Lulu stated her insecurity was the best example of that, where Koray was unable to make any meaning out of Lulu's insecurity even after being asked leading questions. In addition, he was unable to relate to the characters though his ethnic identity as a Cherkes individual, unlike how Seçil did through her Kurdish identity. To illustrate, while Seçil was able to notice that everyone in the restaurant was white, Koray did not state that he noticed this pattern or any other situation like this one. He was also unable to give clear examples during the in-depth interviews on how the characters' black identity was emphasized in the episode.

Lastly, the participants perception of the leading characters included common themes and differences. While their readings of the characters' relationship consisted of a family and

a friend group, they all saw them as a family to a varying degree within their own definitions of the concept of family, even though some of them noted that they saw them more as a friend group rather than a family. For all of them, the biological ties did not play a role in the formation of a family but love and support were two common qualities they used while defining it. Thus, it can be said that the participants reproduced the myth of a chosen family through their readings of the episode. However, in the meantime, they overturned the myth of traditional family, one that is defined by the biological ties of its members and relies on and reinforces traditional gender norms and roles.

When we look at the findings of both of the studies and analyse them together interesting results emerge. While both the episode and the readings of the participants contained contradicting messages, the messages found in the episode and the ones the audiences made sometimes differed from one another. The participants made a dominant/hegemonic reading of some of the progressive messages in the episode and accepted the validity of the characters' gender identity as women and did not see them as being men in essence. Although, as the only one among the participants, Seçil made comments about the masculinity or the femininity of the characters' looks. Other than that, the progressive messages they found in the episode included feminist ones that saw the characters as being empowered. Thus, they did not see the characters as pathetic individuals to be pitied but ones that they identified with. In addition, although it can be said that the participants made some meanings that opposed white supremacy, the perspectives of the participants, except Seçil's, failed to be adequately intersectional. Also, they accepted the message of a chosen family in the episode and saw them as a family but from different perspectives and to varying degrees. In terms of the messages in the episode that reproduce discourses of the dominant ideologies, the participants did not pick up most of the hegemonic messages in the episode. While the episode sexualizes the leading characters' bodies, repeatedly presents them as victims and

reproduces a number of stereotypes such as the sapphire and the coquettish minx, the participants' answers did not indicate that their readings included any of them. The only stereotype they included in their readings was the doting mother stereotype which they thought Elektra (and sometimes Blanca) relatively fit into and read it from a dominant/hegemonic position. Thus, the participants accepted and reproduced the idea that motherhood requires one to be compassionate, selfless and care giving. However, for some of the participants Elektra's motherhood was simply a title of authority and they did not see her as a mother in the traditional sense; thus, the participants, for the most part, were not able to read the destabilizing messages the episode presents about motherhood.

The participants also produced their own hegemonic meanings that were not there in the episode. The participants' judgemental attitudes towards Lulu sprung out from the participants' own experiences as women living in a patriarchal society and was not one of the encoded messages in the episode. Although, it could be argued that Lulu having a surgically enhanced look might have played some role in the participants' negative perceptions of Lulu, since people with cosmetic operations are generally perceived as being superficial or fake. Overall, both the episode and the participants' readings included conflicting messages; however, the participants made both dominant/hegemonic readings of them and also produced their own meanings by viewing the episode from the framework their own lived experiences.

6. Conclusion

LGBTQ stories are increasingly gaining attention in western countries as the community gains mainstream acceptance. The same is not true for Turkey where LGBTQ voices are trying to be silenced. However, western productions, and mainly US productions, have a global reach and has the power to influence people's attitudes about marginalized sexual identity groups. This thesis attempted to uncover the ideological meanings contained in western LGBTQ representations on fictional series of quality television programs and present possible readings real life audiences can make of them and the possible meanings they can produce from them. By conducting both a semiotic analysis and an audience reception study of the same sample of media product, this thesis aimed to present a multi-dimensional and embrative understanding about the representations of the black transsexual women in it and the meanings these representations may convey. As Martin (2020) notes, while the textual analyses may present an intellectual reading of a given media text and provide a more nuanced understanding of the ideological messages embedded within these representations that an audience reception study cannot provide, audience reception studies can present what possible meanings actual audiences can make from these representations, which is an aspect textual analyses fall short on (p. 73). So, by conducting both studies together, this thesis aimed to compensate for each study's shortcomings with the use of the other.

The literature review which this thesis took as its foundation benefitted from theories related to both gender and media studies. First the distinction between sex and gender was explained and then some other fundamental concepts regarding gender and sexuality were described, such as LGBTQ, transgender, transsexual, non-binary and cisgender. Then to understand the cultural context the television series *Pose* was produced in and the cultural context in which the audiences viewed it, the historical trajectory of LGBTQ and transgender movements in the USA and Turkey were discussed. After that, a foundation consisting of both

information on social issues and theoretical information in regards to gender and transgender identities were laid out, which touched upon topics of feminist and queer theory, the discrimination transgender people experience(d) in society in general and within the LGBTQ community, Judith Butler's concept of performativity, the concept of passing and the wrong body narrative around transgenderism. Later, the development of television studies was discussed; first by explaining the mainstream communication theories and then touching upon the ideas of intellectuals, who come both from the critical theory approach and the cultural studies approach, on popular culture and television. In addition, studies on television, film and audience reception which adopt a feminist approach were discussed and Bourdieu's praxis theory and his ideas on taste were talked about to form the theoretical basis of the audience reception study of this thesis. Also, the concept of quality television has been investigated as a mode of television programming for niche and educated audiences which provides a more "masculine" viewing experience. Lastly, the representations of women as a general category, representations of black women, representations of LGBTQ members and representations of transgender women on US and Turkish televisions were explored and the stereotypical ways these groups are presented on media were discussed.

To answer the research questions on whether if the representations in the episode are progressive and intersectional or not and which myths they produce and/or reproduce, how LGBTQ individuals, more specifically black transsexual women, are represented in the 9th episode of the second season of FX's *Pose* was investigated by using John Fiske's (2001) "codes of television" method. While doing so, an intersectional approach was adopted and the study did not focus on solely one dimension of the characters but analysed them by taking into account the multiple facets of their identity, namely their racial identity, sexual identity and gender identity.

The first hypothesis of this thesis argued that the episode contains contradictory meanings in regards to the messages it conveys through its representations of black transsexual women. On reality level, the findings showed that the representations the episode presents through the leading characters convey both progressive messages that challenge stereotypical representations and white supremacist ideas and messages that reproduce patriarchal ideas. In addition, the representations carry the risk of creating normative standards in terms of representations of trans women and domesticating trans identities within the binary system, despite presenting authentic representations and being progressive for validating the characters' gender identity and not presenting them as deceitful individuals. On representational level, the technical and conventional representational codes in the episode have been used to invite audiences to identify with and relate to the leading characters, presenting oppositional viewpoints that challenges the status quo in the meantime. However, both on representational level (thorough conventional codes) and ideological level, the episode included contradicting messages that both challenge and support dominant ideologies in society; while challenging cisgender-normative, transphobic, homophobic, white supremacist, patriarchal ideas and the normative and traditional understandings of the concept of family that is formed around biological ties in different occasions, it also reproduced some of them by presenting the leading characters in a hyperfeminine way, having only cisgender women discriminating against the characters and by reproducing some of the stereotypes about trans women, black women and women as a general category. In short, the representations of transsexual women in the episode were mostly subversive and progressive but they also included some messages that support the ideologies of the status quo. Thus, it can be said that the episode contains contradicting messages, overall, and the first hypothesis of this thesis was confirmed.

The second hypothesis of this thesis argued that the representations of the black transsexual women on *Pose* would fail to be intersectional. When we look at the results of the analysis of the episode, we can see that it contains many ideological messages including ones that criticize white supremacy, transphobia and patriarchy. While the episode gives messages about transphobia and patriarchy through its black transsexual characters, the only explicit criticism of white supremacy comes from Adrian, a cisgender, heterosexual, black man. Although, it cannot be said that the episode fails to be intersectional in this regard. Even though the episode does not criticize white supremacy through its leading characters, it contains various moments where the characters' racial identity is highlighted. Although, to see these intersectional messages, one has to pay attention to details or read between the lines; for example, during Angel's story about the time her father took her to a pool at a fancy club and they did not let them in. Thus, the second hypothesis of this thesis was debunked because the representations in the episode do not fail at being intersectional. However, it cannot be said that the representations are adequately intersectional, either, because they do not give clear messages through the leading characters themselves. The messages they convey might go unnoticed for many viewers in their first viewing. Thus, it can be said that the episode does not fail to be intersectional but fails to be adequately intersectional.

Intersectionality was also a central concept in the audience reception study, as well. The research question regarding this part of the thesis aimed to present a qualitative analysis on how audiences from different sexual identities, sexual orientations and ethnicities made their own meanings from the media text they were presented. The third hypothesis of this thesis argued that, despite the contradicting messages in the episode, the participants would make empowering meanings from the episode.

The audience reception part of the study observed that the sampled audience who belong to different gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity groups viewed the episode from

the lens of their unique identity groups and produced both subversive and oppositional messages and messages that perpetuate dominant and hegemonic ideologies. Although, it is important to note that the audiences did not view the episode from a fixed identity position, meaning that they connected with the characters in the episode in various ways depending on and through the perspective of the different dimensions of their identities. To illustrate, Seçil was able to read and relate to the characters from the perspective of her identity as a woman and as a Kurdish individual. Overall, although making contradicting meanings, the participants saw the representations of black transsexual characters as figures they found empowering and inspiring messages within. Thus, it can be said that the third hypothesis of this thesis was confirmed.

Gerbner and Gross (1976) notes that television gives audiences information about the world around them; it teaches them “what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right” (p. 176). Thus, investigating the messages in the representations of marginalized groups can inform us about the dominant attitudes towards those groups. However, as Fiske (1989) argues, television is “site of struggle” (p. 20) in terms of ideological messages it contains, which means that it conveys both oppositional messages and messages that perpetuate dominant discourses. These ideological messages the representations on television convey can have an influence on how people perceive individuals from marginalized and/or oppressed groups. Investigating these messages is important because while progressive representations can challenge harmful notions that further oppress the non-dominant groups in society, stereotypical or negative representations can reinforce these harmful notions and further marginalize them.

As a “site of struggle” (Fiske, 1989, p. 20) and a complex medium, television contains many contradictions and contradictory ways of seeing (Fiske & Hartley, 2003, pp. 91, 92). Thus, investigating the contradictory messages the audiences can make is important to

uncover how ideological ideas can operate on an individual level. As Bourdieu (1996) notes, individuals' habituses are shaped by and in return shape the social conditions they live in (p. 170). Thus, while popular culture productions, especially television production as a part of one of the mediums we interact the most, can give us information about society we live in and how the world around us operates, it can also have an influence on the formation of our perceptions, worldviews, perspectives and ideas. Individuals' program preferences and the way they interpret and produce meanings out of them are affected by the inclined behaviours within the limits of their habituses. In addition, the meanings the audiences produce can play a guiding role in the way they reshape and reproduce the social conditions of their environment.

Different dimensions of individuals' identity can have an effect on and can be affected by both their real-life experiences and on the meanings they make from media productions. Thus, investigating the messages within the popular culture representations of marginalized and/or oppressed groups and exploring the receptions of audiences who belong to different marginalized and/or oppressed groups within society is important and valuable, especially when we consider the need for intersectional studies within the literature of both representational analysis and audience reception studies. This thesis adopted an intersectional approach and located it in the centre of its analyses. It acknowledged that both the images on the screen and audiences who watch them do not belong to only one single social group within society but can belong to various different groups in regards to their sexual and romantic orientation, sexual identity, racial orientation, ethnic orientation and social class. Adopting an intersectional attitude like this one would keep studies in these areas from being one dimensional and would help us explore how individuals who are located in the intersection of different groups are represented on media and how these individuals themselves perceive these representations and what meanings they make from them. Admittedly, for the most part, intersectionality has been neglected as an approach in the

literature and there is a dire need for such studies (Martin, 2020, p. 73). In addition, most of the audience reception studies that have adopted an intersectional approach have been conducted in western countries, mainly in the US (Haslop, 2009, p. 4). Thus, for future studies, adopting an intersectional approach is very important to understand how individuals who are located in the intersection of various different minorities are represented on media and how individuals who belong to those groups read these representations. In addition, exploring receptions of individuals outside of the western world would keep the literature from being western-centric and one dimensional and give ideas about how western productions have an influence on people from non-western countries; thus, laying out the extent their influence and the effect they may create on a global scale.

One of the limitations of this thesis was that it only focused one of the episodes of the series. Thus, while presenting a profound analysis, it fell short on presenting a bigger picture about how the black transsexual women on *Pose* were represented in the series as a whole. The future studies which may investigate the representations of transgender women or LGBTQ individuals in it, may benefit from the findings of this thesis. However, focusing on multiple episodes or seasons of the series would present a more wholistic picture about the representations of the characters and their reception by audiences and would add valuable contributions for the literature.

One of the findings of this thesis, which was a cause for concern, was the choice of employing only cisgender-passing trans individuals in the episode. Similar to the critique I presented under the “Representation of Women” section about Özkan & Hardt's (2020) analysis of Jessica Jones, the cisgender-passing representations of transsexual and transgender women can present authentic images of specific groups withing gender-variant individuals, can add variety to the images of sexual minorities on the screen and present progressive representations that challenge harmful perceptions as long as they do not become the

industrial standard. Admittedly, to be able to come to a conclusion about this, one has to look at both the series (*Pose*) as a whole and at other television series which include transgender women as a part of their cast to see how many of their characters are cisgender-passing. While this is not one of the concerns of this thesis, the issue raises questions and worry, nonetheless, and it is hoped that expressing this might provide a lead for future studies.

One of the contributions of this thesis to the literature was presenting a semiotic analysis of how intersectional identities are represented on televisual productions by adopting an intersectional approach in its analysis. It also contributed to the literature that surrounds the television show *Pose* and the representations of transgender women on television by presenting a profound analysis of the messages the series conveys about black transsexual women by focusing on the analysis of one of the episodes of the series. In addition, it contributed to the literature of audience reception studies by investigating the meanings audiences from different sexual identities, sexual/romantic orientations and ethnic groups made from products of popular culture by keeping in mind the different dimensions of the audiences' identity and adopting an intersectional approach, which the literature was greatly in need of. Also, this thesis was able to distinguish itself from previous audience reception studies which adopted an intersectional approach by presenting receptions of audiences from Turkey, audiences outside of the western context. Thus, it contributed to the literature by presenting a sample on how audiences who are familiar with western culture but do not completely belong to it made meanings out of a popular culture text which was produced within a western context.

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