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“HE DRINKS CHAMPAGNE DURING RAMADAN”

Ethnic performativity among singers with a migratory background in
the Eurovision Song Contest

Tannaz Gakwisi

Master of Arts in European Studies

The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

Supervisor: Alena Minchenia

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Abstract

Since 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) has become one of the most popular entertainment events in the world. Each year, countries across Europe compete in a competition with original songs. While the majority of the entries includes a notion of European or national identity, there have been various performers from minority communities throughout the years. This thesis aimed to study the performance of ethnic identity among contestants in the Eurovision Song Contest with a first or second generation migratory background. By using Jean Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model, Judith Butler's concept of performativity was applied to the ESC. The study was conducted as a multiple case-study, and included three singers that have taken part in the contest: Mahmood from Italy (2019), Jeangu Macrooy from the Netherlands (2021), and Manizha from Russia (2021). In each case, the song's lyrics, music video and live performance were analysed, based on the performance of ethnic elements. In addition, media footage was analysed to study the public debate surrounding the participation of these singers, as well as to understand the idea behind the creative process surrounding the song and performance. Overall, the study showed that the artists performed ethnic identity in various ways, but in particular through the use of language, clothing and visuals. However, the motivation behind the performative choices differed per artist, and the importance of ethnic identity varied per case. Furthermore, for all participants, their ethnic identity was emphasized in the media, to which the singers responded in different manners, by either emphasizing their ethnic identity, or expressing their sense of national identity.

Keywords: ethnic identity, ethnic performativity, minority identity, ethnic identity development, Eurovision Song Contest

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1 Introduction

It's okay if people say to me: "Manizha, I don't like your song." I will say: "thank you, but that is your opinion." But if someone says: "Manizha, you cannot go to Eurovision, because you were born in Tajikistan, and you don't look, like, Russian," I want to ask you a very simple question: "what does a Russian look like?" (Wiwibloggs, 2021a).

1.1 Introduction to the Thesis Topic

The Eurovision Song Contest (also known as Eurovision or the ESC) is considered to be one of the biggest media events in the world (Akšamija, 2006, p. 1). Since 1956, countries in and around Europe send original songs to compete for the trophy during a four-hour live show. While the first contest included seven Western European countries, the show has expanded to around forty countries in the latest editions, including countries that are not geographically in Europe, such as Israel and Australia (Jordan, 2011, p. 20; Carniel, 2019).

Although the ESC is advertised as a competition between songs, and its organizer, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), states that the event is non-political (EBU, n.d.-a), the ESC includes many additional dimensions to the musical aspect. The official competitors of the show are broadcasters (EBU, n.d.-a), but as the countries' names and flags are shown on screen throughout the show, it can be considered as an political event as well (Kitsios, 2013, pp. 5-6; Akšamija, 2006, p. 1; Leach, 2018, p. 40). In addition, Eurovision has often been used as a platform for various statements throughout the history of the event, which were often a reflection of Europe's history at the time (Akšamija, 2006, p. 1; Torres, 2006, p. 7). Topics as the unification of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and dissatisfaction over migration from Eastern Europe were visible in both the expansion of the contest, as well as in the songs' topics (Torres, 2006, p. 7; Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 240).

1.2 Identity in the Eurovision Song Contest

As the contest is a competition between nations, artists are meant to represent their country, and therefore, occasionally include national ethnic symbols, such as language, native instruments or clothing in their performance (Akšamija, 2006, p. 5; Kitsios, 2013, p. 38). However, this is not obligatory, and with the diversification of Europe, there has been a place for different types of identities as well, such as a focus on Europeaness, sexual identity, indigenous identities, and migrant minority cultures (Lewis, 2019, p. 22; Akšamija, 2006, pp. 4-5; Yair, 2019, p. 7). In the case of the latter, the country is represented by a participant whose roots lie in a different country. These performers, who are a first or second generation migrant, do not only showcase the national identity of the country they are representing, but also their ethnic minority identity.

1.3 Theoretical Framework and Research Question

Ethnic identity can be performed by expressing norms and values, beliefs, language, traditions, and other forms of culture (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 8; Balidemaj & Small, 2019, p. 647), and overall, there is more awareness among migrants and non-white people, compared to people of the (white) majority culture (Phinney, 1989, p. 46; González et al., 2017). However, individual ethnic identity does not stand by itself, but is affected by other types of identity, such as gender, or the region in which the individual is raised (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 4; Butler, 1990).

In this thesis, I will study the ethnic performance of participants in Eurovision, when representing not only themselves and their ethnic identity, but also their country in an international setting. Therefore, the main research question of this thesis is as follows: *In what ways do participants with a first or second generation migratory background perform ethnic identity during their participation at the Eurovision Song Contest?*

To answer the main research question, the followed sub questions are used:

- *What elements do participants with a migratory background use to express ethnic identity, regarding the song's lyrics, music video and live performance?*
- *In what way is the ethnic identity of the participants portrayed in the media surrounding their participation in the ESC?*

- *What other types of identity do the participants express within the context of their participation?*

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

To support the theory of ethnic identity, I briefly introduce Henri Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory, and then focus on Jean Phinney's (1989) Ethnic Identity Development model that has been derived from Tajfel's theory. I then apply Phinney's model to Judith Butler's (1990) performative theory, to have a better understanding of the concept of ethnic performativity. In the second chapter, I provide a short overview of the contest's history, as well as an overview of previous research on the Eurovision Song Contest, focusing on the topic of identity. Lastly, I apply ethnic performativity to the ESC.

In the second part of the thesis, I conduct a multiple case-study on three entries from the contests of 2019 and 2021, all of which included a singer with a migratory background that emphasized ethnic identity during their participation in the contest. These entries are Mahmood's *Soldi* (Italy 2019), Jeangu Macrooy's *Birth of a New Age* (Netherlands 2021), and Manizha's *Russian Woman* (Russia 2021). I analyse these entries based on the lyrics, music video, and live performance, as well as media footage surrounding their participation in the ESC. Lastly, I state the limitations of this research in the discussion, suggest proposals for further research, and draw final conclusions.

1.5 Purpose of the Thesis

With over 160 million viewers each year (EBU, 2022), the Eurovision Song Contest has undoubtedly become part of Europe's shared culture, and is therefore a platform to perform identity. As migration and superdiversity are largely present in today's society, the development of ethnic identity in a national context is important for the inclusion of migrant communities. In the context of Europe, unity in diversity has been one of the main focus points of Europe and the European Union (European Union, n.d.), as many European countries include non-European migrant communities. With Eurovision as one of the main platforms to present oneself as part of the nation, the contest is an interesting and important

case to analyse the representation of minorities. Although Eurovision fan websites have reported on the representation of ethnic minorities in the contest (e.g. Russell 2020, Baker, 2021), it is a topic that has been scarcely researched in academic literature. This thesis is therefore an addition to existing literature about the Eurovision Song Contest, ethnic performativity, and the representation of migrant communities in Europe.

2 Theoretical Framework: Ethnic Identity Through a Performative Lens

The topic of identity can be considered as multidimensional and complex, and is therefore one of the most discussed topics in social sciences (Umaña-Taylor, 2015, p. 3). As a result, a variety of theories have been developed on the matter, varying from group identities to specific aspects of personal identity. To understand how a singer's migratory background affects their performance in the Eurovision Song Contest, I briefly discuss Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, and then expand on Phinney's development model of ethnic identity. In the second part of the chapter, I use the core aspects of Phinney's model to create a performative lens on ethnic theory, based on Butler's theory of gender performativity.

2.1 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory is one of the most cited theories on identity, and was developed by Henri Tajfel in 1978. Tajfel argued that individuals see themselves as part of a group, whose identity they then make their own (Balidemaj & Small, 2019, p. 647; Tajfel 1981). These groups may vary from broad, such as gender, to specific groups, such as hobby clubs (Campbell, 2011, p. 362). A main aspect of Social Identity Theory is how a group creates a division between the ingroup and outgroup, creating a sense of "we" versus "them" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thereby, the group identity affects the individual's behaviour towards the ingroup, as well as their behaviour towards the outgroup (Campbell, 2011, p. 362).

Ethnic identity and Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development

One of the concepts that has emerged from Social Identity Theory is ethnic identity. According to Tajfel (1981), ethnic identity is part of one's self-concept, which is then defined by one's knowledge of the group (p. 225). Although ethnic identity is sometimes grouped together with racial identity, the term *race* focuses on the power and privileges based on appearance, whereas an *ethnicity* is usually defined by the group's social and cultural

boundaries (Murchison, n.d.). These are external, such as traditions, language and media, or internal, among which self-image, group values and affinity for the group members (Slootman, 2018, p. 22; Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 8). As stated by Branch (1994), ethnic identity functions at both the individual and group level (Balidemaj & Small, 2019, p. 647; Branch, 1994).

While earlier research focused on ethnicity as an identification label, this ignored the complexity of the topic, as well as in-group differences. Phinney (1996) argued that ethnic groups should not be generalized, and that members of ethnic communities are heterogeneous, as they are affected by social class, generation, and the region in which members of the community are situated (p. 143). Moreover, Spencer & Markstrom-Adams (1990) headed the research on ethnic identity in a new direction, by creating a framework that incorporates the versatility of identity (Umaña-Taylor, 2015, pp. 12-13). In the 2000s, research on ethnic identity shifted from one-item measurements to taking into consideration other defining variables between individuals. As a result, ethnic identity is rather seen as a continuum than as a categorization (Grindal, Kushida & Nieri, 2021, p. 41; Umaña-Taylor, 2015, pp. 11, 18), which is defined by people's actions (Slootman, 2018, p. 21). Ethnic identities and groups are thus not a natural product, but rather a product of setting boundaries between "us" and "other" (Slootman, 2018, p. 22), referring back to Tajfel's concept of Social Identity Theory.

One of the concepts that provided a base to study ethnic identity as a continuum was Phinney's (1989) model of Ethnic Identity Development. The origins of Phinney's work lied in the research materials of Erik H. Erikson (1950) on the identity development of children and adolescents, and James Marcia's theory on identity formation (1966). The model described three stages of the individual's perception of their own ethnic identity, and other ethnic groups, based on the work of Marcia (Phinney, 1996, p. 147). In general, Phinney concluded that the process of ethnic identity development starts in childhood, but develops throughout adolescence and adulthood (Syed, 2015, p. 28).

The first phase of Phinney's development model is *diffuse*, where the individual is unaware, or does not have an interest in their ethnic background. The individual's relationship with ethnic identity is affected by the behaviour of the surrounding community (Phinney, 1996, p. 147). The individual accepts the majority values, or even prefers them over their own minority values (Phinney, 1989, p. 36), and may identify as the majority ethnicity (Phinney, 1996, p. 147).

In the second phase, *mortarium*, an individual is willing to learn more about their background. In this phase, the individual discusses the topic of ethnicity with family and friends (Phinney, 1989, p. 36). In addition, the individual might sympathize more towards other minority communities. On the other hand, the individual's feelings against the majority culture tend to be more negative (Phinney, 1996, p. 147).

The third and final phase of Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model is *achieved*, when the individual is fully aware of their ethnic identity and has not only accepted their background, but also feels a sense of belonging towards the minority community. As a result, the individual has a more positive sense of self-concept (Phinney, 1989, p. 36). Grindal, Kushida & Nieri (2021) stated how, in particular, the achieved ethnic identity is seen as essential, as it helps the individual to overcome negative stereotypes that are related to their ethnic identity (p. 55).

In addition to the three phases of the Ethnic Identity Development model, Phinney (1992) defined four components of ethnic identity, which are self-identification, affirmation and belonging, ethnic behaviour and practices, and ethnic identity achievement. Self-identification regards the label that an individual uses for themselves, whereas affirmation and belonging concerns the pride of the individual to belong to a specific ethnic group. Ethnic behaviour and practices then concern social practices, such as language, religion and traditions, while ethnic identity achievement relates to the understanding and commitment to the identity of the individual. From these four components, Phinney (1992) considered affirmation and belonging, and ethnic identity achievement as crucial to one's ethnic identity.

Although ethnicity is a component that can be applied to every individual and group, González et al. (2017) noted that ethnic identity is much more present among those who belong to a minority group. Similarly, Balidemaj & Small (2019) mentioned how ethnic identity development is an important phase in a migrant's life, as it can positively affect an individual's mental health (p. 647). Besides, Phinney (1989) quoted Tajfel (1978), who characterized minority identity development by its marginalization and suppression by the majority culture, which leads members of the ethnic minority to choose between the group's negative image, or to revolt against this image, and to search for their own identity (p. 34). This was agreed on by Phinney herself (1989), who noted that the process of ethnic identity development is started by a negative image of their identity, which leads the individual to question its social meaning (Grindal, Kushida & Nieri, 2021, p. 39; Phinney, 1989).

Although the term *ethnic minority* is sometimes limited to newcomers' and their integration process, Sloodman (2018) stated how this is a limited perspective, and how ethnic identification also plays a role in the identity forming process of second or third generation migrants (p. 18). Apart from suppression by the majority culture, several researchers pointed out the importance of context when studying ethnic identity, such as the social aspect and history of the community. When researching ethnic identity, it is thus important to consider the context as a variable (Umaña-Taylor, 2015, p. 22).

Ethnic identity theory can thus be used as a tool to study its development among adolescents and young adults, and in particular Phinney's (1992) model provides an overview of the different phases of this continuum. While the development process is partly individual, as it is affected by various factors, it can be argued that ethnic identity appears after suppression by the majority culture, and that members of the ethnic minority community are not born as a member, but are led to perform their ethnic identity.

2.2 Ethnic Performativity

The concept of performativity was introduced by Judith Butler (1990), who originally focused on gender performativity. Gender performativity revolves around the idea that men and women are not born as such, but are rather performing masculinity and femininity. As these performances are repeated over time, they become established role patterns (Butler, 1990).

As identified by Malcolm & Mendoza (2014, p. 4), core aspects of performative theory are repetition, fluid identity, agency, and intersectionality (Butler, 1990). Repetition refers to the fact that people do not choose their identity, but repeat certain roles over time. Fluid identity concerns the fact that identity is not fixed, and that it can change through discourse, as identity is decided through society and context. Agency refers to the ability to recognize norms, as well as to ignore or overperform them. Lastly, concerning the topic of intersectionality, Malcolm & Mendoza stressed how cultural and social categories are intertwined and emphasized its importance, to understand the relationship between an individual's various identities (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014, p. 4; Butler, 1990). Earlier, Collins (1998) contributed to the matter by mentioning that the function of intersectionality is to find out how defining aspects of identity, such as gender, race or class mutually construct one another (p. 63).

When applying the concept of performativity onto ethnic identity, the expressions of ethnic identity become part of the performative aspect. In this case, the emphasis does not lie on different roles, such as masculine or feminine, but rather on being a member of the ethnic group, which is then expressed through the four core aspects of performativity mentioned by Malcolm & Mendoza (2014). When applied to ethnic performativity, this includes the use of language, gestures, religion, traditions and food, among others.

Previous research on ethnic performativity has been conducted on various ethnic communities. A study by Grosswirth Kachtan (2015) on ethnic performativity within the Israeli army concluded that ethnicity creates different forms of masculinity, and that soldiers do not only perform ethnic identity as they are required to, but also as a sense of identification (p. 16). Chiruta (2021), who performed a study on the performativity of Roma identity in Romanian media during the Covid-19 pandemic, concluded that the Roma community was usually not reported upon in the national media, unless it enforced stereotypes, such as causing threats, instability, or conflict. This approach continued during covid-19, which assisted the authorities to take control of the pandemic (pp. 16-17). Moreover, Shimakawa's study on the ethnic performance of Asian Pacific Americans (2004) included the case of a theatre play, in which an Asian female character committed suicide in a manner that is reserved for men in Asian culture, and thereby went against the performance of femininity that was expected from her (p. 149). These studies did not only present the diverse nature of ethnic performativity, but also showed how it is affected by multiple identities. In the studies conducted by Grosswirth Kachtan (2015) and Shimakawa (2004), gender identity played a role in addition to ethnicity, and supported Butler's argument that intersectionality plays a role in performativity (1990). Lastly, in the case of Chiruta, society and context played a role, as argued by Malcolm & Mendoza (2014).

3 The Eurovision Song Contest: Background and Previous Research

In this chapter, I provide more information to the thesis' topic, by explaining the background of the Eurovision Song Contest. First of all, I dive into the history of the contest. Secondly, I focus on previous research on Eurovision. Thirdly, I describe how the ESC is not only limited to a television show, but can be considered as a full media event. Lastly, I explain how ethnic performativity can be applied to the Eurovision Song Contest.

3.1 A Brief Introduction to the Eurovision Song Contest

The Eurovision Song Contest was first held in 1956. In an era of various initiatives to promote European integration, Swiss media executive Marcel Bezençon proposed to integrate European nations through music, inspired by the Italian Festival of Sanremo (Wellings & Kalman, 2019, p. 8). Since then, the contest has been held every year¹. Each competing nation enters the competition with an original song, and as the contest has grown to approximately forty participating countries in recent years, the competition is split up into two semi-finals and a final, in which 25 countries compete for the victory (EBU, n.d.-b). The voting is evenly divided between a jury-vote, which consists of experts from the music industry, and a public vote, in which viewers can participate through televoting. Each country distributes the same number of points, and thus, all participating countries have the same power to influence the results of the contest, regardless of size (EBU, n.d.-a). The winning country is awarded the honour to host the next edition (Yair, 1995, p. 149), which means that the contest continuously travels across the continent.

The national broadcasters of the participating countries are responsible for providing the songs for the contest, and have much freedom in deciding their country's entry. The rules state that the song must be original and cannot be over 3 minutes long (EBU, n.d.-a), but regarding the performing artist, countries are not bound to performers who have the country's nationality (Kitsios, 2013, p. 23), nor do they have to sing in the country's national language

¹ Except in 2020, when it was cancelled due to the covid-19 pandemic

(Jordan, 2011, p. 45). This has resulted in singers who have taken part with no official connection to the country that they represented (Kitsios, 2013, p. 23). In addition, the slight majority of the countries usually enters the contest with a song in English, although occasionally, countries opt for a song in their national language, or a multilingual song (Akšamija, 2006, pp. 4-5).

Although the rules furthermore state that the song's lyrics should be free from offensive, commercial or political messages (EBU, n.d.-a), this has proven to be a grey area, as several entries in the history of the contest have included references to political events (Kitsios, 2013, pp. 5-6, 29), and Leach (2018) has even argued that the fact that nations are competing against each other makes the competition political by itself (p. 40). Nevertheless, the EBU advertises the Eurovision Song Contest as a non-political event (EBU, n.d.-a), and various entries in the history of the contest have therefore led to controversy. In some cases, this has resulted in a withdrawal of the participating country, such as Georgia's 2009 entry, called *We Don't Wanna Put In*, which included a reference to Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, in the aftermath of the Russo-Georgian war (Baker, 2019, p. 177). In other cases, the entry has been allowed to take part in the contest, among which the Ukrainian Jamala's winning entry *1944*, which referred to the deportation of Crimean Tatars during the Second World War (Walker, 2016), or Armenia's entry *Face The Shadow*, originally called *Don't Deny*, from the 2015 contest, which referred to the 100th anniversary of the Armenian genocide (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 25). Other entries have referred to European political events, among which multiple songs in the 1990 contest, that build on the theme of the fall of the Iron Curtain and the forthcoming Maastricht Treaty (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 21), and the French entry *N'oubliez pas (Don't Forget)* from 2015, which remembered the Great War (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 292).

Although political messages are often expressed in the song's lyrics, this does not have to be the case per se, as they can also be expressed through symbolism in the performance. An example of this is Israel's 2000 entry *Sameach (Happy)*, where the singers waved both Israeli and Syrian flags towards the end of the performance, against the will of the national broadcaster (Torres, 2006, p. 10), or the Armenian entry from 2015, where the contestants were dressed in the same colour as the forget-me-not flower on the anniversary logo (Lidman, 2015). What is noticeable, is that these entries all refer to political events that were relevant to the represented country, or to European political events at the time. The Eurovision Song Contest can thus be seen as a mirror of Europe's history, as the start, further expansion, and

entries in the contest follow the same timeline of European integration and political events (Akšamija, 2006, p. 1).

3.2 Previous Research on Identity in the ESC and Current Research Gap

3.2.1 European Identity

Panea (2018) states that identity, spectacle and representation are key concepts in literature concerning large events, and the ESC is no exception to this (p. 121), as all three concepts are visibly present across the show. Throughout the history of the Eurovision Song Contest, identity has played a main role, which can be seen in several ways. Among some scholars, the ESC is seen as a visualization of Europe's imagined community (e.g. Wellings & Kalman, 2019, p. 11; Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 4), but at the same time, its notion of European identity has raised questions as well. While the original competing countries in 1956 were all Western European, the contest gradually expanded to the east, when Yugoslavia, Turkey and Israel joined the competition in the 1960s and 1970s (Panea, 2018, p. 126). In particular, Israel's debut in the contest first raised the question of Europe's borders in the context of the ESC (Tragaki, 2013), and thereby the definition of European identity.

However, the biggest expansion of the contest can be seen in the 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and dissolution of Yugoslavia, when many newly independent states and countries from the former Eastern Bloc joined the competition (EBU, 2004, pp. 32-33). This had an effect from both sides; Eastern countries felt the urge to brand their own national identity on one hand, and the expression of Europeanness on the other (Kitsios, 2013, p. 25). Kitsios (2013) described the good results by these new countries as a confidence boost, but simultaneously, it caused much criticism among Western European countries, who accused the East of bloc voting (Wellings & Kalman, 2019, p. 15). This division between east and west visualizes the "we" versus "other" of Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, where the original participating countries distanced themselves from the new, Eastern European states (Wellings & Kalman, 2019, p. 14).

3.2.2 National Identity

In addition to European identity, national identity is regularly performed in the contest, and thereby has been researched in academic literature as well. For many countries that participate in the contest, representing national identity is an important aspect (Kitsios, 2013, p. 23), which can be seen in the use of language, traditional music elements, or clothing during the performance. In addition, visual symbols are shown during the broadcast of the show, for example through the use of flags (Torres, 2006, p. 10). One phenomenon that has been frequently researched is nation-branding, which means that nations present themselves in a specific way in an international setting. This can be seen in songs and performances, or through the hosting of the event, such as in the case of Estonia, which was the first former Soviet nation to host the contest in 2002 (Jordan, 2011).

Yair (2019) stated that performers usually have two dialectical directions regarding identity; they can focus on expanding inclusiveness, or on ethnic and national identity when representing their country (p. 3). This way, countries can either reinforce or break old stereotypes. Germany, for example, focused on Europeanness rather than German identity in the early days of the contest, to avoid associations with nationalism (Lewis, 2019, p. 22, 41); whereas Serbia used Eurovision as a means to portrait national identity as a “transitional country” in the 1990s and 2000s, after the fall of Yugoslavia (Mitrović, 2010, p. 174). In some cases, both identities are combined into one song, for example by singing in multiple languages, or combining musical genres. In other cases, clichés are used that might not be appreciated by the citizens of the country itself, but that are appreciated abroad (Kitsios, 2013, pp. 17-18).

3.2.3 Minority Identities

Research on other types of identity in the contest is relatively limited, but has been conducted on various types of identity, among which indigenous minorities and the presence of LGBTQ performers (e.g. Gauja, 2019; Yair, 2019; Halliwell, 2021). However, not much research is available on the representation of ethnic minorities and non-white performers in the contest, even though fan websites on the ESC have devoted articles to the matter in the past (e.g. Baker, 2021; Ross, 2012; Hockman, 2020; Russell, 2020; Yard, 2020). Performers with a migration background have been present since the very first editions of the contest (Ross,

2012), but are only mentioned briefly in academic literature as part of a bigger study, such as Ukraine's participant from 2012 (Kitsios, 2013, p. 23) or Australia's performers with a migratory background (Gauja, 2019, p. 216), as an example of ethnic diversity in the contest.

3.3 The Eurovision Song Contest as a Media Event

Although the main focus of the ESC lies on the two semi-finals and the final in May, the contest can be considered as a full media-event. In the months leading up to the show, countries focus on selecting a contestant and song. In many countries, this is done through a national selection process, during which viewers are able to vote for their favourite act. In other countries, the entry is chosen through an internal selection, which means that some media buzz is generated surrounding the release of the song (EBU, n.d.-b). In the weeks leading up to the contest, local press reports on the rehearsals, dedicating news items and interviews to the contest and the country's representative (Akšamija, 2006, p. 3). Although the majority of press releases are aimed at the local market, occasionally, entries cause uproar before the contest. This includes the case of Israel in 2000 (Torres, 2006, p. 10), as well as Serbia and Montenegro in 2006, where a dispute between the Serbian and Montenegrin juries during the national selection of the song led to a withdrawal from the ESC altogether (Torres, 2006, p. 11; BBC News, 2006).

In addition to national media, a community of fan media is active online, who report on the backstage events of the contest, and conduct interviews with the participants. Lastly, the contest is usually a popular topic for discussions on social media, as many of the entries appear in trending lists of video and streaming platforms (EBU, 2022). This means that the singers who are taking part in the competition do not only have the three minutes on stage to present themselves, but that they can also elaborate on the message of their song in interviews and on social media.

3.4 Ethnic Performativity in the Context of the Eurovision Song Contest

Although the topic of ethnic minority has not yet been researched in detail, there are many opportunities to study its visibility. To apply ethnic performativity onto the ESC, I use

Malcolm & Mendoza's (2014) identified core aspects of repetition, fluid identity, agency, and intersectionality (p. 4). These aspects are applied to Phinney's components of ethnic identity, which are self-identification, affirmation and belonging, ethnic behaviour and practices, and ethnic identity achievement.

3.4.1 Self-identification

The way in which the individual refers to themselves plays an important role in shaping an identity. As argued by Nancy (1994), representation has the potential to become identity through repetition. Self-identification of the performers can therefore be seen in choices regarding the song, such as language and genre, in addition to media appearances, in which performers present themselves and elaborate on their entry. These self-identifications may very well be fluid, as it can happen that singers do not always identify themselves as part of their ethnic minority or a member of the nation, but switch between identifying themselves as either of the two, both at the same time, or neither, depending on the context. Similarly, defining factors such as gender and sexual orientation, which have been considered to be relevant in previous research on the ESC (Halliwell, 2021; Yair, 2019; Blangiardo & Baio, 2014), as well as the context in which they express their identity, should be analysed when looking at self-identification, which introduces the aspect of intersectionality.

3.4.2 Affirmation and belonging

Affirmation and belonging concerns the content of the interviews and performances, where participants express their individual identity, and pride towards their ethnic identity through speech and gestures, such as clothing and symbols. The use of these symbols can be repeated over time, which links affirmation and belonging to the importance of repetition in performativity theory.

When looking at the effect of agency on affirmation and belonging, one can consider the extent to which participants are aware of the norms and values of their ethnic identity, and in which ways they express themselves about these identities. Kitsios (2013) noted that, in the ESC, the most visible identifications are age, nationality, race and gender. Values and beliefs, on the other hand, are not as visible (p. 52). Lastly, intersectionality provides an impression of

how participants include other identities into their participation at the Eurovision Song Contest, and in what manner it affects their pride to be part of their ethnic group.

3.4.3 Ethnic behaviour and practices

Similar to affection and belonging, ethnic behaviour and practices can be performed through the use of traditions and symbols, as well as language. Here, contestants can self-identify by using a specific language in a particular situation, or switching between multiple languages during their performance or in interviews. Language is deemed to be important in Eurovision, as it says much about the singer's and country's identity. Several researchers pointed out the language choice for the song; although English is the international lingua franca and the most useful to convey a message, the national language is used to show loyalty to the national identity (Akšamija, 2006, p. 5; Kitsios, 2013, p. 38). For contestants with a migratory background, an extra layer is added to this language choice, as the free language rule allows them to use their minority language as well. To express themselves, they might furthermore use aspects of their ethnic identity or another form of identity, or combine aspects of different identities during their performance, in interviews or on social media.

3.4.4 Ethnic identity achievement

When looking at ethnic identity achievement, it is once again possible to look at how a singer refers to their ethnic identity to be part of their individual identity in interviews. Furthermore, agency influences ethnic identity achievement by looking at how a performer deals with the norms and values from their own culture, to what extent they are aware of this, and why they decide to regard or not regard it part of their individual identity. This brings in the aspect of intersectionality as well, as it is important to consider what other identities affect them in their decisions.

4 Methodology

To find out how participants from a migratory background perform ethnic identity in the Eurovision Song Contest, I conducted a multiple case-study. First, I explain how I narrowed down all entries in the ESC to the three that are included in this sample, and I then introduce the singers and their entries. Secondly, I explain the purpose of multiple case-study as a research method, and the set-up of the study. Lastly, I elaborate on the strengths and the limitations of the study.

4.1 Selecting the Cases

The three selected cases are from the contests of 2019 and 2021. To take part in the ESC, it is not compulsory to have citizenship of the represented country, and it is therefore not unusual for contestants to not have a direct link to the country that they are representing (Kitsios, 2013, p. 23). As a result, the word “migrant” can be interpreted very broadly in the context of Eurovision. To narrow down the number of eligible entries, I only considered contestants with a migratory background that were either born, or had lived in the represented country for several years. Furthermore, as the focus of this thesis lies on *how*, rather than *the extent to which* singers express their identity, I selected entries in which elements from either national or ethnic minority culture were performed. Participants who were from a migratory background, but sang their song fully in English (or another non-native language), or sang about a topic that was not immediately related to their personal background, were therefore not included in the sample. To be able to find sufficient data on each case, another criterium was that the entry should have caused some type of public debate in the country that the artist represented, prior to the contest. To keep the analysis within the scope of the thesis, I limited myself to entries from the five most recent editions of the contest, excluding 2023. This brought the number of entries for the analysis down to three: *Soldi*, Italy’s entry in the 2019 contest, and *Birth of a New Age* and *Russian Woman*, the entries from respectively the Netherlands and Russia from the 2021 edition. In the next section, I briefly introduce the singers’ backgrounds.

4.1.1 Italy 2019: Mahmood – Soldi

Artist biography

Mahmood, whose birth name is Alessandro Mahmoud, was born in 1992, and 26 years old at the time of the 2019 contest. Born from a Sardinian mother and an Egyptian father, Mahmood grew up in the neighbourhood of Gratosoglio, Milan. After taking part in the X Factor Italy in 2012, Mahmood released several singles, but only became known to the public after his participation in the Sanremo Festival, which led him to represent Italy at the Eurovision Song Contest (Jadda, 2019).

Migration to Italy and the aftermath of the 2015 migration crisis

Since the so-called 2015 European migrant crisis, migration has been a major topic of debate in Italy (Di Maio, 2019). As the country is relatively close to Northern Africa, from where a significant amount of migrants originate (Caritas Italiana, 2019, p. 18), the increase of migrants in Italy has been one of the highest within the European Union over the past twenty years (Caritas Italiana, 2019). This has resulted in a successful campaign for the right-wing parties in the country, who advocated against migration (Torelli, 2018; BBC News, 2018; Di Maio, 2019). According a 2020 report by Caritas e Migrantes, North-West Italy, where Milan is situated, had the highest migration rate among the Italian territorial areas (p. 34), and the area of Greater Milan has the highest of migrants within the country (Wanted in Milan, 2017). Within Milan, Gratosoglio has a migrant population of around 15 per cent (Bourgeois, 2020, p. 59).

Gratosoglio is a neighbourhood that was built in the 1960s to meet the urgent need for housing for migrant workers from the south of Italy, but later developed into a neighbourhood with a high percentage of migrants from abroad. In addition, the neighbourhood deals with various problems, such as unemployment, and commercial deflation (Stefanizzi & Verdolini, 2021, pp. 114-116).

Selection process

Mahmood was chosen as the Italian representative after winning the annual Sanremo Festival, which is a main entertainment event in the country, and attracts much media attention each year (Mouriquand & Carbonaro, 2023). Mahmood received a ticket to the festival's line-up after winning the so-called "Newcomer's Festival", and was therefore not expected to win among the 24 competing songs (Vitali, 2019). His status as a new artist was reflected in the detailed results as well, as he received a little under 21 per cent of the public's vote in the final voting round. However, as Mahmood received 64 per cent of the Press Jury vote, he still became the winner of the Italian preselection for the ESC (Redazione Sorrisi, 2019).

Song and results

The song *Soldi* (*Money*) was sung almost entirely in Italian, as most other recent entries from Italy, but contained a few lines in Arabic, despite the fact that Mahmood does not speak the language himself (Jadda, 2019). Mahmood described the song as "Morocco pop" (Moretti, 2019). The song was composed by Mahmood himself, together with the Italian songwriters Dardust and Charlie Charles, and addressed the topic of a problematic relationship between a father and son (Montalto Monella, 2019). At the ESC, Mahmood placed 2nd in the final, receiving 219 points from the jury and 253 from the public. This was Italy's best result since 2011, although it should be noted that Italy is overall successful in the contest, and often scores a top 10 result (Eurovisionworld, n.d.).

4.1.2 The Netherlands 2021: Jeangu Macrooy – Birth of a New Age

Artist biography

Jeangu Macrooy was born in 1993 in Paramaribo, Suriname, and has been living in the Netherlands since 2014. After graduating from the Artez Conservatory in Enschede, Macrooy released several albums and performed regularly at festivals in both the Netherlands and Suriname (Unexpected Records, n.d.).

The Surinam community in the Netherlands

As a former Dutch colony, Suriname became an independent state in 1975, but still holds international relations to the Netherlands (NOS Nieuws, 2020; Republiek Suriname, n.d.). However, these relations have not always been good, and it should be noted that, around the time of Jeangu Macrooy's participation in the ESC, the debate surrounding the apologies from the Dutch state towards the former Dutch colonies (Government of the Netherlands, 2022) had been in the news regularly (e.g. NOS Nieuws, 2021a; Brassem, 2021; Lucassen, 2021; Jurna, 2019). The Surinam community forms one of the biggest minority communities in the Netherlands (CBS, 2023), estimated at a little under 350,000 first and second generation migrants in 2015 (CBS, 2015), out of a population of 17 million (CBS, n.d.).

The official language of Suriname is Dutch, but as the country's population is ethnically diverse, a variety of languages is spoken (Dialectloket, n.d.). One of these languages is Sranantongo (also known as Sranan), a Creole language that is based on the languages of the European colonizers and the indigenous languages of the slaves who originally came from West Africa (AVROTROS, 2014; Dialectloket, n.d.). The language, which was created as a means for slaves and their slave owners to communicate, was not highly regarded, and was even forbidden to use for a certain period (Oomen, 2021). However, it has nowadays become the "language of the people" of Suriname (Atlas, 2014).

Selection process

Jeangu Macrooy was originally chosen to represent the Netherlands at the cancelled 2020 contest with the song *Grow*, which was chosen by a selection committee assembled by the national broadcaster AVROTROS (Het Parool, 2020). For the 2021 edition, Jeangu was rechosen as the contestant by the broadcaster (Eurovisie Songfestival, 2020). In interviews, he mentioned to have written multiple songs for the 2021 contest, but that *Birth of a New Age* was directly accepted as the entry by AVROTROS after proposing the song (Wiwibloggs, 2021b; De Telegraaf, 2021).

Song and results

Jeangu Macrooy described *Birth of a New Age* as a mix of soul and Surinamese folk music, based on kawina percussion (NPO Radio 2, 2021). The song contained English verses, while

the song's chorus was sung in Sranan. While Macrooy was not the first artist from Suriname to represent the Netherlands at Eurovision (Hitdossier, 2020), it was the first time in the contest's history that the language was used (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a). In addition, Macrooy's choice to sing in Sranan was a change from previous years, as the Netherlands' recent entries had been sung fully in English. The song was written by Jeangu Macrooy and his producer Pieter Perquin (NPO Radio 2, 2021).

As the 2021 contest was held in the Netherlands, Macrooy's *Birth of a New Age* was the so-called host entry, and did therefore not complete in the semi-finals. The song placed 23rd in the final, receiving 11 points from the jury and 0 from the public, and thereby was the country's worst result since 2015 (Eurovisionworld, n.d.).

4.1.3 Russia 2021: Manizha – Russian Woman

Artist biography

Manizha Dalerovna Sangin (born as Manizha Dalerovna Khamrayeva) was born in 1991 in Dushanbe, present-day Tajikistan. She moved to Moscow at age 3, due to the war in her home country (Dufalla & S, 2021). Although she had been active in the music industry since childhood (Roth, 2021), Manizha released her first album in 2017, as an independent artist. Manizha's musical repertoire includes music in Russian and English, as well as Tajik (Boutsko, 2019), and often concern controversial themes, such as dealing with an ethnic inferiority complex in her song *Nedoslavianka (Not Slavic Enough)* (Simon, 2021). Apart from being a singer, Manizha is active as a goodwill ambassador at the UN Refugee Agency (Simon, 2021).

Minorities from the former Soviet Union in Russia

Russia is among the countries with the highest migrant populations in the world, counting up to 12 million in 2020 (Gontmakher, 2022), among a population of 146.7 million (Khurshudyan, 2020). A significant percentage of these migrants originates from the former Soviet states. In the early 1990s, many people migrated from the former Soviet republics to Russia, of which 40 per cent was not ethnically Russian (Chudinovskikh & Denisenko, 2017).

Boutsko (2021) and Simon (2021) point out that migrants from former Central-Asian post-Soviet states are often at the bottom of Russian society, as they are low-educated and do not have official papers. However, this is not fully applicable to Manizha's case, who did not have a Russian passport until age 14 (Wiwibloggs, 2021a), but whose parents did have prestigious jobs in Tajikistan (Boutsko, 2021).

Selection process

The song *Russian Woman* was chosen in a preselection in which three songs competed. The results were fully decided by televoting, and Manizha won the national final with 39.7 per cent of the votes (EBU, 2021).

Song and results

The song *Russian Woman* contained a mix of English and Russian lyrics, and was thereby the first entry from Russia since 2011 to include lyrics in the country's official language.

Manizha's musical style was described as art-pop in her biography on the official website of the ESC (EBU, n.d.-c), and large parts of the song were performed in rap-style. The song was written by Manizha herself, together with Israeli songwriters Ori Avni and Ori Kaplan. In interviews, Manizha pointed out the coincidence that the song was written on International Women's Day 2020, and chosen as the Russian entry exactly one year later (EBU, 2021). At the Eurovision Song Contest, Manizha passed the semi-final, and received 104 points from the jury and 100 from the public in the final. Ending up at the 9th place overall, her result was slightly worse than the majority of Russia's recent entries in the contest (Eurovisionworld, n.d.).

4.2 Multiple Case-Study as a Research Method

A case-study provides the opportunity to analyse the ethnic performativity of artists in detail, and to get an impression of how ethnicity is not only performed on stage, but also beyond the performance itself. As a research method, many different definitions of *case-study* are

available, and it is thus not strange that these definitions vary from each other as well. Gerring (2007) states that a case-study is an intensive research of one case or a small set of cases, which forms a multiple case-study. However, Swanborn (2010) disagrees, and argues that the focus of a case-study should rather lie on the development of the phenomenon within a certain period (p. 10). He states that a case-study studies a social phenomenon in its natural context, using different sources, and that the focus lies on process-training, which concerns the social process of the different subjects (p. 14). In this case, the social process focusses on the dynamic between the artist and the audience of the Eurovision Song Contest.

4.2.1 Analysis of the Lyrics, Music Video and Performance

The first part of each case-study consists of an analysis of the musical and visual aspect of the entries. I observed the appearance of ethnic identity in the songs' lyrics, music video and live performance². In each case, I analysed the content from the beginning until the end, by describing what elements of ethnic identity, such as language, history and clothing, could be observed. The observations were complemented by comments from the singers themselves, or online news articles about the contestant. All videos were retrieved from the official channel of the Eurovision Song Contest on YouTube (Eurovision Song Contest, n.d.). The lyrics and translations were retrieved from eurovision.tv, and can be found in Appendices A, B and C. In all cases, the live performances from the final were analysed.

Reliability and validity

The reliability of the research can be secured, as the content that is analysed is clearly narrowed down to the song's lyrics, music video, and live performance. Each aspect is analysed in the same manner. Furthermore, the research is valid, as I only analyse elements that are related to ethnic identity.

4.2.2 Analysis of Media Footage

² Except for *Russian Woman*, which does not have a music video

In addition to the analysis of the lyrics, music video and live performance, I analysed the social dimension of the singers' participation in the Eurovision Song Contest, by looking at media publications from the lead-up to their final performance. The focus of the media analysis lied on the themes that were not directly visible in the song's lyrics or performance, such as the artist's personal background. Due to the scope of this thesis, and the availability of content, I limited myself to footage that was available online. The collected media footage included news articles, interviews with news outlets and eurovision fan blogs, videos from the national broadcaster and the official Eurovision channel on YouTube, and appearances in general television shows. The majority of the collected data dated from the period between February or March, after the release of the song, and May, when the contest was held, of the respective year. However, I complemented the available media footage with earlier interviews, to gather background information on the singer's identity. I divided the collected data into several different themes, such as ethnic identity and intersectionality, language or norms and values, based on the content of the footage.

Reliability and validity

The backgrounds of the participants in the ESC are heterogeneous, and it is therefore important to create a purposeful selection of singers who perform ethnic identity during their participation. By analysing not one, but several different elements of ethnic identity, I portrayed a full image. The validity of the research can be guaranteed, as I included a variety of sources, such as interviews, news articles, and documentaries.

4.3 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The three cases that I analysed for this study are very diverse, and therefore, a multiple case-study provides much freedom to adjust the analysis to the collected data. This means that each case can be analysed in a slightly different way, but that it is still possible to draw an overall conclusion. Nevertheless, narrowing down the amount of analysed data remains arbitrary. Due to the available resources, the analysis of data was limited to my own language knowledge, which means that interviews in Dutch, English and Italian were analysed in its original form, whereas interviews in Russian were excluded, or analysed based on translated articles.

5 Results

In this chapter, I analyse the results of the three case-studies. Each paragraph includes one case, for which I first look at the lyrics, music video (if available) and live performance of each song. In the second part of each paragraph, I analyse the media footage regarding the participant.

5.1 Mahmood – Soldi

5.1.1 Analysis of the Lyrics, Music Video and Live Performance

Lyrics

According to Mahmood, *Soldi* is a personal story, in which he sings about growing up without a father (Ling, 2019). In the first verse, the lyrics frame the image of a hot day in the suburbs, where Mahmood assures his mother that he will come home. Although Mahmood does not address this line in interviews, it is possible that he is referring to his own suburb of Gratosoglio (Rai, 2019).

In periferia fa molto caldo

It is warm in the suburbs

Mamma stai tranquilla sto arrivando

Mum, stay calm, I am coming

In the second part of the verse, Mahmood introduces his father as a liar, referring to him in third-person (“he”). He describes him as someone who drinks champagne during Ramadan, and smokes shisha while asking Mahmood how he is doing. In several news articles, these lyrics are pointed out, as they relate to Mahmood’s Egyptian background (Jadda, 2019; Carlo, 2019).

Te la prenderai per un bugiardo

You will be disappointed by a liar

(...)

Beve champagne sotto Ramadan

(...)

Fuma narghilè mi chiede come va

Mi chiede come va, come va, come va

(...)

He drinks champagne during Ramadan

(...)

He smokes shisha, he asks me how I'm doing

He asks me «How are you doing?» «How are you doing?» «How are you doing?»

The song then enters the pre-chorus, where Mahmood does not refer to his father in third-person anymore, but directly sings to him, and describes a general feeling of insecurity.

Sai già come va, come va, come va

*Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi
fregherai*

*Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora
so cosa sei*

*È difficile stare al mondo quando perdi
l'orgoglio*

Lasci casa in un giorno

*You already know how things are going, how
things are going, how things are going.*

*I think faster trying to figure out whether
tomorrow you will fool me*

*I got no time to clear things up, because
only now I found out what you are*

*Being alive it's not easy when you lose your
pride*

You leave home out of the blue

Then, in the chorus, Mahmood asks whether his dad misses him, or only thinks about money, repeating the song title throughout the chorus. In interviews, Mahmood explained that the concept of money is not only material, but also the cause of a created distance (Noisey Italia, 2019), and talked about its effect on family relationships (Jadda, 2019).

Dimmi se

Pensavi solo ai soldi, soldi

Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi

You, tell me whether

You only thought about money, money

As if I have had any money, money

Dimmi se ti manco o te ne fotti, fotti

*Tell me whether you miss me or you don't
give a damn*

In the second verse of the song, Mahmood still sings towards his dad, but rather focuses on his mother's point of view. Here, he addresses the topic of unfaithfulness, referring to the fact that his father is hiding the truth.

Ciò che devi dire non l'hai detto

Tradire è una pallottola nel petto

Prendi tutta la tua carità

Menti a casa ma lo sai che lo sa

You haven't told yet what you had to tell

Betrayal is a bullet in the chest

Keep all your mercy to yourself

*You keep lying at home but you know that
she knows*

During the bridge of the song, Mahmood sings a few lines of the song in Arabic, quoting words that his father said to him as a child (Serafini, 2019). These lines are then accompanied by Italian lyrics, which express Mahmood's doubt about his father's words. The section is concluded by the line "I – from you – did not want any money", where he once again refers to the song title, and its meaning.

Waladi waladi habibi ta3ala hina

Mi dicevi giocando giocando con aria fiera

Waladi waladi habibi sembrava vera

La voglia, la voglia di tornare come prima

Io da te non ho voluto soldi

«My son, my son, darling, come over here»

*You used to tell me while playing, looking
proud*

«My son, my son, darling», it looked real

*Your wish, your wish to bring things back to
what they were*

I – from you – didn't want any money...

Mahmood then sings the pre-chorus and chorus again, with slightly alternated lyrics. Here, he makes one more reference to someone who is leaving, and directly refers to his father for the first time.

*Laschi la città ma nessuno lo sa
Ieri eri qua ora dove sei, papà*

*You leave the city without anybody knowing
Yesterday you were here, where are you now,
dad?*

Music video

The music video of *Soldi* starts with the artist's name and song title, with a young boy standing in front of a blue screen. Once the verse starts, the image changes to Mahmood, who is seated in a living room and sings the lyrics to himself, without looking into the camera. The video shows different shots across the living room, of a small statue of Virgin Mary during the line during the line "Beve champagne sotto Ramadan" ("he drinks champagne during Ramadan"), cassettes and an old-school phone, which picture an image of Mahmood's own Christian background and upbringing in the 90s (Del Guercio, 2019). The image then changes to Mahmood, who stands in front of the same blue screen as in the intro, and the video alternates between a group of adult men, a woman in a veil, and the little boy, who is carried by the woman.

Figure 1

A statue of Virgin Mary is shown during the first verse in the music video



(Mahmood, 2019)

The second verse shows a couple that is arguing, and the little boy, who is observing them from the car. The video then switches to Mahmood, who is in the same car. In the second chorus, Mahmood is shown while his back is being tattooed. The same tattoo is shown bit later in the video, on the father's hand, when he bumps fists with the little boy. During the last section of the video, the different extras in the music video are shown again, and the video ends with a shot of the boy in his mother's arms, looking back (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

The boy is carried by a woman in the music video of Soldi



(Mahmood, 2019)

Live performance

During the live performance, Mahmood is joined by three dancers on stage. In an interview with Eurofestival Italia (2019), he explained that the concept of the live performance was to translate the idea behind the music video (ESCXTRA, 2019), and that the dancers are representing the father, or the so-called “other side of the medal”, while Mahmood himself represents the child (Eurofestival Italia, 2019).

The performance starts with Mahmood, who walks to the front of the stage, and the three dancers who enter the stage from the side. In the pre-chorus, an image of Mahmood’s head is shown on the LED screen, which then splits into two. Then, the text “it hurts to be alive / when you lose your pride” is shown on the screen (see Figure 3), which is a loose translation of the Italian lyrics. The image changes into an outline of Mahmood’s head, in which the boy from the music video is shown.

Figure 3

An English translation of the lyrics is displayed on screen



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2019)

Once the chorus starts, burning money bills are shown on the LED screen, as well as a clapping animation, which corresponds to the rhythmic clapping that is part of the chorus. In the second verse, the woman from the music video is shown, followed by the same graphics from the first verse. During the bridge, the dancers walk past Mahmood, and then make pulling movements. The boy now faces a grown-up man, while the dancers cower (see Figure 4), and the text “it hurts to be alive” appears on the LED screen again. In the last chorus, the graphics disappear, and there is a full focus on Mahmood and his dancers, with some brief cuts to the audience. During the very last line, the text “money can’t buy your love” appears on the LED screen.

Figure 4

Mahmood's dancers cower, while the boy and a grown-up man are shown on the LED screen



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2019)

5.1.2 Analysis of Media Footage After Mahmood's Victory at the Sanremo Festival

Ethnic identity

After winning the Sanremo Festival, Mahmood's ethnic identity was extensively discussed in the media. Soon after the broadcast, right-wing politician Matteo Salvini tweeted how he would have preferred runner-up Ultimo to win the festival, wondering whether *Soldi* was really the best Italian song.

#Mahmood..... mah.....

La canzone italiana più bella!?

Io avrei scelto #Ultimo, voi che dite??

#Mahmood..... meh.....

The best Italian song?!?

I would have chosen #Ultimo, what do you say??

(Matteo Salvini, 2019)

Various news outlets reported on the tweet (Giuffrida, 2019; Montalto Monella, 2019; Hawlin, 2019; Ghiglione, 2019; Carlo, 2019), and Ultimo, who was the expected winner of the festival, expressed his discontent as well (Hawlin, 2019). More criticism came from the tv-persona Maria Giovanna Maglie, who argued that progressive people were overrepresented in the Sanremo Festival, and that Mahmood was voted as the winner by the jury to promote migration (Ghiglione, 2019). The right-wing newspaper *Libero* used the headline *From Modugno to Mohammed*, referring to the traditional Italian singer Domenico Modugno, who won the festival multiple times in the 1950s and 1960s, and the Islam prophet Mohammed (Ghiglione, 2019). Furthermore, minister of Economic Development, Labour and Social Policies Luigi di Maio called Mahmood's victory "an abyss between the people and the elite" (Ghiglione, 2019).

Chalkley (2019), who analysed the uproar in an article for the eurovision blog *ESCInsight*, pointed out that the word which stood out in Salvini's tweet was "Italian", questioning Mahmood's background and song. Although Mahmood was not the first artist with a migratory background to have won the Sanremo Festival³, *La Stampa* journalist Venegoni argued that the timing of Mahmood's victory played a role in the controversy, as the migrant crisis had been an important topic in the public debate in the years prior (Ghiglione, 2019). In addition, she stated how the Sanremo Festival had always mirrored Italian society, but that the festival was rather progressive in a conservative country (Ghiglione, 2019). Therefore, Venegoni argued that Mahmood, who did not look Italian and did not have a Italian sounding artist name, caused controversy (Ghiglione, 2019).

In an interview with media platform Noisey Italia (2019), Mahmood expressed his displeasure about the fact that his identity was being used for "political propaganda", and reminded the interviewer that he often had to repeat the fact that he was born in Milan. Mahmood then

³ Previous winners of the Sanremo Festival with a migratory background include Ermal Meta (2018) and Anna Oxa (1989, 1999), both Albanian

explained that he accepted criticism on his work, but not “fake news about him as a person”. In another interview with the newspaper *La Repubblica*, Mahmood mentioned that he was thankful for the Press Jury to vote for his song, but also addressed its commercial success, and how that would not have been possible if people had not liked it (Noisey Italia, 2019; Repubblica, 2019). Regarding the tweet by Salvini, Mahmood mentioned that his ethnic background had never been a question for him (Giordano & Rio, 2019), and elaborated on his words in the interview with Noisey Italia:

Eh, questa cosa, diciamo, non è che mi faccia molto piacere, anche perché non ha proprio senso. Io comunque ho ripetuto sbagliate volte che sono nato e cresciuto a Milano. Io sono nato a Mangiagalli Center⁴. Sono italiano al 100%.

Well, this thing, let's say, it's not that I am very pleased, also because it doesn't really makes sense. In any case, I have repeated many times that I was born and raised in Milan. I was born in Mangiagalli Center. I am 100% Italian.

(Noisey Italia, 2019)

His identification as Italian and Milanese was supported by the mayor of Milan, who announced that Gratosoglio, Milan and Italy had won the Sanremo Festival (Rai, 2019). In the interview to Noisey Italia (2019), Mahmood discussed how Milan felt home to him, and how it formed inspiration for his music as well. Furthermore, Mahmood explained that he did not see himself as a symbol for other Italians with a migratory background (Serafini, 2019), as for him, there was no question to being Italian, since he grew up with classmates from many different countries (Montalto Monella, 2019; The Local Italy, 2019). For him, this “new Italy” was thus not new:

Sono cresciuto già in una classe che era molto mista. Eravamo giovani di diverse nazionalità, sin dagli inizi. Quindi, per me era quella la normalità, capito? Non ho mai percepito la cosa del razzismo perché non c'era, non c'è mai stata.

⁴ A hospital in Milan

I grew up in a class that was very mixed. We were youngsters from different nationalities, since the beginning. So, for me, this was normal, you understand? I never perceived the thing about racism, because it didn't exist, it never existed.
(La Repubblica, 2019)

Intersectionality: sexual identity

Although the topic of sexual identity was not discussed in the song, it is a topic that briefly appeared in some interviews, and followed Mahmood's view against pigeonholing (Noisey Italia, 2019). Despite the fact that Mahmood had never made any official statements about his sexual orientation (Del Guercio, 2019), he explained in the interview to Noisey Italia (2019) that he did not like the focus on his sexuality. Similar to his response regarding his ethnic background, Mahmood explained how he grew up in a mixed generation with an open mind, and that asking someone about their sexual identity implied that there was a difference, while there should not be any (Noisey Italia, 2019).

Norms and values

The controversy surrounding Mahmood's participation in the Eurovision Song Contest was not limited to his ethnic background, but also related to the topic that he sung about. In particular, Mahmood sang about elements that went against traditional Italian values, such as references to his father's Muslim background (Roshan Lall, 2019), despite being a Christian himself (Del Guercio, 2019), and the topic of broken homes (Hawlin, 2019). In a blog post on *The Guardian*, Hawlin (2019) described how Mahmood did "everything that the conservatives dislike", such as singing in Arabic and about Ramadan, and addressing gay rights in both Italy and Egypt.

The public dissatisfaction could also be traced back to the song's genre, which pictured the expectations of the public regarding Italian music. Although Mahmood did not see himself as a rapper (Noisey Italia, 2019), *Soldi* was considered as a "rap song" or "trap song" by some (Roshan Lall, 2019; Ghiglione, 2019), with some R'n'B and Middle Eastern elements (Roshan Lall, 2019). Although rap music was not uncommon in the Sanremo Festival by 2019, *Soldi* was highly different from the traditional *canzone italiana* that the Sanremo Festival is famous

for, and usually wins the contest (Ghiglione, 2019). Nevertheless, Ghiglione (2019) pointed out that rap and hip-hop music were highly popular in the current music charts in Italy at the time that Mahmood won the Sanremo Festival, made by both local and international musicians.

5.2 Jeangu Macrooy – Birth of a New Age

5.2.1 Analysis of the Lyrics, Music Video and Live Performance

Lyrics

In various interviews, Macrooy described his song as an ode to people who stand up for themselves and ask for respect (Wiwibloggs, 2021c), a theme that is present throughout the lyrics. In the first verse, the phrase “your rhythm is rebellion”, which is repeated several times throughout the song, is introduced, and is supported by a choir each time that it is sung. In a blog post on the eurovision fan website *Eurostory*, Van De Vendel (2021) discussed whether the lyric can be interpreted as a mantra, and linked the words to the recent covid-19 pandemic, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement and increase of LGBTQ representation in media and film. In an interview with radio host Bart Arends, Jeangu Macrooy confirmed this concept (NPO Radio 2, 2021). Furthermore, the first verse includes a direct reference to the Surinamese abolitionist movement, where three slaves, who caused a large protest fire in the year 1832, were executed, but are now considered national heroes (Oomen, 2021).

*They spat on your crown
And they poisoned your ground
(Your rhythm is rebellion)
They burned your heroes at the stake*

Then, in the pre-chorus, the lyrics turn towards a more positive message, implying that the voices of heroes will not be forgotten, and mentioning how it is the “birth of a new age”. While Macrooy has mentioned that the song was inspired by various movements world-wide, Oomen (2021) noticed that the entry is part of a trend to revive Surinamese culture among young adults in Suriname, or of Surinamese descent in the Netherlands.

*But your voice will echo all their names
This ain't the end, no!
It's the birth of a new age*

The song then moves to the chorus, which includes the first lines sung in Srnan. In an interview with the contest's host Nikkie de Jager, Jeangu explained that he decided to sing in Srnan to strengthen the message of the song (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a).

Yu no man broko mi

You cannot break me

Yu no man broko mi

You cannot break me

Yu no man broko, broko mi

You cannot break, break me

In the second verse, Macrooy continues to build on the themes of suppression, hope and power. He once again refers to the limitation of freedom, as Gods and thoughts are disregarded. Similar to the first verse, however, the lyrics move towards the power that a person has to end the suppression, once again ending with the lyric "Birth of a new age".

They buried your gods

They imprisoned your thoughts

(Your rhythm is rebellion)

They tried to drain you of your faith

But you are the rage that melts the chains

This ain't the end, no!

It's the birth of a new age

The song immediately moves on to the bridge, where the song's theme is visible once more. The perspective now changes from the second-person point of view ("you") to first-person ("we"), and Macrooy expresses his pride to be the descendent of those born in resilience.

We are the fruit

Adorning the legacy

Of every forgotten revolutionary
Born in resilience
Proud like a lion
We are the birth of a new age

The song ends with a repetition of the chorus, which now contains the following lyrics:

<i>Yu no man broko mi</i>	<i>You cannot break me</i>
<i>Mi na afu sensi</i>	<i>I am half a cent</i>

While the line “Yu no man broko mi” is once again repeated, the full chorus refers to the Surinamese idiom *Mi na afusensi, no wan man e broko mi*, which can be translated as “I am half a cent, no one can break me” (Wiwibloggs, 2021b). The origin of the idiom is the Surinamese half a cent, which was the country’s smallest coin in the 19th century (Wiwibloggs, 2021c). In interviews, Macrooy explained the lyric as “you should not underestimate me, even though I am small” (Van As, 2021; Wiwibloggs, 2021c; Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a), which matches the song’s themes of suppression and power.

Music video

The music video of *Birth of a New Age* includes multiple references to the song’s lyrics and overall theme, and the focus on ethnic identity can be seen in different aspects of the music video. First of all, the music video is directed by Curaçao-born filmmaker Kevin Osepa (Van As, 2021), and all extras that appear in the video are people of colour. The video was recorded at the Rijksmuseum (the national museum of the Netherlands) and the Tropenmuseum (Museum of the Tropes) in Amsterdam, which are two museums that, until recently, focused on the glory of the Dutch Golden Age, including the former Dutch colonies (Oomen, 2021). It was thus not a coincidental choice to record the music video in these museums, as Macrooy explains that, behind the glory, there is the untold story of the colonies, and thereby his own ancestors (Van As, 2021).

Throughout the video, the images switch between Jeangu Macrooy, who stands in different places across the museum, and the extras, who perform different acts of Surinam culture. Towards the end of the first verse, the music video shows the ritual of a *winti*, where a man applies blue wax to another man's chest (see Figure 5). In interviews, Macrooy elaborated on the symbolic and spiritual meaning of the colour blue, and how a *winti* offers protection in traditional Suriname culture (Wiwibloggs, 2021c; Oomen, 2021).

Figure 5

A winti in the music video of Birth of a New Age



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021b)

During the first chorus of the song, Macrooy looks up to three female extras who are wearing a *koto*. These colourful dresses have a symbolic meaning, as they were originally worn by slaves to hide their silhouettes from slave owners, but have now become traditional Surinamese clothing (Van As, 2021; Oomen, 2021). More acts of Surinamese and afro culture are performed throughout the second verse, such as braiding hair, or simply posing. The latter

is explained by Macrooy as the director's idea to create portraits of Afrocentric culture in the national museum, making the invisible visible (Van As, 2021).

The music video continues to show different shots of Macrooy and the extras, and builds towards a climax during the bridge of the song, where four women are walking around a small bath with flower petals. The bath is then poured over Macrooy's head, performing a Surinamese *wasi*, which is a symbol of rinsing oneself, and thereby symbolizes the birth of a new age (Van As, 2021).

The video moves on to the final chorus, which Macrooy described as "euphoric" (Van As, 2021). All performers from the music video, including Macrooy himself, are wearing colourful clothing and dancing in a style that is similar to krumping, a dancing style that was popularized by the black community in the United States as a peaceful form of protest (Goba, 2020). The music video concludes with another shot of the water bath, with four of the extras kneeling and sitting in front of them (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

A wasi in the music video of Birth of a New Age



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021b)

Live performance

Description of the performance

On stage, Jeangu Macrooy is accompanied by two backing singers and a dancer (Wiwibloggs, 2021c). The live performance starts with the graphic of a grey wall on the LED screen, which slowly cracks. The camera then moves downwards, to Jeangu and his backing singers behind him. During the end of the first verse, singing the line “birth of a new age”, the dancer appears in front of Jeangu, dancing in krumping style. The dancer remains the centre of the performance as the chorus starts, with Macrooy and his dancers standing still, lifting one arm above their head. Behind them, the grey wall now shows the song’s lyrics “yu no man broko mi”, switching back and forth between Sranan and the English “you can’t break me”, as Macrooy repeats the line (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Jeangu performs the first chorus of Birth of a New Age



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021c)

As the second verse starts, rays of sunlight are visible through the cracks of the wall. The dancer remains the main focus of the camera, but is now dancing on a smaller catwalk stage. Towards the end of the second verse, Macrooy and the backing singers walk towards the catwalk as well, and the four of them are reunited. During the last part of the song, the lyrics “yu no man broko mi” and “you can’t break me” appear on the screen once again, but now to a multiple-coloured background. In interviews, Macrooy explained that the performance’s change from grey to colour represents the theme of the song; while the grey wall represents the feeling of suppression, the colours are a celebration (Wiwibloggs, 2021c). The performance ends with the four performers holding their arm lifted above their head, in the same pose as earlier in the performance (see Figure 8). Macrooy thanks the audience in English and Sranan, by saying: “Thank you Europe, thank you Netherlands! Sranan! Sranan! Grantangi [thank you]!”.

Figure 8

The end pose of Birth of a New Age



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021c)

Clothing

Macrooy is dressed in blue, and wears a necklace with a round hanger. When discussing the outfit in an interview, Macrooy explained how this necklace represents the half a cent that is mentioned in the lyrics (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a). He described the outfits as Surinamese, but with a modern interpretation (Wiwibloggs, 2021b). In a later interview with Wiwibloggs (2021a), Macrooy explained that his outfit was created by two designers, one of which from the Netherlands, and the other from Suriname. Macrooy described it as “two worlds coming together”, just as Suriname has been “a country where people from different cultures have come together”.

Regarding the colour blue, Macrooy explained that he chose to wear the colour on purpose, due to its spiritual meaning. The outfits of the dancer and backing singers included references to the different cultures of Suriname as well, such as tribal heritage, and Chinese and Creole inspired pieces. This is a reference to Macrooy’s own background, as he does not only have Afro-Surinamese heritage, but Chinese, native-American and European ancestors as well (Wiwibloggs, 2021c).

5.2.2 Analysis of Media Footage After the Release of Birth of a New Age

Ethnic identity

The topic of ethnic identity is present across different interviews given by Macrooy. In an interview with ATV-Suriname (2021), Macrooy mentioned how he felt the energy from the people in Suriname, that he took Suriname everywhere he went, and considered the country as the foundation of whom he was. He concluded his words by saying that he was proud to showcase his Surinamese identity in one of the biggest shows in the world.

When talking about the Netherlands, one narrative that appeared is that of freedom and opportunities. In a documentary about his preparations for the ESC, Macrooy described his career as a long journey, mentioning how he had organized a charity concert to finance his studies in the Netherlands, and how his career launched after releasing his first Extended Play (Van As, 2021). Furthermore, he explained how performing at Eurovision in Rotterdam felt

like home to him, as he had been playing in concert halls across the country (Eurovoix, 2021). When asked during an interview what tourists should visit in Rotterdam, Macrooy linked the Netherlands to Suriname, mentioning the multicultural demographic of the country, and suggested Surinamese restaurants as a culinary tip (Wiwibloggs, 2021b).

Intersectionality: Racial and sexual identity

In addition to his ethnic background, the identities of race and sexuality played a role in Macrooy's interviews as well. When asked if the song was about the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement, Macrooy phrased his answers differently on different occasions. In an interview with eurovision website *Wiwibloggs* (2021b), conducted in April 2021, he neither confirmed, nor denied the claim, and mentioned how the song is rather about general movements from people who feel they have been silenced for too long, saying: "we deserve to claim our space, we deserve our space". In later interviews, however, Macrooy specifically mentioned the BLM movement, but continued to mention that other movements had inspired him as well (Eurovoix, 2021; Van As, 2021). In particular, Macrooy mentioned the LGBTQ community, which he called a "celebration of courage", and thereby linked the topic of his song to both his racial and sexual identity (Wiwibloggs, 2021b).

In an interview from 2020, Macrooy explained how he came out as gay to his family at age 17, and described his move to the Netherlands at age 20 as an escape from the negative views on homosexuality in Suriname, referring to the country's macho culture at the time (AVROTROS, 2020). He described how he was openly gay once leaving the plane, to which his brother, with whom he was doing the interview, jokingly replied: "escape from Narnia".

Toen ik naar Nederland kwam, voelde het veilig. Ik ging naar het land waar het homohuwelijk als eerste mogelijk was, ik ging naar het land van de Pride. (...). Ik stapte op het vliegtuig, wetende dat ik dat deel van mezelf eindelijk helemaal kon omarmen en delen met andere mensen. Vanaf het moment dat ik uit het vliegtuig stapte, was ik eigenlijk uit de kast.

When I came to the Netherlands, it felt safe. I went to the country that was the first to legalize same-sex marriage, I went to the country of the Pride. (...). I boarded the

plane, knowing that I would finally be able to embrace that part of myself, and share it with others. From the moment I got off the plane, I basically came out.

(AVROTROS, 2020)

In the same interview, Macrooy wondered how it would have been to grow up in an environment in which more people were openly gay, and argued that one's environment dictates an individual how to act. He applied this to his own situation, by wondering whether his expression would have been different if he had grown up in a more tolerant environment (AVROTROS, 2020). Later, Macrooy elaborated on the impact of his move to the Netherlands on his sexual identity. He described how his first visit to the Netherlands as a young adult, a year before moving, gave him a sense of freedom to explore romantic relationships, and motivated him to pursue a career in the Netherlands (Van As, 2021).

Language

As Macrooy sang in both English and Sranan during his eurovision entry, the latter is addressed in multiple interviews, in which Macrooy explained how the language has a long history, and expresses his pride to show “the beauty of the language” (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a). He also mentioned that he found it important to show the language to people who had never heard of Sranan before (Eurovoix, 2021). In the interview with ATV-Suriname (2021), he elaborated on the symbolic meaning of the song, mentioning how he was a “descendant of survivors”, and used the language to strengthen his message. Elaborating on the decision to sing in Sranan, Macrooy stated that he was simply spending time in the music studio, while thinking about his heritage and who he was as a person. He then thought of the Surinamese idiom that forms the chorus, which deals with the topic of underestimation (Wiwibloggs, 2021b).

While Macrooy received positive feedback from the Surinamese community in the Netherlands (Oomen, 2021; Van As, 2021), the Surinam lyrics also caused humorous comments online (Oomen, 2021; RTL Nieuws, 2021). Soon after the release, many listeners noticed that the Sranan lyrics sounded similar to “you are my broccoli”, or the Dutch words “doe mij maar broccoli” (“just give me broccoli”) (RTL Nieuws, 2021; NOS Nieuws, 2021b).

Some controversy aroused after supermarket Albert Heijn advertised broccoli on Instagram, accompanied by the text “Ook zo’n trek gekregen na het horen van ons Songfestivalliedje?” (“Are you hungry too after hearing our eurovision song?”) (Albert Heijn, 2021). Members of the Surinamese community responded to the advertisement by pointing out the history of Sranan, and at the fact that the language, which had been forbidden to speak during the slavery era, was now once again ridiculed (Oomen, 2021; NOS Nieuws, 2021b). Macrooy did not publicly reply to the controversy surrounding the advertisement in particular, but mentioned in interviews that he saw the jokes as an opportunity to discuss the meaning behind the lyrics (De Telegraaf, 2021).

5.3 Manizha – Russian Woman

5.3.1 Analysis of the Lyrics and Live Performance

Lyrics

According to Manizha, *Russian Woman* is about gender equality, and the self-awareness of Russian women throughout history (The Moscow Times, 2021). In the first verse, Manizha describes how she is standing in a field, and does not know how to escape. While she first asks for a helping hand, she then sends a call to action, telling other girls not to wait any longer.

<i>Поле поле поле</i>	<i>Fields, fields, fields</i>
<i>Я ж мала</i>	<i>I'm so small</i>
<i>(...)</i>	<i>(...)</i>
<i>Как пройти по полю из огня</i>	<i>How do You cross a field thru the fire?</i>
<i>Как пройти по полю если ты одна?</i>	<i>How do you cross the field if you're alone?</i>
<i>(...)</i>	<i>(...)</i>
<i>Ждать ли чьей-то ручечки, ручки?</i>	<i>Should I wait for a helpful hand?</i>
<i>(...)</i>	<i>(...)</i>
<i>Кто подаст мне ручку девочки?</i>	<i>Who will stretch out for me, girls?</i>
<i>(...)</i>	<i>(...)</i>
<i>А что ждать?</i>	<i>But what's the wait?</i>
<i>Встала и пошла.</i>	<i>Stand up, let's go!</i>

While the lyrics in the first verse do not include any specific references to ethnic identity, several eurovision-related blogs have linked the lyrics to the history of Russian women. Ten Veen (2021) explained how Russian women were forced to work on the fields in the 19th century, whereas Boomkens (2021) linked the first verse of *Russian Woman* to Manizha's own background, as she escaped her birth country Tajikistan, "through fire", to Russia.

In the chorus, the song switches to English. Manizha now specifically refers to Russian women for the first time, singing how they are strong enough to bounce against walls.

Every Russian Woman

Needs to know

You're strong enough to bounce against the wall

In the second verse of the song, the focus moves to the beauty standards that are expected from women. Manizha describes how she is being judged about her clothing choices, body weight, and life decisions. Besides, the topic of a broken family is briefly mentioned, addressing the judgement of growing up without a father. Ten Veen (2021) linked these lyrics to the history of Russian women, as many were left without a husband or father during and after the First and Second World War. In the last part of the verse, Manizha discredits the comments, by saying that she loves herself.

Тебе уж за 30

Ало? Где же дети?

Ты в целом красива

Но вот бы похудеть бы

Надень подлиннее

Надень покороче

Росла без отца

(...)

Мы с вами не стадо

(...)

Я вас не виню

А себя я чертовски люблю

You're 30!

Hello? Where are your kids?

You are cute overall

But should lose some weight

Wear something longer

Wear something shorter

Oh you grew up without a father?

(...)

We're not a flock

(...)

I don't blame you a bit

But damn do I like myself

The topic of family is again present in the song's bridge, where the lyrics mention the theme of fight, similar to the first verse. Furthermore, Manizha connects the lyrics to broken families.

Сын без отца

Дочь без отца

Но сломанной FAMILY

Не сломать меня

Boy without a father

Girl with no dad

But this broken family

Can't break me

Live performance

Description of the performance

On the stage in Rotterdam, Manizha is accompanied by four backing singers, two men and two women, who stand around her in a squared shape. The performance starts with a zoom-in of Manizha's large dress, which includes a top part with different types of fabric (see Figure 9). Manizha moves around the stage in the dress, before changing into a red overall.

Figure 9

Manizha's dress during the performance of Russian Woman



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021d)

During the chorus, several texts in English can be read on the LED screen behind Manizha, such as “be creative”, “break the wall”, and “make a change”. The backing singers are now visible as well, and have the same type of fabric around their microphone stands as the dress. During the second verse, the camera turns around Manizha and her backing singers, while the LED screen behind them projects different illustrations of women. In an interview with *ESCInsight*, Manizha explained that these images are the work of Natalia Goncharova and Aleksandra Exter, two female Russian artists from the 20th century, who combined traditional and avant-garde elements in their work, and were not accepted in their home country (Chalkley, 2021).

During the bridge, Manizha and her backing singers all raise their arms and, and flames are lit on the stage. The LED screen now shows another illustration, this time made by the modern Russian artist Natalia Klimova, of a woman wearing a *kokoshnik*, which is a traditional Russian headdress, and fighting horses (Chalkley, 2021) (see Figure 10). During the instrumental break and second chorus, more texts are shown in English. Manizha repeats the phrase “don’t be afraid” several times, and the camera switches back and forth between her and the backing singers.

Figure 10

The work of artist Natalia Klimova, including a kokoshnik, is shown during the bridge



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021d)

The bridge of the song is repeated once again, and now Manizha and her backing singers turn their backs to the audience, facing the screen, where various women are singing along to the song (see Figure 11). In the interview with *ESCInsight*, Manizha explained that these are women from different ages and regions in Russia, often active as activists, and that they are women that inspire her (Chalkley, 2021). While the number of women included on the screen multiplies, Manizha turns back to the audience, and kneels down.

Figure 11

Manizha and her backing singers sing towards the “Russian Woman”



(Eurovision Song Contest, 2021d)

The performance is concluded with some phrases that are not officially part of the song: “Are you ready for change? Because we are, we are the change”. In the end pose, Manizha and her backing singers all face the audience again, and the images of the women form the words “Russian Woman”.

Clothing

During the performance, Manizha wears a large dress with different types of fabric, as well as a red overall with the words *ПАЛИИ WYMAH* on the back, the Cyrillicized version of the song title. In interviews, Manizha explained that she asked women from different parts of Russia to send fabric from their region, to create a dress that supports Russian women, as she wanted “every Russian woman to be on stage” (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e). The use of fabric is

furthermore a symbolic choice, as embroidery is seen as a female field, which is looked down upon (Chalkley, 2021).

The red overall that Manizha wears under the dress is a reference to the working class of Russian women “who are always hard working” (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e), and also includes a piece of Tajik embroidery on the chest (Chalkley, 2021). Besides, Manizha considered the overall to be a reference to her own family, and her mother who had many low-wage jobs after coming to Russia (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e). Lastly, she explained in an interview to *Wiwibloggs* how the headband that she is wearing is a reference to the country during the era of the Soviet Union, where many women wore headbands when working in the factory, similar to the well-known American *we can do it*-poster (Wiwibloggs, 2021a).

5.3.2 Analysis of Media Footage After Manizha’s Victory at the Russian National Final

Ethnic identity

When asked about her heritage in interviews, Manizha often stressed the multicultural aspect of Russian identity (Wiwibloggs, 2021a; ESCXTRA, 2021). In a 2019 interview, Manizha identified as a citizen of the world, who is both Tajik and Slavic (Deschamps, 2021). However, during an interview with *Wiwibloggs* (2021a), prior to her participation at the ESC, she said: “I was born in Tajikistan, but I believe that I am a Russian woman”. She then argued that every woman in Russia is multicultural, which is the country’s strength (Wiwibloggs, 2021a). In some cases, Manizha briefly referred to her Tajik background, for instance when she told in an interview that she only received a Russian passport at age 14 (Wiwibloggs, 2021a), and therefore mentioned the Swedish contestant Tusse as her “12 points⁵” of the contest, explaining that they understood each other, as both once were refugees (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e).

After winning the national final in Russia, Manizha received much criticism which concerned the song’s themes of stereotypes and traditional values, in particular due to Manizha’s own migratory background (Chalkley, 2021; Abbasova, 2021; Annayev, D. & AFP, 2021; Simon,

⁵ During the voting, countries award 12 points to their favourite entry, and the phrase has therefore become characteristic for the Eurovision Song Contest

2021). When replying to the controversy, Manizha explained that she was surprised by the large amount of negativity, and wondered what a Russian should look like, referring to the comments that she could not represent the country due to her ethnicity (Wiwibloggs, 2021a).

Although Manizha mentioned in interviews that she was harmed by the comments about her ethnic background and the song's message (BBC News, 2021; Wiwibloggs, 2021a), she uploaded a 3-minute video in which she mocked the accusations of not being Russian and having bought votes, by appearing in a blonde wig, and inviting a researcher to find out if she was actually Russian enough (Gallagher, 2021; M A N I Z H A, 2021). A reply to the negative commentary could also be seen in the live performance itself, by the different women who sing along towards the ends of the song. Manizha explained how, after receiving much negativity, she wanted to show that Russia “is a country of many nationalities and ethnicities” (ESCXTRA, 2021).

Intersectionality: gender identity

Another type of identity that played a defining factor in Manizha's career is gender identity. In various interviews, the singer mentioned how she found it a big responsibility to bring a message, and that the message was not only limited to Russian women, but “that every woman should know that they are strong and have a choice, and not to live up to stereotypes” (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e). She mentioned that women “do not look like barbies, but are hard workers”, elaborating on the worker's outfit on stage (Wiwibloggs, 2021a).

Manizha called her fight for feminism and equality the “story of her life” (ESCXTRA, 2021). Here, she referred to her personal story, telling how her family came to Russia as refugees (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021e), and how she was excluded by other children because of her background (Wiwibloggs, 2021a). Moreover, Manizha linked it to gender identity, by mentioning her grandmother, who was one of the first women in Tajikistan to take off her headscarf, and which led Manizha to adapt her grandmother's last name Sangin as her official name (Boomkens, 2021). Moreover, Manizha discussed how her father disapproved her wish to become a singer as a Muslim woman (Boomkens, 2021), and how a producer in her teenage years asked her to change her clothing style, as well as her hair colour and stage name, which would be too Muslim (ESCXTRA, 2021).

Norms and values

The theme of norms and values is strongly present in the lyrics, and throughout the song, Manizha sings about the expectations from women, as well as traditional family values. In an interview to BBC News (2021), she explained how people, and in particular girls, are given advice and expectations from a young age, and that it is difficult to fight against these stereotypes. Regarding the tone of the song, Manizha explained that she did not want to write a “dramatic” song, and opted for ironic lyrics instead (Wiwibloggs, 2021a). The “call to action”, as it is called by one interviewer, is present in the bridge of the song as well, and includes a reference to traditional family values. About this, Manizha argued that growing up in a broken family does not mean that one will become a broken person (ESCXTRA, 2021).

Simon (2021) explained the controversy over the song’s lyrics and Manizha’s background by quoting Putin’s view on multiculturalism, and his argument that unity in Russian society exists due to its traditional values, in contrary to the west, where the focus lies on individualism. Among the critics of the song’s message was the controversial politician Vladimir Zhirinovksy, who argued that the song was “against Russian women” (Ibragimova, 2021), whereas the website *Veteranskie Vest* requested an investigation to find out whether the song contained “illegal lyrics” (Annayev, D. & AFP, 2021; Asia-Plus, 2021). Furthermore, the Union of Orthodox Women argued that the lyrics would undermine traditional family values, and promote hatred against men (Annayev, D. & AFP, 2021). At the same time, however, Manizha received support from bloggers and activists, among others, who supported the message of the song (Simon, 2021; Meduza, 2021).

In her country of birth, opinions were similarly divided. While some depicted the song as “just noise”, others Tajiks described the lyrics as relatable (Ibragimova, 2021). When being asked about the conservative norms and values in Russian society, Manizha stated that the song is not “anti-Russian”, quoting the interviewer, but that she wanted to represent the Russia that she knows:

Listen, it’s not “anti-Russian”, I just want to represent the kind of Russia that I know. Because here, in Russia, I have a lot of people with the same mind and vision, you know what I mean? Russia is so big, and of course, there are so many

completely different types of people inside the country. But it's sad that, in the media, we are not representing a good side of our country. So, for me, it's an opportunity to represent this side of my country.
(ESCXTRA, 2021)

Elaborating on this in another interview, Manizha used the words “generous, open and bright” (The Moscow Times, 2021). Lastly, Manizha mentioned how the message of her song was not limited to Russia only, but that “every country needs a *Russian Woman*” (ESCXTRA, 2021).

6 Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to find out in what ways participants with a first or second generation migratory background perform ethnic identity during their participation at the Eurovision Song Contest. This was done by analysing three cases from Italy, the Netherlands and Russia. In this section, I discuss the results, based on the main aspects of Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model.

6.1 Expression of Ethnic Identity in the Lyrics, Music Video and Live Performance

One of the main findings in the lyrics, music videos and live performances is the use of language. All cases used more than one language in their entry, which follows the element of ethnic behaviour and practices from Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model (1992), as participants performed ethnic identity by switching between languages in specific situations. When looking at each case individually, it appears that the participants used language with different motivations. In the case of Jeangu Macrooy, he deliberately chose to showcase part of his ethnic identity (Eurovision Song Contest, 2021a), whereas Mahmood's choice to sing in Arabic was mostly personal, and intended as a reference to his childhood memory. Lastly, all singers made use of English phrases during the live performance. Although the participants did not elaborate on this choice during interviews, previous research about the Eurovision Song Contest showed that English is often used to appeal to a larger audience (Kitsios, 2013, p. 38).

Regarding the aspect of self-identification in Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model, The participants considered themselves part of different identity communities, and intersectionality, which is mentioned by Collins (1998) and Malcolm & Mendoza (2014), plays a role as well. First of all, Jeangu Macrooy and Manizha identified themselves as part of a larger community during their performance; Jeangu Macrooy identified as a member of both the Surinam and LGBTQ community through the lyrics, in which he identified as a descendant of those who fought in resilience, and a similar narrative can be found in *Russian Woman*. Here, Manizha first portrayed herself as someone who does not feel intimidated

anymore, and then referred to “every Russian woman”, which were the communities she identified herself with as well (Wiwibloggs, 2021a). Mahmood, on the other hand, did not picture himself as part of a community, but sang from a personal perspective. Although Mahmood identified as Italian in interviews (Rai, 2019; Noisey Italia, 2019), in the music video, he portrayed himself as a child of different cultures, with a father who smokes shisha, but in a house where Virgin Mary is displayed as well.

The aspect of affirmation and belonging is visible through clothing, albeit in different ways. In the case of Jeangu Macrooy, the main aim was to represent his ethnic identity on stage and in the music video, including a reference to the lyrics and the symbolic meaning of the colour blue. Manizha, on the other hand, used clothing as a way to express the diverse nature of the, in her eyes, national Russian identity. By showing different ethnicities in one country, she expressed her pride towards the national identity, despite the fact that she was not ethnically Russian.

Although Phinney’s Ethnic Identity Development model mentioned traditions as an expression of ethnic identity, this is only visible in the music video of *Birth of a New Age*, where a *winti* was performed, and the song’s title was depicted by a water bath. Instead, ethnic identity was mostly expressed in the visuals on the LED screen during the live performance. In *Birth of a New Age*, the transition from suppression to celebration could be seen, as the colours broke through a grey wall. Furthermore, Manizha included artistic works of Russian female artists and images of Russian women in her performance, to exhibit a specific image of her country that was unknown to the large public. When looking at Mahmood’s live performance, the focus once again lied on telling the personal story and the meaning of the song, rather than expressing ethnic or national identity.

The multiple use of language, clothing, and overall symbolism in the performances is in line with previous research about the ESC, which showed that countries use symbols to express their identity. As stated by Yair (2019), performers in the ESC have the choice to opt for an inclusive approach, or an approach where national identity is exhibited. This decision then has the ability to strengthen or to break old stereotypes. The three artists of this multiple case-study can be considered part of both categories, as they aimed to showcase a type of national identity which is not the traditional one, and expand the notion of national identity, to thereby break stereotypes. This is visible in Manizha’s *Russian Woman*, who shows the different ethnicities in Russia, and Macrooy’s performance, which showcases the identity and history

of a prominent minority community of the Netherlands. At the same time, each case has an inclusive approach by singing in English, or using English texts on the LED screen.

Although Kitsios (2013) argued that values and beliefs are not common in performances at the ESC (p. 52), a few occurrences could be found among the cases. Regarding the aspect of ethnic identity achievement, ethnic identity is often linked to the norms and values of national culture. In the case of Mahmood, the norms and values concern Christianity, and the topic of broken homes. Similar values can be found in *Russian Woman*, where Manizha sings about broken families in Russian society, as well as beauty standards for women.

6.2 Identity Approach in Media Appearances Surrounding the Performers' Participation in the Eurovision Song Contest

One main finding in the analysis of media footage is the contribution of media in the framing of the singer's identity. Mainly in the cases of Manizha and Mahmood, ethnic identity was portrayed by the media, rather than by the artist themselves. Regarding the way in which the artists identified themselves in interviews, Jeangu Macrooy called Suriname as the country that had formed him, whereas the Netherlands was mostly framed as the country of opportunities. Mahmood and Manizha, on the other hand, clearly expressed their sense of national identity, and emphasized this as a response to the negative media reports. Here, the aspect of fluid identity is visibly present; while in interviews prior to the ESC, Manizha identified as both Slavic and Tajik, in the lead-up to the contest, she explained how she was a Russian woman, and a similar narrative appeared from Mahmood's interviews, who considered himself "100 per cent Italian" (Noisey Italia, 2019). For them, having a migratory background was thus not relevant to identify with the national identity and represent the country in a pan-European event.

The element of affirmation and belonging is present in various ways in media appearances. In all cases, the performers dealt with negative reactions from the public, based on elements of ethnic identity that were part of the entry. This means that, as stated by Tajfel (1978), the minority culture dealt with suppression from the majority culture. Malcolm & Mendoza (2014) argued that identity is decided through society and context, which can be applied to these cases as well; Mahmood, who has north-African origins, won the Sanremo Festival

when the influx of migrants from the same region was a topic of debate in Italy (Caritas Italiana, 2019; BBC, 2018), and Jeangu Macrooy made references to Suriname's slavery past, at a moment when its apologies for the role of the Dutch government were discussed in the news (NOS Nieuws, 2021a). Earlier research on the Eurovision Song Contest showed that various entries in the history of the contest reflected political events in the country (Motschenbacher, 2016, p. 25; Baker, 2019, p. 177), and similar conclusions can be drawn on the entries in this multiple case-study.

In contrast to Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model (1992), in which members express pride towards their ethnic identity after receiving suppression, the dynamic between suppression and ethnic identity pride can be considered as a type of back-and-forth effect in this study. Here, ethnic performativity was the cause of the negative response, and as a reaction, the performers expressed affection towards their ethnic identity. In addition, Macrooy used the publicity to explain the meaning of the lyrics, and thereby create more awareness, while Mahmood mentioned that his ethnic background had never been an issue before. Manizha did not necessarily express her pride when discussing the musical elements of her song, but rather when talking about the various ethnicities in Russia, and expressed her Russian-ness as a result of negative feedback from the public.

Regarding ethnic identity achievement, the singers mentioned their ethnic identity in combination with several other forms of identity in interviews. Jeangu Macrooy mentioned his sexual identity, and compared the acceptance of the LGBTQ community to the situation in the Netherlands. While the expression of sexual identity was not directly present in the song's lyrics or performance, being a member of the community influenced Macrooy to write the song. Furthermore, gender identity played a role in *Russian Woman*, where Manizha sang about society's expectations from women. Similar to Macrooy, she did not limit herself to Russian identity only, but connected the message of her song to her own Tajik background, and mentioned how the song could be relevant in every country (ESCXTRA, 2021).

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Applying a multiple case-study provided the opportunity to thoroughly study the performance of ethnic identity in the Eurovision Song Contest. As the music video and live performance during the show allowed a limited frame to showcase a certain message, the analysis of media

appearances and footage was an important addition to the process behind the performance, and can be expanded across even more different types of media in further research, such as social media or printed media.

Although ethnic performativity focuses on the core of the thesis' topic, it does not provide as much room for other identities that are performed during the ESC, and it is a challenge to merge different types of identities, which hold relevance as well, into a specific case-study. One more suggestion for further research is therefore to follow artists over a longer period of time, to analyse the full potential of Phinney's Ethnic Identity Development model.

7 Conclusion

The Eurovision Song Contest has been one of the main entertainment events of Europe since its first edition in 1956, and, in academic literature, the competition has been used to study multiple types of identity on various occasions. This study showed that participants with a first or second generation migratory background in the ESC perform ethnic identity in multiple ways, and with different motivations, as was conducted in a multiple case-study among three performers from Italy, the Netherlands and Russia. Previous research on Eurovision has revolved around the presence of an imagined European community, or so-called nation-branding through participation in the contest, and in line with these studies, one main tool to perform ethnic identity appeared to be the use of language to express pride, or to communicate the message of the song to a specific audience. Clothing is another means to perform identity, and in this study, it was used to represent both ethnic identity, and the different ethnicities within national identity. Thirdly, the use of graphics on the LED screen played a main role in the three cases that were analysed in this study.

Regarding media appearances surrounding the participation in the ESC, all contestants received some type of negative public response, and, in addition, the media partly framed the ethnic identity of the participant. In these cases, performing ethnic identity was not the main aim of the artist when taking part in the national selection, but became a topic of public debate after becoming the country's representative. In one case, the discussion resulted in the fact that ethnic identity did become a main theme of the performance. Furthermore, the presence of other identities played a role in the performance of ethnic identity as well. Similar to earlier research on the ESC, this mainly concerned sexual and gender identity. In some cases, expressions of other forms of identity were directly included in the lyrics, music video, or live performance, while in other cases, the intersectional effect only became apparent in interviews.

The Eurovision Song Contest has been used for various studies, and this thesis contributed to the current academic field by focusing on participants with a migratory background, which is a topic that had been scarcely researched before. As this thesis focused on performers for whom ethnic identity was a national topic of debate, one aspect that was left out of the study was the extent to which singers with a migratory background include ethnic identity in their

performance overall. Furthermore, similar studies can be conducted with other types of minorities that are regularly present in the contest, such as indigenous or queer minorities. The representation of ethnic minorities is relevant in different fields in society, and can be used for research on other pan-European events. Therefore, conducting a study on the performance of ethnic identity among singers with a migratory background in the Eurovision Song Contest provides a fruitful opening for further research on the representation of ethnic minorities in an international setting.

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9 Appendices

Appendix A: Lyrics and Translation of *Soldi*

Italian/Arabic

English

In periferia fa molto caldo
Mamma stai tranquilla sto arrivando
Te la prenderai per un bugiardo
Ti sembrava amore ma era altro

It's quite hot in the suburbs
Mum, don't worry, I'm on my way home
You will be disappointed by a liar
It looked like love to you but it was
something else

Beve champagne sotto Ramadan
Alla TV danno Jackie Chan
Fuma narghilè mi chiede come va

He drinks champagne during Ramadan
On the telly they are airing Jackie Chan
He smokes shisha. He asks me how I'm
doing

Mi chiede come va, come va, come va

He asks me «How are you doing?»
«How are you doing?» «How are you
doing?»

Sai già come va, come va, come va

You already know how things are going,
how things are going, how things are
going.

Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi
fregherai
Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora so
cosa sei

I think faster trying to figure out whether
tomorrow you will fool me
I got no time to clear things up
Because only now I found out what you
are

È difficile stare al mondo quando perdi
l'orgoglio

Being alive it's not easy
When you lose your pride

Lasci casa in un giorno

Tu dimmi se

You leave home out of the blue

You, tell me whether

Pensavi solo ai soldi, soldi

Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi

Dimmi se ti manco o te ne fotti, fotti

You only thought about money, money

As if I have had any money, money

Tell me whether you miss me or you
don't give a damn

Mi chiedevi come va, come va, come va

You used to ask me «How are you
doing?» «How are you doing?» «How
are you doing?»

Adesso come va, come va, come va

Now how things are going, how things
are going, how things are going?

Ciò che devi dire non l'hai detto

Tradire è una pallottola nel petto

Prendi tutta la tua carità

Menti a casa ma lo sai che lo sa

You haven't told yet what you had to tell

Betrayal is a bullet in the chest

Keep all your mercy to yourself

You keep lying at home but you know
that she knows

Su una sedia lei mi chiederà

(Sittin') on a chair she'll be asking me

Mi chiede come va, come va, come va

You ask me «How are you doing?»
«How are you doing?» «How are you
doing?»

Sai già come va, come va, come va

You already know how things are going,
how things are going, how things are
going.

Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi
fregherai

Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora so
cosa sei

I think faster trying to figure out
whether tomorrow you will fool me

I got no time to clear things up
Because only now I found out what you
are

È difficile stare al mondo
Quando perdi l'orgoglio
Ho capito in un secondo che tu da me

Being alive it's not easy
When you lose your pride
I figured it out in one second
That you, from me

Volevi solo soldi
Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi
Prima mi parlavi fino a tardi, tardi

You only wanted money, money
As if I have had any money, money
Before, you used to talk to me till late

Mi chiedevi come va, come va, come va

You used to ask me «How are you
doing?» «How are you doing?» «How
are you doing?»

Adesso come va, come va, come va

Now how things are going, how things
are going, how things are going?

Waladi waladi habibi ta3ala hina

«My son, my son, darling, come over
here»

Mi dicevi giocando giocando con aria fiera

You used to tell me while playing,
looking proud

Waladi waladi habibi sembrava vera

«My son, my son, darling», it looked
real

La voglia, la voglia di tornare come prima

your wish, your wish to bring things
back to what they were

Io da te non ho voluto soldi
È difficile stare al mondo
Quando perdi l'orgoglio
Lasci casa in un giorno
Tu dimmi se

I – from you – didn't want any money...
Being alive it's not easy
When you lose your pride
You leave home out of the blue
You, tell me if

Volevi solo soldi, soldi
Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi

You only wanted money, money
As if I had any money, money

Lasci la città ma nessuno lo sa

You leave the city without anybody
knowing

Ieri eri qua ora dove sei, papà

Yesterday you were here, where are you
now, dad?

Mi chiedi come va, come va, come va

You ask me «How are you doing?»
«How are you doing?» «How are you
doing?»

Sai già come va, come va, come va

You already know how things are going,
how things are going, how things are
going.

Appendix B: Lyrics and Translation of *Birth of a New Age*

English/Srnan

English

Skin as rich as a starlit night
Your rhythm is rebellion
Deep currents running in the rivers of your eyes
Your rhythm is rebellion
They spat on your crown
And they poisoned your ground
Your rhythm is rebellion
They burned your heroes at the stake
But your voice will echo all their names
This ain't the end, no!
It's the birth of a new age

Yu no man broko mi

You cannot break me

Soul blazing like a hurricane
Your rhythm is rebellion
Spirit roaring wild like untamed flames
Your rhythm is rebellion
They buried your gods
They imprisoned your thoughts
Your rhythm is rebellion
They tried to drain you of your faith
But you are the rage that melts the chains
This ain't the end, no!
It's the birth of a new age

We are the fruit
Adorning the legacy

Of every forgotten revolutionary
Born in resilience
Proud like a lion
We are the birth of a new age

Yu no man broko mi
Mi na afu sensi

You cannot break me
I am half a cent

Appendix C: Lyrics and Translation of *Russian Woman*

Russian/English

English

Поле поле поле

Fields, fields, fields

Я ж мала

I'm so small

Поле поле поле

Fields, fields, fields

Так мала

I'm too small

Как пройти по полю из огня

How do You cross a field thru the fire?

Как пройти по полю если ты одна?

How do you cross the field if you're alone?

А-а-а?

Heeeey?

Ждать ли чьей-то ручечки, ручки?

Should I wait for a helpful hand?

А-а-а?

Whaaat?

Кто подаст мне ручку девочки?

Who will stretch out for me, girls?

Из покон веков

For ages now

С ночи до утра

From night till dawn

С ночи-ночи

From the deepest of the night

Ждем мы корабля

We are waiting for a ship

Ждем мы корабля

A Sailing ship

Очень очень

Waiting very much

С ночи до утра

From night till dawn

Ждем мы корабля

Waiting for a ship

Ждем бы корабля

Waiting for a ship

А что ждать?

But what's the wait?

Встала и пошла.

Stand up, let's go!

Every Russian Woman

Needs to know

You're strong enough to bounce against the wall

Шо там хорохорится?

Ой, красавица?

Ждешь своего юнца?

Ой, красавица

Тебе уж за 30

Ало? Где же дети?

Ты в целом красива

Но вот бы похудеть бы

Надень подлиннее

Надень покороче

Росла без отца

Делай то, что не хочешь

Ты точно не хочешь?

Не хочешь?

А надо.

Послушайте, правда.

Мы с вами не стадо

Вороны пщ-щ-щ пыщ-щ-щ

Отвалите

Теперь зарубите себе на носу

Я вас не виню

А себя я чертовски люблю

Борются, борются

Все по кругу борются

Да не молятся

Сын без отца

Дочь без отца

Но сломанной FAMILY

What's the rattling about?

Hey, beauty!

Are you waiting for your Prince?

Hey, beauty!

You're 30!

Hello? Where are your kids?

You are cute overall

But should lose some weight

Wear something longer

Wear something shorter

Oh you grew up without a father?

You should do what you don't want to

You sure you'd don't want to?

Don't want to?

You SHOULD!

Listen up, really!

We're not a flock

Hey, crows, shoo!

Leave me alone (give me a break)

Now learn it by heart:

I don't blame you a bit

But damn do I like myself

They just fight, always fight

Go round and round to just fight

But never pray

Boy without a father

Girl with no dad

But this broken family

Не сломать меня

Can't break me