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THE SECOND LINE PARADE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY THROUGH COSTUME IN THE GROUP THE UNDEFEATED DIVAS, GENTS AND KIDS.

Suellen da Costa Coelho

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**THE SECOND LINE PARADE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF
IDENTITY THROUGH COSTUME IN THE GROUP THE
UNDEFEATED DIVAS, GENTS AND KIDS.**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
College of Music & Dramatic Arts
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

In

Costume Technology and Design

by
Suellen da Costa Coelho
B.A, Senai Cetiqt, 2013
May 2021

To my Mom, Maria Bento da Costa Coelho

(In memoriam)

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Is it Uptown or Downtown?

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Is it Uptown or Downtown?

Where ya from, Where ya from, Where ya from

Where Ya from Pt.2. Stooges Brass band.

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the role of costume in identity formation in the second line group The Undefeated Divas, Gents and Kids. The methodology used in this research was data collection through interviews with members of the group. Through these interviews, we seek to establish the importance of costume in reflecting and constructing a sense of community within the group.

While the existing literature focuses on the history of second line parades and their importance in Louisiana's culture, this research intends to explore costume's meaning and significance. The purpose of this work is to complement the existing literature in the area, and to answer to what point identity serves second line group The Undefeated Diva, Gents and Kids as a device for their annual parade construction of costumes.

1. INTRODUCTION

Since I moved from my homeland, Rio de Janeiro, to Louisiana, I have noticed some similarities between these two locations. Both areas have a pivotal place in Black people history in the New World. My country was the last one to sign the abolition of slavery and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University played an essential role in the American Civil War as the Military Academy of the Confederate States. The similarities are even more noticeable between New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro. Both cities are famous in part due to their Carnival tradition, also known in the United States as Mardi Gras, an essential part of the festivities related to the Catholic celebration of Easter rites.

Although the State of Louisiana has rejoiced in a significant aspect of the Mardi Gras tradition, a portion this festival culture is also linked to a sad segment of the civil rights movement history. After spending generations as slaves on plantations or servers in New Orleans houses, African Americans could not enjoy civil rights once granted citizenship. When slavery ended, there was little security for the newly freed people. The mutual aid societies, first created by Catholic Church's orders in New Orleans, became an important form of insurance where the newly free people could find doctor's assistance, pensions and a way to bury their members and dependents. In the journal "Sundays in the Street", Leslie G Parr states: "since 1831, New Orleans was full of religious groups, charitable organizations and social clubs." (Parr, 9)

The newly freed people found in their community better ways to protect each other from all sorts of problems in the United States' second biggest port. For the Black population in New Orleans, the right to be a citizen was denied, bringing about the necessity to express its culture. In part, Black New Orleanians found in the annual parade

sponsored by the mutual aid societies more than social, financial and medical support, but the artistic basis to construct their identity as well. Ervin Goffman, a Canadian American sociologist recognized for his studies on communication and the related rituals in social interactions, defines in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, first published in 1959, the following sentence: “self-presentation is one way to accentuate certain facts and concealing others.” (Goffman, 65) In this book, Goffman relates self-presentation to a dramaturgical perspective; he states in his preface: “I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them” (Preface Goffman).

The annual second line parade requirement of costumes is an essential part of the self-presentation construction for those groups and plays a huge role in the construction of identity for the second line groups. Based on my initial research, I noticed that there is a shortage of published work in the area of identity and costumes in the second line parade. The purpose of this work is to complement the existing literature on the subject and answer to what point identity serves the second line group Undefeated Divas as a device for their annual parade construction of costumes.

1.1 WHY THE UNDEFEATED DIVAS?

The similarities between New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro can be better understood by looking at the history of slavery in both places. Carnival played a big role in the identity of Rio de Janeiro's new freed slaves. Samba and colorful parades during Carnival permeate the imagination of the whole world. In the late 19th century in Rio, the impoverished former slaves, driven by a housing crisis and the political crisis in the city, were sent to live in favelas - defined by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) as "subnormal agglomeration" and a "community of at least 51 units illegally occupying public or private land in a disorderly and dense manner. This kind of settlement is characterized by the lack of property titles, irregular infrastructure and streets as well as the lack of basic public services such as clean drinking water, sewage, electricity, waste collection and public safety." The United Nations (UN), reaching for an international approach, defines favela as a *Slum*. Favelas emerged as part of the political choices designed to keep the Black community far from the middle class in downtown. The Black population was sent into the less desired areas on the city as hilltops, suburbs and swamps. Far from downtown, those population groups found in the annual gathering during Carnival a way to take the streets and represent the spirit of community through a flag with cheerful colors, costumes and samba with lyrics that represent their ancestry and the everyday life in the favelas. In New Orleans, the Sundays in the streets started as a tradition in the "Bamboula". Liliane Crete states in the book *Daily Life in Louisiana, 1815-1830* that: "Sunday was a day of relaxation, even for the slaves. Dressed in their finest, they gathered by hundreds under the sycamores in Congo Place, and from early afternoon until nightfall they danced to the rhythm of tom-toms and crude stringed instruments." (Liliane Crete,

226) Liliane explain in the chapter *The “Bamboula”* that the Anglo-Saxon population would disapprove the slave gathering and dance in the Congo Square but the Creole population at this time would appreciate the music.

On my first Sunday on the streets of New Orleans, I was with a friend who invited me to The Undeclared Divas annual parade. In 2018, after living in Louisiana for one year, I thought I knew the second line parade and the dancing followers holding beautiful and ornate umbrellas on the French Quarter streets. But the second line was much more than that.

Right after I arrived, I noticed that most of the people waiting for the first sounds of the brass band were Black people from the neighborhood. Seeing their familiarity with each other, I noticed how much The Undeclared Divas parade was about community, and how this reminded me of my own neighborhood - an important parade route when I was a kid. The followers from the community waited outside of the bar that serves as the group’s stop to get dressed, wearing similar shirts as a tribute to some of their dead family members or sometimes to someone’s birthday. At the beginning of the parade, the well-dressed members come out of the bar dancing and cheering their community and creating in that moment a sense of belonging and commitment with the second line tradition. At the end of 2018, close to the next annual parade that always happens in the third Sunday of January, one of the members told me that he was worried about his costume, since the seamstress was late in finishing it. In an attempt to help him, a close friend suggested that the member should use the costume from the prior year. That suggestion was taken as outrageous. The member explained how the development of the annual costume is important for the group, and that they would only be worn again for a presentation at the New Orleans Jazz &

Heritage Festival, as a way to raise money to help paying for the group's expenses. One example of the costs incurred is the police escort throughout the parade. For him it would be illogical to parade wearing an old costume. He also explained how the costumes are kept in secret to make sure that other groups do not copy their design. Similarly, in Brazil, the colors and the costumes for the annual parade are kept secret from other groups, and they are released as a surprise only at the parade. The similarities with this parade and the parades in Rio made me realize the importance of the costumes for that moment.

For the group member, the repetition of the costume would constrain his performance and affect the impression that he wanted to create in the audience. The special moment could not happen if he were wearing an old costume; the performance could only be completed with the presentation of his best self, wearing the new costume for the most important day for the group, their annual parade. Pravina Shukla, a professor at Indiana University Bloomington, states in the book *Costume: Performing Identities Through Dress*, released in 2015, that: "Like ritual, costumed events are distinct from daily existence and therefore, they allow for extreme forms of dress to aid in the formation of an alternative identity." (Shukla Pravina, 15)

The parade day is like a ritual for each member of the second line group, when they distinguish themselves from who they are on the other days of the year. On the third Sunday of January, the members of the group take the streets of New Orleans to show other groups that they are undefeated every year, despite the difficult experiences faced throughout this period. (e.g., see Fig. 1)



Fig. 1. The Undeclared Divas Banner, 2018

2. DRESS AND IDENTITY

In this chapter, I am going to present the scholar view on dress and identity, to display the definition of the term dress created by Mary Ellen Roach Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher and to expand the connections among dress, ritual and performance identity as well.

In the journal *Clothing and Textiles Research*, Mary Ellen Roach Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher revise the theory presented in 1965 on the significance of dress, term that is going to be used throughout this work.

The authors discuss the importance of the social function of dressing and how it establishes communication and identity. According to the authors: “dress of an individual is an assemblage of modifications of the and/or supplements to the body” (Eicher, Roach-Higgins, 1) The authors present in the journal, a system to identify dress, separating biological characteristic and dress, as a modification, and what the authors called body supplements, in which the clothes and objects would be sufficient to communicate identity in the “out-of-every-day social role or activity” (Eicher, Roach-Higgins, 3). But the authors specify in the journal that the word costume should be reserved to theater, festivals, ceremonies and rituals, in which the individual uses the costume to express a performance identity. The performance identity is presented in the second line’s annual parade by costume, accessories, design and color.

Joanne B. Eicher, in her continuum study of dress and identity, wrote a chapter in the book edited and introduced by Valerie Steele - chief curator of The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology - *The Berg Companion to Fashion*. The chapter is called “Clothing, Costume and Dress”, in which Eicher states: “What people wear also can indicate personality characteristics and aesthetic preferences. People understand most clearly the significance and meaning of clothing, costume and dress when the wearers and observers share the same cultural background.”(Eicher,

151). In Eicher's distinction between costume and dress, she points out that costumes have a special requirement in terms of fit, colors and effects and that costumes can set apart and highlight the main character of the cast or the troupe.

In the same book, *The Berg Companion to Fashion*, dress and adornment are presented as a universal feature of human behavior, as a part of what the scholar calls costume for ceremonies or festivals. On Sundays, on the streets, the second line parade provides the structures of theme and color to the group participant, reaffirming social values and ties. In the chapter called "Ceremonial and Festival Costumes", the author Fred T. Smith states that "unlike masquerading, dress is not meant to transform an individual into something else but to enhance the identity of the individual." (Smith, 130) In the chapter "Identity, Status, and Leadership" of same book, Fred T. Smith explains how dress plays a vital role in affirming a person's identity. He uses examples like Nigerian Yoruba, to explain the group cohesion through the use of costume for social occasions, such as wedding ceremonies and funerals. The author states that "Costumes may also express identity or membership in a group." (Smith,133).

Another theoretical work that was important to this research was the book *Costume: Performing Identities Through Dress* by the folklore professor at Indiana University Bloomington, Pravina Shukla. In the book, the author explores the connections between identity and costume and states that "costume functions to help the individuals elect, embrace, and display especial identities that are not expressed through daily dress" (Shukla, 5). Shukla also discusses the dress and costume dichotomy citing the scholars Valerie Steele and Joanne B. Eicher and how both authors define feature of costume. Pravina conducted an ethnographic research to show how people are engaged in an emotional journey while using costumes to assume their performance identity.

2.1 SECOND LINE GENERALLY

To clarify the use of the term second line in this work, it is important to explore the wide variety of elements the term is used to describe, including a type of dance, of which the pace is dictated by the brass band, the rhythm of a musical tradition. According to Dr. Helen A. Regis, when citing Riley and Vidacovich in the paper *Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line*: "The term second line is ambiguous, pointing to multiple dimensions of the same phenomenological reality. It refers to the dance steps performed by club members and their followers during parades. It also refers to a distinctive syncopated rhythm (Riley and Vidacovich 1995) that is said to have originated on the streets of New Orleans. More importantly, second line means the followers, or joiners, who fall in behind the 'first line', composed of the brass band and the social club, which typically sponsors the parade." (Helen A. Regis 754)

The multiple dimensions of the second line represent a shared ancestral history held by a specific group, which is explored in a wide variety of ways, though marked by connected means of expression. The term second line originated as a way to describe those who walked behind the first line in a parade. Most often, the first line is made up of a brass band musicians. The second line parade tradition has been constructed across the city for joyous occasions like marriages and graduations as well as mourning traditions, celebrating the life of the deceased. Despite the similarities of a group following and celebrating the first line of musicians, specific celebrations may be marked by differences in populations in the first and second lines, as Dr. Regis states in her paper: "Most white residents of the city have never been to such a second line parade and have little or no awareness of the significance of this Black tradition." (Helen A. Regis ,756) Second line parades for a wedding party celebrate the bride and groom and the guests go as followers in a second line, holding white handkerchiefs in the air. The graduation parade celebrates the graduate,

and the followers are parents, family, and friends. In the second line parade, the costume is an important symbol to define who is a member of the group and who is not.

As Dr. Helen A. Regis writes in her paper *Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line*, “Many visitors to New Orleans think they have seen a second line, although what they have witnessed is a cheerful (if not cheesy) minstrel show performed for outsiders. (Regis, 1999).” (Helen A. Regis ,756) As part of an important cultural tradition that celebrates life and grief, second line parade is a vital tradition for the city’s Black community

3. METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this research, data was collected through interviews in order to feature individual voices of the group to consider the meaning and have a complete understating of the costume function in the second line parade. Analyzing answers from members of The Undeafated Divas, Gents and Kids group, the thematical analysis can reveal the importance of the costumes to the group's identity construction for its annual parade.

The field research is an important support to our methodology, using a questionnaire, in which the costume designer and members of The Undeafated Divas explain their choices of costume colors and shapes for the annual parade. It also explains the meaning and function of the costumes as it explores the scope of identity in the group through the Sunday parades on the streets. My justification of this work is the shortage of academic work on the New Orleans second line parade costumes, having The Undeafated Divas group as a case.

The hypothesis of this research is that the annual second line parade requirement of costumes is an essential part of the self-presentation construction for those groups, and it plays a significant role in the construction of identity for the second line groups.

3.1. QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaires were developed to help us understand specific information regarding costume choices. The first part was created for the costume designer with questions such as, “How does The Undefeated Divas choose the colors for the annual parade?” collecting answers that might be useful to support the coding and the thematic analysis, and to know the design process of the group The Undefeated Divas, Gents, and Kids. The second part of the questionnaire was developed for The Undefeated Divas members, including questions that might indicate how costume design affects their construction of identity. Questions like: “How do you feel when you are wearing your annual parade costume?” Collected responses might support the main hypothesis that the costume is important for the construction of identity in the second line group.

3.2. DATA

This research data was analyzed using a coding technique based on the book *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* by Johnny Saldana. This coding method is particularly useful for ethnographic research as a tool to code data and bring voice to the participant, bringing the nuances of the interview and transcribing their vocal emphasis, throughout the interview.

For the data analysis of a qualitative research, software like NVivo or Dedoose may be used. I chose not to use a software, instead using Microsoft word to analyze and code my data. First, I created two tables in a Word document. The first was a table with the name and quotes from the interviewee in which I coded the main idea presented in each quote. In a second phase, I created four tables with the codes from the first phase, found similarities between the codes and eliminated some similar ones to reduce the amount of codes for each interview participant. In a

third phase, I created themes from the codes to better explain my research through the interviews, connecting each code with a theme.

3.3. DATA ANALYSIS

<p style="text-align: center;">Henri Devezin</p> <p>“Alright, so, the feeling that I have I can’t really describe to nobody else, but first of all it is a lot stress! It is a lot of stress; I mean, it feels like two-ton weight is on your shoulders It’s like almost in the point when you can’t breathe, and then.... it’s like when you hear the band stride up when you hear the band start playing in this, is time for y’all to hit the door, then two ton weight is lifted. It’s not only is that weight lifted, but is an out of body experience, because I am not there anymore, that just my shell, I’m actually standing outside like you, looking at myself come out the door.”</p> <p>“How do I present my design to the group? I don’t. I don’t, the group doesn’t see anything, only me, my uncle Kevin, and my aunt Antoinette, we are the only ones who... you know and, and really! actually the men doesn’t see anything from the women and the women doesn’t see anything from the men, is like me and uncle we do our thing and the women, they do their thing, but I guess I have to see a little bit, because my aunt, always, you know! She asks me to draw her design and cut all stencils and stuff.”</p> <p>“Oh! the dove, the dove on the shoulder symbolizes God being with us, and uh, of course you see the things we have in our hands with big ostrich plumes on in it, those we call fans, and... it actually, originated with the Mardi Gras Indians. The big chief would use the fan to fan way evil spirits from their journey from beginning to end, so kind just tied over from Mardi Gras Indians to Second Line”.</p> <p>“You know what is..... I would appreciate the help, but I guess it’s... it’s more of a burden that I have to bear on my own, because....</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MEANING</p> <p>EXPERIENCING STRESS BEFORE THE PARADE AND A GREAT FEELING FOR BEING PART OF THE SECOND LINE AND THIS AMAZING EXPERIENCE</p> <p>KEEPING THE COSTUME, A SECRET</p> <p>KEEPING THE COSTUMES IN SECRET AS AN STRATEGY FOR NOT BEING COPIED</p> <p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>KEEPING THE TRADITIONS ALIVE</p>
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<p>because the people who came before me beared it on their own. They didn't ask for help. We didn't know how they got it done, they just got it done."</p> <p>"I see second line as life.... I mean, if... you can tie to pretty much.... anything, and everything that you do, even in a daily basis, wherever you going through, whether is joy, pain, sunshine and rain.... There is always going be second line."</p> <p>"It is a traditional thing, pretty much every Saint Joseph night, when the Mardi Gras Indian come out in the nighttime, me and my family we go out and we kind of choose the color that night. Like, we take a look of all the different colors that the Indians come out with, than we put it together, pretty much that night we come up with the colors so that is how we come up with all the colors theme, Saint Joseph night."</p> <p>that "I mean, it is a conversation, but we do a lot of colors and they have a lot of pretty, pretty colors and different combinations that we wouldn't think, that would actually go together, when you look at the Mardi Grass Indians, like this is, a real unique thing, that they have as put all this color that just don't blend, and somehow make work it."</p>	<p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>MEANING</p> <p>KEEPING THE TRADITION AND BELIVING THAT HE SHOULD CARRY THE RESPONSIBILITY ALONE.</p> <p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>THE SECOND LINE BRINGS MEANING TO HIS LIFE.</p> <p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>KEEPING THE TRADITION ALIVE AND FEELING WELL FOR USING SO MANY COLORS</p>
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<p>Antoinette Devezin</p> <p>"I have this deep deep secret, and I've been holding strong to it I don't too much let my members see what they are really gonna look like until they be....! I like to see everyone's face how they gonna look, you know, and throughout the years that I've been doing it, I've been doing it.... I hate to hear my age; fifty plus years I've been second lining. I mean, I am able to deal with the yeas and the</p>	<p>KEEPING THE COSTUME, A SECRET</p> <p>KEEPING THE COSTUMES IN SECRET AS A STRATEGY FOR NOT BEING COPIED</p>
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<p>nays, the objections because I know how to overcome, the objections. You know they say 'oh I object this; she will object to this outfit' oh well!! I know how to get through this.”</p> <p>“oh! I am big show of! I am a big show of”</p> <p>“if you have a low self-steam, don’t come over here because we won’t help you, because you have to have that. I mean you gonna be looking good, you are out there, all eyes on you”</p> <p>“the significance is that we are who we are, Un...defeated we have not been defeated yet, and we are undefeated, we just do things, we don’t go out and do things to... let’s just say, I am not gonna do this because my money is low, it doesn’t matter how much it costs, it doesn’t matter, it can cost a dollar, it can cost a thousand dollars! If we can afford it, it is all in what we like and it is all in, you know, carrying out our culture and tradition.”</p> <p>“oh Katrina! Well, nobody was back in the city a and city gave us an ultimate, we had to come back... or, that is not a thing, Undefeated Divas, Gents and kids, we are the only parade club there is never miss our parade day, not even for Katrina, they called us, the Thursday before our parade day, and they were like, ‘look, y’all have to come back to the city if y’all want to keep y’all day, or y’all gonna loose up’ so we got together the Thursday night and just put some stuff together, and we drove... hum! We had member that came from Atlanta, North Caroline, Kansas City, Houston, uh... I was in Baton Rouge and we came back to the city that day just to parade.”</p> <p>“we are undefeated”</p>	<p>FEELING BEAUTIFUL WITH THE COSTUME</p> <p>A GREAT FEELING FOR BEING SEEN</p> <p>GREAT SELF STEAM AND POSITIVE BELIEFS OF OTHER PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS</p> <p>MEANING</p> <p>IT REPRESENTS A MEANING OF LIFE AND NO FEAR FOR BEING PART OF A BIG CULTURE</p> <p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>TO KEEP THE TRADITION ALIVE EVEN IN DIFIFCULT TIMES</p> <p>MEANING</p> <p>PROUD OF NEVER HAVE BEEN DEFEATED</p>
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<p>Kevin Devezin</p> <p>“it is show time!”</p> <p>“we just try to look good every time we come out of that door, we don’t care what you put on when you come out, what we wanna, we have our own concept and you have your own concept, and that’s what we do, you know we will support you, whatever you do. I don’t care if you come out in your bra and your drawers, we will come out there and support you though, if you are able to pay for your permit and your band, that is your day.”</p>	<p>FEELING BEAUTIFUL WITH THE COSTUME</p> <p>TIME TO SHOW OFF IN THE PARADE</p> <p>KEEPING THE TRADITION OF SECOND LINE</p> <p>LOOKING GOOD IS IMPORTANT BUT NOT AS IMPORTANT AS SUPPORTING THE OTHER GROUPS TO KEEP THE CULTURE OF SECOND LINE ALIVE</p>
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<p>Janice Riley</p> <p>“Second Line for me is just... I just likes to grow up there, just being seen, is a thing where you know everybody is going see me, is true because I am in a route, but just to be out there Second Lining, you know, is just giving me joy.”</p> <p>“no matter what you say, how you say, when you say the Divas gonna change, at least one time.... every year!”</p> <p>“with the Divas! You never know what you gonna wear, until a week or two before the parade”</p> <p>“It depends on the costume... see, some costumes you may not like, but is what is what we, you know, what, whatever Net decides to put on, that is we gonna put on! But some costumes...you never know what you gonna wear. Whit Net Devezin! With Antoinette Devezin! you would be surprise when you get ready to put that costume on, and then you see it and... damn!! I like that!! Can’t wait to get into that!”</p> <p>“Look!! look what we got on! Girl... look our boot look our shoes, you know, yeah, we get to talk in one another”</p>	<p>FEELING BEAUTIFUL WITH THE COSTUME</p> <p>A GREAT FEELING FOR BEING SEEN AND FOR CREATING A GOOD IMPRESSION ON OTHER PEOPLE</p> <p>FEELING BEAUTIFUL WITH THE COSTUME</p> <p>ACKNOWLEDGING THAT CHANGES OF CLOTHES IN THE GROUP WILL ALWAYS HAPPEN</p> <p>KEEPING THE COSTUME, A SECRET</p> <p>COSTUMES ARE SECRET UNTIL THE PARADE DAY</p> <p>KEEPING THE SECOND LINE TRADITION</p> <p>TRUSTING HER COSTUME DESIGN AND BEING PROUD OF THE GROUP TRADITION OF KEEPING THE SURPRISE, SHOWING THE COSTUMES ON THE PARADE DAY</p> <p>FEELING BEAUTIFUL WITH THE COSTUME</p> <p>A GREAT FEELING WEARING THE COSTUMES AND LOOKING BEATIFUL TO COME OUT IN THE PARADE</p>
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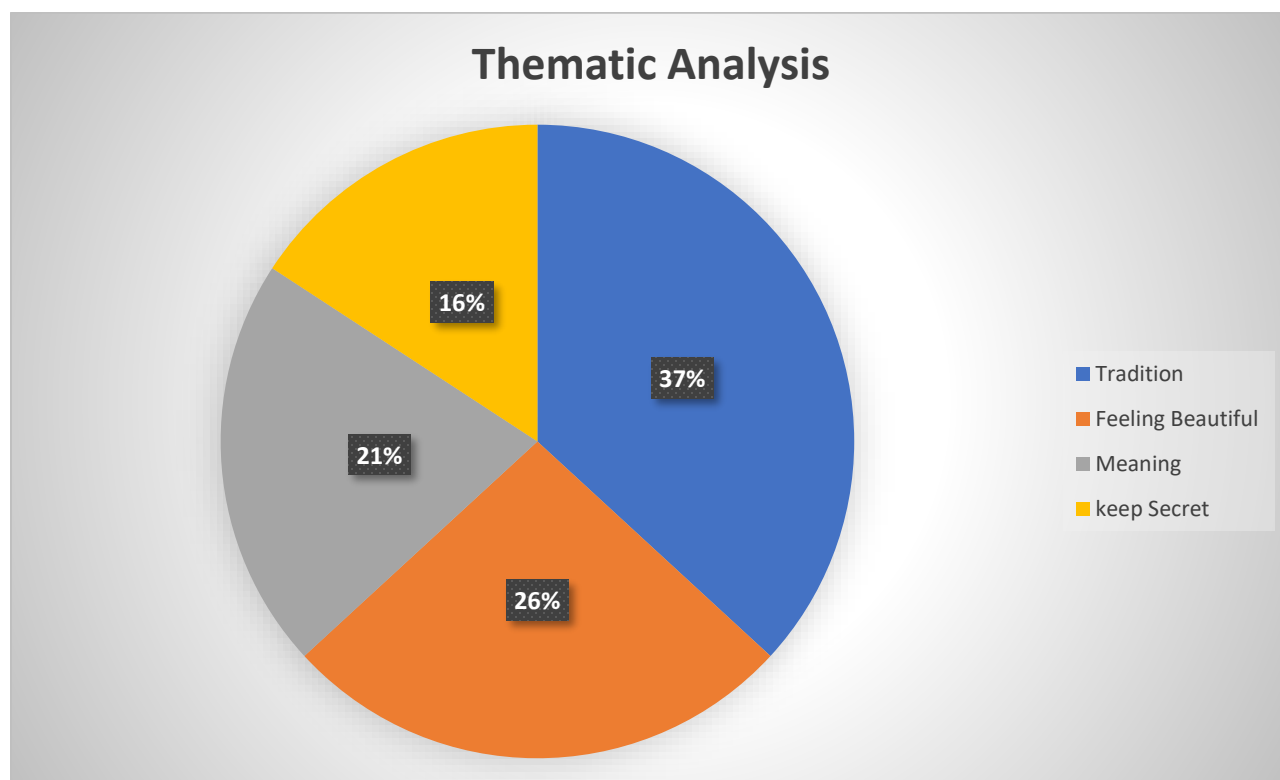


Fig. 2. Thematic Analysis. Excel Microsoft.

Phrases such as “It is show time” or “Oh! I am a big show off! I am a big show off!” represent how they feel when it is time to hit the streets with their costume and accessories. The costumes play a big role in their identity performance on the streets.

THEME: MEANING

The theme “Meaning” appeared here as an answer to the question “What is the significance of The Undefeated Divas to you?” The theme surfaced in the interviews as a feeling of pride in phrases like “We are undefeated” to describe how their costume has improved year after year, how the second line is important to them and also to manifest that they would do whatever is necessary to be on the streets wearing their costumes, once it means a lot to them.

THEME: KEEPING THE COSTUME A SECRET

The theme “Keeping the costume a secret” was an answer to my question “How do you present the design for the annual parade to the group?” Even though this was a question directed just to Henri Devezin, Antoinette Devezin and Janice Railey mentioned this subject as something important to the group. The secret should be kept as a way to prevent other groups from stealing their design ideas. Working this way, the group believes that they will not be defeated on the streets. This statement showed its great importance for this research, proving how essential the costumes are in the identity of the group.

4. THE COSTUME IN THE SECOND LINE GROUP THE UNDEFEATED DIVAS, GENTS AND KIDS

During the interview with The Undefeated Divas' Gents costume designer, Henri Devezin, I asked how he feels wearing his costume for the annual parade and he immediately responded: "Alright, so, the feeling that I have I can't really describe to nobody else, but first of all, it is a lot stress! It is a lot of stress; I mean, it feels like two-ton weight is on your shoulders It's like almost in the point when you can't breathe, and then.... it's like when you hear the band stride up when you hear the band start playing in this, is time for y'all to hit the door, then two ton weight is lifted. It's not only is that weight lifted, but is an out of body experience, because I am not there anymore, that just my shell, I'm actually standing outside like you, looking at myself come out the door." (Devezin, Henri) Henri is referring to the moment the members of The Undefeated Divas emerge from one of their chosen stops during their annual parade. The members of The Undefeated Divas arrive at the place and find their costumes labeled and placed on chairs ready to be put on.

However, my second question to Henri was about his annual parade design presentation. As a costume designer myself, I expected an answer that would fit my ideal for a design presentation, where the designers present the ideas to the director then wait for feedback about whether the design created is accepted or not, making alterations throughout the design process to reach the director's idea, in collaboration with other designers and in agreement with the director's vision for the show. But it was interesting to see him pause for a long moment and answer "How do I present my design to the group? I don't. I don't, the group doesn't see anything, only me, my uncle Kevin and my aunt Antoinette. We are the only ones who... you know and, and really! Actually, the men doesn't see anything from the women and the women doesn't see anything from

the men, is like me and uncle, we do our thing and the women, they do their thing, but, I guess I have to see a little bit, because my aunt, always, you know! She asks me to draw her design and cut all stencils and stuff.” (Devezin, Henri) For Henri, the main reason for keeping the design for the annual parade a secret, even from Divas’ members, is the belief that in the past, people have stolen their design ideas before the annual parade happened on the streets.

For as long as I have been a costume designer, I cannot avoid thinking about the technical process involved in building a garment. In theatre training, there are steps that we follow, and measuring the performer is one of the early steps. In my interview with Henri, I asked if he takes measurements of each member, he answered that he takes the measurements whenever possible, and Henri has a file with the measurements of the whole group.

As part of his design process, Henri carries with him a little notebook, filled with ideas and fabric swatches. He states that he likes to go to fabric stores and grab little swatches, which he carries with him for inspiration. His notation comes with the amount of each material that he will need to buy in order to build the costumes and the accessories carried by the members at their annual parade. (e.g., see Fig.4, Fig.5, Fig.6, Fig.7.)

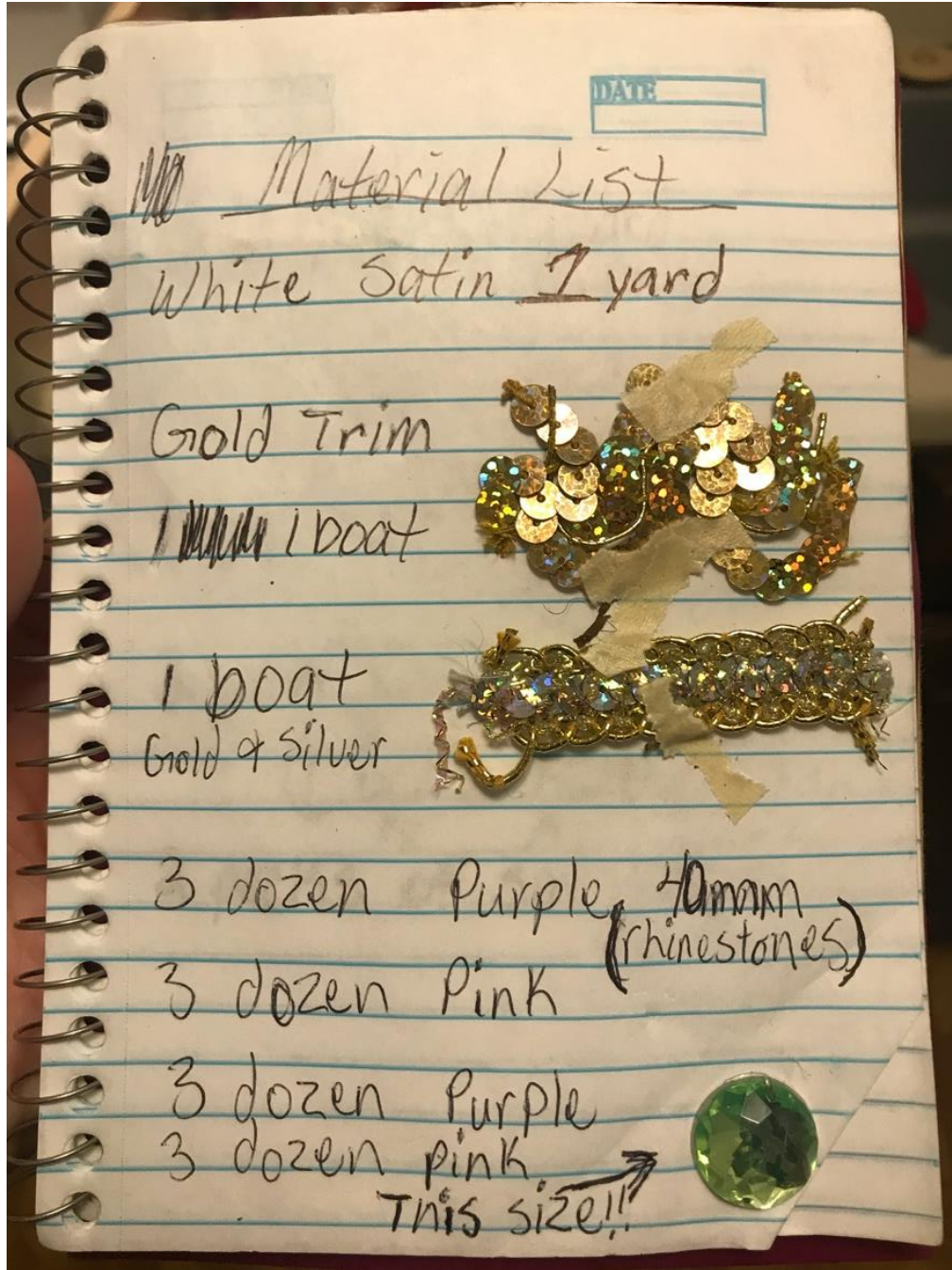


Fig. 4. Henri's Notebook

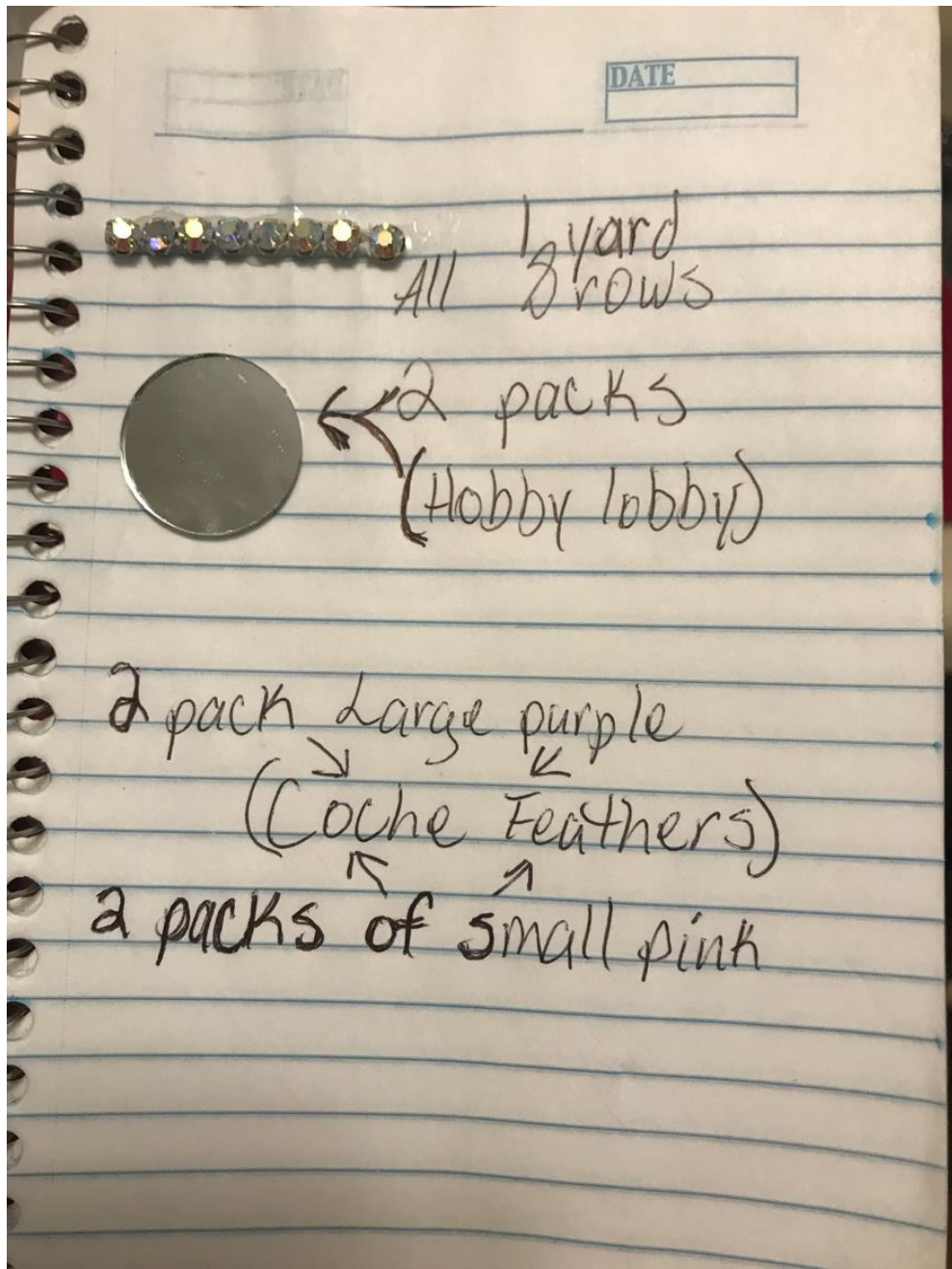


Fig. 5. Henri's Notebook.

Buddy DATE 2020

Hat: Youth $7\frac{5}{8}$

Shoes: Youth 9

Shirt: Youth Large

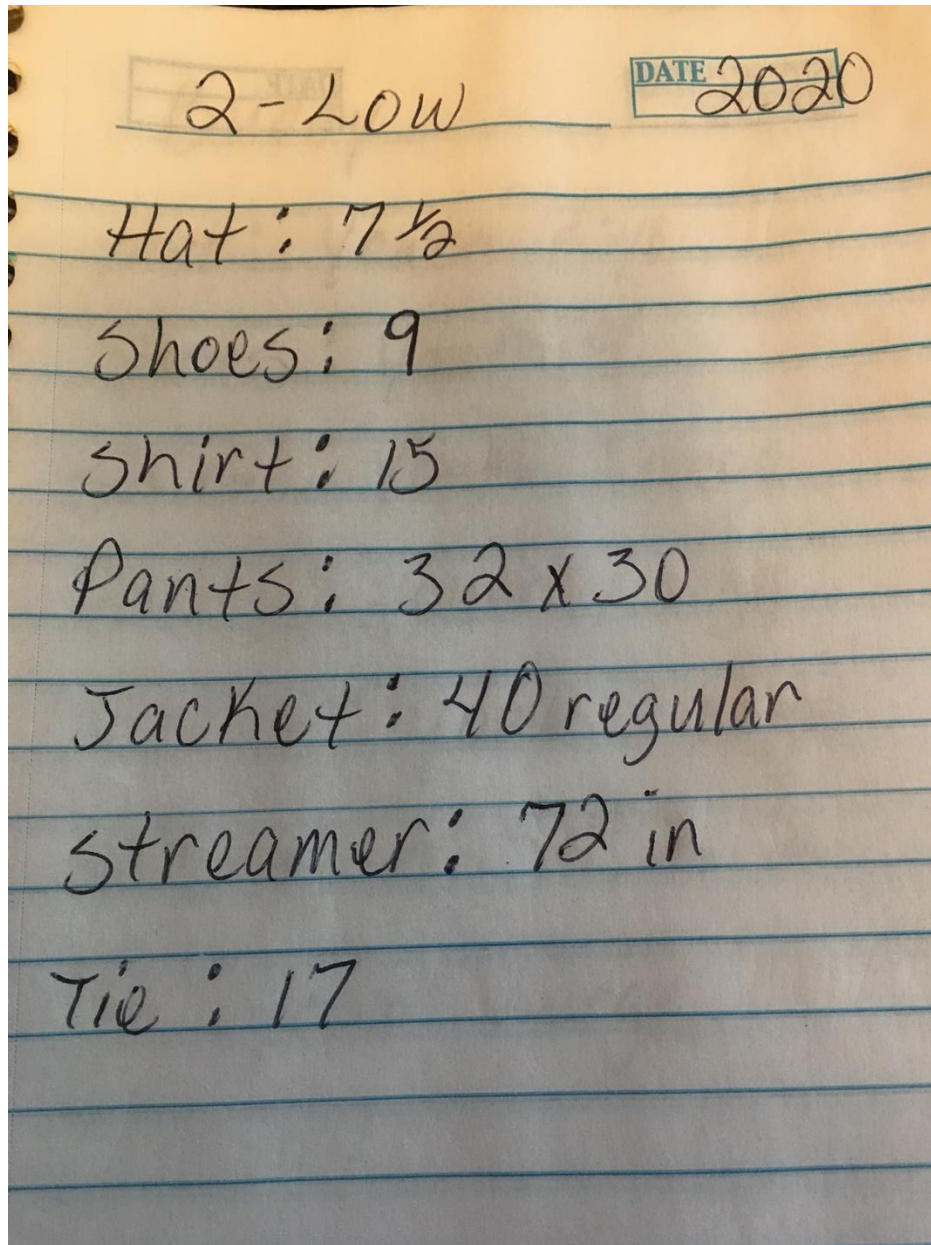
Pants: youth Large

Jacket: youth Large

Streamer: $54\frac{3}{4}$ in

Tie: Youth Large

Fig. 6. Henri's measurement notes.



2-Low

DATE 2020

Hat: 7 1/2

Shoes: 9

Shirt: 15

Pants: 32 x 30

Jacket: 40 regular

streamer: 72 in

Tie: 17

Fig. 7. Henri's measurement notes.

Like in a ritual, the costume for the annual parades represents a transcendence to above daily social structure, allowing the members to present and celebrate their ancestry. The accessories, which help to compose the full garment of The Undefeated Divas group, come from an oral tradition passed down from the elders to the younger generation. In an attempt to better

understand the symbolism of each of the accessories that complement the parade outfit, I asked the costume designer to interpret it. During the interview, he explained the sash on the suits, the dove on their shoulders, the fan that the members carry during the parade, the cane and the yoke where normally the bows are placed. Henri explains: “Oh! the dove, the dove on the shoulder symbolizes God being with us, and uh, of course you see the things we have in our hands with big ostrich plumes on in it, those we call fans, and... it actually, originated with the Mardi Gras Indians. The big chief would use them to fan away evil spirits from their journey, from beginning to end, so kind just tied over from Mardi Gras Indians to second line”. When I asked about the cane in the parade, with a big laugh Henri explained that the cane doesn’t have a specific meaning. He said that the cane is a way to express the creativity in the costume and in the dance.

For the authors of the book *The House of Dance and Feathers*, Rachel Braunlin, Ronald W. Lewis and Helen Regis, the fan is part of the parade since the benevolent societies, before the days of air conditioning in church. The fan is used to represent the club through feathers and colored fabric matching the suit. Also, in this book, the authors clarify the significance of other objects in the parade, like the streamers/sash explained as a “badge of honor” carried by the members of the group. (Braunlin, Lewis, Regis,170)

In the program “*Takin’ it To The Streets*” on the New Orleans radio station WWOZ, aired in 2019, the host Action Jackson, during the interview with Henri, says that if you parade in the second line, you need to learn how to “bust bow,” and he asks Henri to explain to the audience the meaning of that. Henri explains: “busting bows, as we all know, we wear a lot of bows in our accessories and my uncle, he rolls the bows on the machine and... I mean, we can start anywhere from five or six years old, helping to bust bows. If you don’t do anything else, you learn how to bust bows; it is kind of like opening, ripping to make it look like a bow.” During the interview,

Mr. Action explains that the bows are almost as important as the beads and patches for the Mardi Gras Indians, because the bows are second line decorations. Henri explains that in the first part of making a bow, a machine is used to roll it, and in the second part, they use the fingers to open the bow. Henri also explains in the interview, that the Undefeated Divas like to do a salt and pepper style, using two colors of bow and sometimes, two colors in the same bow. (e.g., see Fig.8, Fig.9, Fig.10.)



Fig. 8. The Divas Kid and her Bows. Jamel Tate photos



Fig. 9. Bow's detail, made by Kevin Devezin, for the 2020 parade



Fig. 10. Kevin Devezin proud of his streamer for the 2020 parade, full of bows made by himself, 2021

Designing and wearing the costume for the annual parade comes with a big sense of responsibility for Henri. At the end of our interview, I offered to help him in the process for the 2021 parade, since I'm a costume designer. To which he replied: "You know what is..... I would appreciate the help, but I guess it's... it's more of a burden that I have to bear on my own,

because.... because the people who came before me bore it on their own. They didn't ask for help. We didn't know how they got it done, they just got it done.” (Devezin, Henri). He feels the need to carry this responsibility alone and to keep the group's costume design tradition alive. As a spectator in the parade, the commitment and the meaning that comes along with the stop points, dancing and wearing their costumes, may be perceived as a staged act on the streets, what Goffman would call an activity-oriented action toward communication. In this case, it communicates the deep emotional connection to the New Orleans ancestral Black culture and to the past of The Undefeated Divas. (e.g., see Fig. 11, Fig. 12, Fig.13, Fig.14, Fig.15.)



Fig. 11. The Undefeated Divas Parade 2018. Henri Devezin dancing.



Fig.12.The Undefeated Divas Parade 2018. Henri Devezin dancing.



Fig. 13. The Undefeated Divas Parade 2017. Henri Devezin.



Fig. 14. Parade Fan



Fig. 15. Parade Fan, 2021

5. THE DIVAS COSTUME DESIGNER

My work in this research did not start with Henri Devezin's interview, it started when, on the day of the 2020 parade, without success, I tried to meet Antoinette Devezin, the lady who conceived the group that would be the subject of my research. As a costume designer, doing an ethnographic research was new to me. Invited by Dr. Regis to audit the contemporary ethnographic class at LSU, I learned my most valuable lesson: that I should be patient and wait for the right moment to listen. If I wanted to bring voice to this group, I should let them speak. During my interview with Henri and Ms. Janice, I heard a lot about Antoinette Devezin, the group's creator, who designs the clothes for the Divas. I contacted Antoinette four times, but she could not talk to me. In 2021, on the Undefeated Divas parade day, canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I went to New Orleans hoping to meet her, and she accepted to be interviewed by me. Antoinette Devezin along with her husband and one of the Gents, Kevin Devezin, talked to me.

Antoinette Devezin received me wearing a full sequin garment with the Saints' colors, the New Orleans football team. She gave me a big smile when she discovered that I was Brazilian and talked about her love for the parades in Brazil and the costumes made over there. I started my interview with Antoinette asking how she took the Divas measurements, and she answered that she would set up a day with the Divas to do that and right after this answer she decided to admit something: "I have this deep, deep secret, and I've been holding strong to it ... I don't too much let my members see what they are really gonna look like until they be... I like to see everyone's face how they gonna look, you know, and throughout the years that I've been doing it, I've been doing it.... I hate to hear my age; fifty plus years I've been second lining. I mean, I am able to deal with the years and the nays, the objections because I know how to overcome, the objections. You

know, they say ‘oh I object this; she will object to this outfit’ oh well!! I know how to get through this.” (Devezin, Antoinette)

Antoinette Devezin was proud of her decision of not letting the members see their costumes before the parade. For her, this is part of their identity of being undefeated every year and not let other groups steal their costume design. As part of her decision of keeping the costume a secret, she needs to deal with what she calls “hands on”. For her, the difference between the Divas and other groups is that the bows, the fans and the accessories for their annual parade are made by herself and her family. She told me: “believe it or not, our young kids know how to bust the bows. Yeah, they can bust bows.” For her, the whole family’s hands on is part of the group’s tradition.

My next question to Net, as Antoinette asked me to call her, was how she feels when she wears the costumes. She jumped on the chair and said: “Oh! I am a big show off! I am a big show off!” At this moment, Kevin Devezin, her husband and one of the group’s gents, who was also present in the living room, started nodding his head and saying: “It is show time!” And Net completes: “If you have a low self-esteem, don’t come over here because we won’t help you, because you have to have that. I mean, you gonna be looking good, you are out there, all eyes on you” (Devezin, Antoinette) In Antoinette Devezin’s words, I noticed how the costumes can intensify the self-esteem and attract the attention and the appreciation of other people. This presentation of the self is modified by the eyes of others, this vision is part of the group’s construction of identity, in which with changes of costumes throughout the parade and costumes never seen before, the group creates strong characteristics and beliefs that makes them undefeated every year on the streets.

My interview with Antoinette and Kevin Devezin took place on the third Sunday of January, the day reserved for The Undefeated Divas to hit the streets. Kevin Devezin was wearing a white shirt with the Group's name in golden letters. He asked me if I knew that on that very Sunday they were supposed to be on the streets, and as a person who felt totally connected with the group at that point of my research, I answered with a half-smile and sad eyes that I was aware of that. He told me he had hopes for a big parade in 2022. The Undefeated Divas has five Gents and eight Divas. The year of 2021 was a special year because of the group's 25th birthday, and they would parade with old members of the group who no longer parade. The whole conversation about how the COVID-19 pandemic destroyed their plans for 2021 lead me to the other main question for the owners of the group. What is the significance of The Undefeated Divas for them? And Net answered "the significance is that we are who we are, Un... defeated, we have not been defeated yet, and we are undefeated, we just do things, we don't go out and do things to... let's just say, I am not gonna do this because my money is low, it doesn't matter how much it costs, it doesn't matter, it can cost a dollar, it can cost a thousand dollars! If we can afford it, it is all in what we like and it is all in, you know, carrying out our culture and tradition." During the year it is normal to see some second line groups promoting fundraiser balls to get money for their costumes and to cover the parade's costs. Antoinette told me that The Undefeated Divas does not do fundraisers, everything comes from their pockets.

Next, during the interview, among pictures of past parades and videos on Facebook, Kevin Devezin showed me a picture of the parade after hurricane Katrina. Antoinette wanted me to see this picture because of the costumes, and she told me: "Oh Katrina! Well, nobody was back in the city and the city gave us an ultimatum, we had to come back... or, that is not a thing, Undefeated Divas, Gents and Kids, we are the only parade club that has never missed our parade

day, not even for Katrina. They called us, on the Thursday before our parade day, and they were like, ‘look, y’all have to come back to the city if y’all want to keep y’all day, or y’all gonna loose up’ so we got together on Thursday night and just put some stuff together, and we drove... uh, we had members that came from Atlanta, North Carolina, Kansas City, Houston, uh... I was in Baton Rouge and we came back to the city that day just to parade.” (Devezin, Antoinette) I was impressed with how they created costumes in four days and Antoinette said: “We are undefeated.” Mr. Devezin held the picture so that I could photograph the memento of parade. They were proud of the fact that they had never missed one day of parade, until the pandemic. (e.g., see Fig. 16.)



Fig.16. Kevin Devezin Holding the parade picture after Hurricane Katrina

In my afternoon with Antoinette and Kevin Devezin, I learned a lot about how proud they are of being part of the New Orleans culture. For Kevin Devezin, the second line is much more about the community and keeping the parades alive than about the costumes. He states “We just try to look good every time we come out of that door, we don’t care what you put on when you come out, what we wanna, we have our own concept and you have your own concept, and that’s what we do, you know we will support you, whatever you do. I don’t care if you come out in your bra and your drawers, we will come out there and support you though, if you are able to pay for your permit and your band, that is your day.” (Devezin, Kevin)

Before I left Devin’s house, Kevin Devezin showed me the fans hung on his walls. As I will discuss later in this work, I could not see the costumes for the last five years, since as a family tradition, every five years they get burnt. At the end of our interview, I told Antoinette that a part of my project would be to build a costume to Henri Devezin. I told her that I would like to connect my Brazilian culture to the second line culture. My First thought for the color of the suit was pink, to make the connection with one of the most celebrated samba schools in Brazil. Antoinette told me that pink would be beautiful but a yellow... and she stopped and said: “When it hits the sun...” I left her house with this in mind. During my interviews with The Undefeated Divas members, I was afraid of not being honest in my ethnographic research, or interfering in a certain way with their answers, since my excitement about the topic was visible. On that moment, I could not stop thinking about the yellow suit suggested by Antoinette Devezin, and I could see that it would be impossible not to leave a part of me in their answers and a part of them in my thoughts. So, I decided, the suit is going to be yellow, and it is going to be beautiful when the sun hits it. (e.g., see Fig.17, Fig.18, Fig.19, Fig. 20, Fig.21.)



Fig. 17. Kevin Devezin in the 2020 parade



Fig. 18. Kevin Devezin and Antoinette Devezin, January 2021

UNDEFEATED DIVAS, GENT'S AND KIDS

FEATURING THE BLACK STORYVILLE STEPPERS

Annual Parade

Sunday January 19, 2020

'STILL WINNING 365'

In Honor of Ms. LILLY "Madea" PATTERSON

October 20, 1925 - October 1, 2019

AND

KING DASHAN "Mook" BROWN

Formation Time 12:45

Show Time 1pm

Big Shot 2020 Ms. Demetrius Williams (Mardi Gras Divas)

Governor: Mr. Robert A Watkins Sr. Governess: Ms. Marion Winley

Dutchess: Rosalinda Winley

START: 2916 Gen Taylor (THE BIG HOUSE "LILLY'S DREAM TEAM") OUT Gen. Taylor, right on S. Claiborne ave. left on Toledano STOP: Tapp's Lounge, proceed out Toledano, right on S. Broad, out S. Broad to Banks right on Banks, left on S. Galvez, left on Conti STOP: 2410 "YELLOW'S PLACE", Out Conti left on N. Rocheblave, right on Bienville to N. Dupre, right on N. Dupre to Conti STOP: GOOD TIMES BAR (keepin it real) right on Conti, left on N. Broad STOP: IMPRESSIVE BARBER (Dumaine Street Gang) proceed out N, Broad STOP: N. Broad and Laharpe (MOC) out N. Broad right at St. Bernard STOP: N. Miro and St. Bernard (Seal's Class Act) continue out St. Bernard Brief Stop under the Bridge " TIRBUTE TO ALL WHO'S GONE HOME.

Continue down St. Bernard STOP (Other Place Lounge)DISBAND

Please leave all attitudes, weapons, problems etc. at home and come out and have fun remember this is a family fun event celebrating our culture and KIDS WILL BE IN FULL EFFECT. Also NOPD.

A special Thanks to The Norman Dixon Sr. foundation, Quint Davis, Jazz Inheritance festival, Goodfellas & Raynold Fenelon, Dumaine Street Gang, Perry & Keepin it real, Good Times Bar, Impressive Barber, MOC, Seal's Mardi Gras Lounge, WWOZ, Tapp's, The Patterson & Gaines Family.

RBI, Diane Harris, Evelyn Young, Wallace Patterson Sr, Jamal Baker, Diane Rodriguez, Anna Babin, Faye Fanta, Madea, Mook, Ora Lee Baker and All who has gone home to be with the Lord.

Fig. 19. The Undefeated Divas parade route 2020



Fig. 20. The Undefeated Divas parade after Hurricane Katrina



Fig. 21. Antoinette Devezin

6. THE UNDEFEATED DIVAS MEMBER

The second line parade is where they dance and celebrate, and every Sunday, on the streets, New Orleans witnesses the resistance of Black bodies assuming another persona through costume, using the streets as the stage for their performances. In my interview with Henri Devezin one of the questions I asked was what were his perceptions about the second line. Promptly, he answered “I see second line as life.... I mean, if... you can tie to pretty much.... anything, and everything that you do, even in a daily basis, whatever you going through, whether is joy, pain, sunshine and rain.... There is always going be second line.” (Devezin, Henri) The answer was deeper than I expected. Knowing that the second line parade was a way of life for him, Henri showed during the interview that he understood that the costume in the annual parade enables him to be distinguished from his everyday life.

The same idea is shared by another member of The Undefeated Divas, Ms. Janice Railey, who accepted to do an interview with me and shared her journey in a living room full of pictures of herself wearing second line costumes. After moving with her mom from New York to New Orleans in 1965, Ms. Janice started to watch the parades with her family. In 1970, she decided to join a second line group, where she learned to dance and to be part of this community. In a quick follow up question, I asked Ms. Janice: “What was your perception about the second line?” She answered, “Second line for me is just... I just like to go up there, just being seen, is a thing where you know everybody is going see me, it’s true because I am in a route, but just to be out there second lining, you know, it’s just giving me joy.” (Railey, Janice) Ms. Janice started to parade with The Undefeated Divas in 2003, and her first time hitting the street was in November. At this time, the group was used to parading on the Thanksgiving weekend. After Hurricane Katrina, the group started to parade in January. Also, after the hurricane, Ms. Janice paraded with the Lady

Wales, the female division of the second line group The Prince of Wales, one of the oldest second line groups in New Orleans. Ms. Janice paraded with the Lady Wales for four years, but as she explained in the interview, she felt that it was time to come back “home,” referring to The Divas group. The main reasons for her words were the clothes and the changes throughout the parade. Ms. Janice explained that for the parade route, the “Divas”, as she warmly calls them, in some years can have three changes of clothes during the parade. She states: “No matter what you say, how you say it, when you say the Divas gonna change, at least one time.... every year!” (Railey, Janice) I was really surprised by this answer since the costume designer did not tell me about these particular clothing changes in our interview, but it did not surprise me the fact that Ms. Janice decided to come back to the divas because of the costumes. After I had asked how important the costume was to her in the annual parade, she answered: “With the Divas! You never know what you gonna wear, until a week or two before the parade” (Railey, Janice) This is something that the costume designer and Ms. Janice are proud of, because they know that no one will copy their costumes, they will be unique on the streets. As a part of the interview, I asked Ms. Janice how she feels when she wears the costume and she replied: “It depends on the costume... see, some costumes you may not like, but is what is, what we, you know, what, whatever Net decides to put on, that is what we gonna put on! But some costumes...you never know what you gonna wear. With Net Devezin! With Antoinette Devezin! You would be surprised when you get ready to put that costume on, and then you see it and... damn!! I like that!! Can’t wait to get into that!” (Railey, Janice) Ms. Janice completed her answer of how she feels saying that she loves the shoes, she has every pair of shoes that she wore to parade. She proudly showed me two pairs. Answering my questions about getting together with other members to get dressed, Ms. Janice explained that for her, it is important to dress together as moment of appreciation among members. She says “Look!

Look what we got on! Girl... look our boots look our shoes, you know, yeah, we get to talk in one another". (Railey, Janice) The release of the costume on the parade day, becomes a rite where the costume is the agent of trust between member and costume designer and it is part of the group's identity, making sure colors will never be copied by other groups, they will always have changes of costumes at the stops and feel undefeated every year. (e.g., see Fig.22, Fig. 23, Fig.24, Fig.25.)



Fig. 22. Ms. Janice favorites shoes



Fig. 23. Ms. Janice parading with The Lady Wales.



Fig. 24. Ms. Janice parading with The Undefeated Divas in 2007



Fig. 25. Ms. Janice parading with The Undefeated Divas in 2020

7. THE THEME AND THE COLORS

The colors of the Undefeated Divas are chosen each year by the board members. The Mardi Gras Indians celebrate their festivities around St Joseph's Day. They put on their crowns and suits and take the streets of New Orleans to meet other gangs. The rich array of colors and beads are the starting point for Henri Devezin's color combination choice for The Undefeated Divas annual parade. In the interview, which took place in his house, Henri told me: "It is a traditional thing, pretty much every Saint Joseph night, when the Mardi Gras Indians come out in the nighttime, me and my family, we go out and we kind of choose the color that night. Like, we take a look at all the different colors that the Indians come out with, then we put it together, pretty much that night we come up with the colors. So that is how we come up with all the color theme, Saint Joseph night." (Devezin, Henri) He also explained: "I mean, it is a conversation, but we do a lot of colors and they have a lot of pretty, pretty colors and different combinations that we wouldn't think that would actually go together, when you look at the Mardi Grass Indians, like this is, a real unique thing, that they have as put all this color that just don't blend, and somehow make it work." (Devezin, Henri) Despite the origin of Mardi Gras Indian costumes and the differences between uptown Indian costumes and downtown New Orleans, the Indians are known for the colorful feathers in their costumes and the sophisticated bead work inspired by Native Americans. In the book *House of Dance and Feathers* Ronald Lewis says "Coming out of slavery, being African American wasn't socially acceptable. By masking like Native Americans, it created an identity of strength." (Breunlin, Lewis, Regis, 65) The combination of ostrich plumes and the beaded patches make the Mardi Gras Indian suits with completely decorated e starting point for Henri Devezin and his family's choice of colors. (e.g., see Fig.26, Fig. 27, Fig.28, Fig.29.)



Fig. 26. A.L. Davis Park Super Sunday New Orleans, 2018 Mardi Gras Indian

8. THE SUIT AND THE TRADITIONS

Henri considers second line his life. He sees the group as his family, and they work together to be undefeated every year on the streets. The second line has been part of his family since he was a kid, but his decision to become part of parades came after his uncle Kevin Devezin's first parade in 2006, after hurricane Katrina. Henri joined the Undefeated Divas & Gents after many attempts when he heard from his uncle that he was not ready yet to be part of the group. Watching his uncle holding the fan for four hours at the parades and receiving instructions to never put the fan down, was how he got prepared by Kevin to put on his outfit on and join the Undefeated Divas. For Henri, his uncle's respect for the second line was an inspiration and parading with the Divas would bring Henri closer to the family tradition, which taught him the importance of the accessories and that to be a good member and a good dancer, your fan should always be held high.

Before Henri became the group's designer, he wore what The Divas, Gents, and the Kids costume designer, his aunt, created. In the meantime, Henri found his passion for designing and started helping his aunt creating the accessories and denim for his first parade as an assistant. After gaining his aunt's trust as a designer, he started designing for the group's gents and kids. In the interview Henri gave to the radio station WWOZ New Orleans 90.7 FM in 2019, he hesitates to call himself the designer of the group. In a sign of respect to the traditions, he said that he should ask the elders what his title would be. In my interview with Henri in 2021, I called him the costume designer of The Undefeated Divas, and I noticed that he accepted the title and was very proud of the work that he has been doing with the group.

For Henri Devezin, the suit in the parade is a representation of the "Sunday's best", which is used to define the best clothes that someone wears to attend church services. As Henri states in his interview: "To present their best self to his community." (Devezin, Henri) In the paper *Dress*

and Identity written by Mari Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B Eicher, the authors define the self as a “composite of an individual’s identities communicated by dress, bodily aspects of appearance, and discourse, as well as the material and social objects (other people) that contribute meaning to situations for interaction.” (Roach and Eicher, 5). In this case, the costume contributes to the configuration of the self, where the member wearing his costume in the parade separates himself from others in a performance of identity as an Undeclared Divas’ member. In the same paper, Roach and Eicher present the dress and identity idea written by Stone G.P. In the paper *Appearance and the Self*, from 1962, Stone states: “Dress contributes to the acquisition of identities and the development of a sense of self.” (Roach and Eicher, 5) Roach and Eicher completes Stone thought about self-stating “that self acquires identities when “situated- that is cast in the shape of a social object by the acknowledgement of his participation or membership in social relations” (Roach and Eicher, 5) During the interview I asked Henri where he keeps his past parade costumes and to my surprise, he answered that every five years, as a tradition, his family burns their costumes. When I asked why, he explained that it is mostly to make room in his house. The tradition to burn costumes is also part of the past of the Mardi Gras Indians. In the journal *New Orleans Mardi Gras Indians: Mediating Racial Politics from the Backstreets to Main Street* Cynthia Becker brings an interview made with big chief Daryl Montana, where he explains that in the past, the Indians used to burn their suits because they have no room in their houses to keep them. The author also reveals that after burning their suits, the Indians would reuse the decorative material in other suits since beads at that time were made of glass, making the material too expensive not to be reused. In my interview with Henri, I could notice that he did not relate his action of burning the suit to the Indians past, but it is possible that a connection of cultures in New Orleans brought to his family the burning suit tradition as a contribution in the acquisition of identity.



Fig. 27. Henri in the 2019 parade. Second line suit



Fig. 28. Mardi Gras Indian suit, Big Chief Demond, Mardi Gras day 2018

9. MY DESIGN

In the development of this work, the idea of designing a costume for Henri Devezin came as something inevitable, after my involvement with The Undefeated Divas. Using my project class at LSU and with the mentorship of my advisor Kyla Kazuschyk, I decided to build the full garment, with pants, vest and jacket. The suit shall be made from scratch, following the traditional process of making a suit.

First, I designed the suit based on design research. The following step is scheduling a meeting with Henri Devezin to take his measurements. With this in hand I can start my pattern process, which consists of using a template used to create the parts of the garment which are traced on paper, following the model measurements. After I finish the pattern, I trace it in a cotton fabric, cut the fabric and assemble the pieces together to create a mockup of the suit. That means a suit made of relatively inexpensive cotton for the model fitting and to make alterations, if necessary. With the mockup in hand, I can make a second appointment with Henri and try the mockup on him. My next step shall be making the necessary alterations, using the mockup as base and after that, tracing the pattern and cutting the fashion fabric. In this case, the fabric chosen by me is going to be 100% wool. After sewing the pants, the vest and the jacket, I shall have Henri try it on once again, and if necessary, make more alterations. Then, I am going to work on the finishing of the garment, as the hem and the stitching of buttons.

My main idea with this suit is to have a photo shoot with Henri in New Orleans to show our collaboration through the process of this research.

10.THECNICAL DRAWING



Fig. 29. Technical Drawing

10.1 RENDERING



Fig. 30. Rendering

CONCLUSION

On January 17th, 2021, I did my last interview in New Orleans. It was supposed to be the The Undefeated Divas' parade day. I was there, sitting in the living room with the two persons with whom I prepared myself during the previous year to meet, the owners of the group, Antoinette and Kevin Devezin. The sadness because they could not hit the streets this year did not prevent the family and some members of the group from celebrating. They had a small brass band at their door that day. Since I started this research, I prepared myself to take pictures of the costumes in the 2021 parade, which did not happen. But I could not prepare myself for the amount of kindness that I received through this process. I could not prepare myself for the emotional attachment with the Divas during my interviews. More than spending an afternoon with the members, we did a collaborating work where my passion for second line was fed by their desire to talk about the group and their beautiful costumes.

In this research, I collected interviews with members of the second line group The Undefeated Divas, and through them I created codes to reach important themes to understand the construction of identity through costume in this group. The answers to my questionnaire were important to understand how the members of the groups see themselves, how they create their identity through peculiarities in the costume construction and if it comes from the costume designer, or from wearing the costumes, or from a member.

For me, this research was not just a necessity to finish my MFA at LSU, but it was also the beginning of a learning process in a field that means a lot to me, on the root that comes before dress, before we present ourselves and on how we perform our identity through costume. This research is the opening for further research. I know that the brass band just started for me, and I still have the whole route to parade.

APENDIX 1. QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR MEMBERS

1. When was your first experience with the second line parade?
2. What are your perceptions about second line parades?
3. When did you start to parade with The Undefeated Divas?
4. How important is the costume for the annual parade?
5. Do you wear your costume after the annual parade?
6. How do you feel when you are wearing your costume for the annual parade?
7. Do you get together with other members to get ready for the parade?
8. Do you think that wearing your costume in the parade communicates a message to others?
9. What is the significance of The Undefeated Divas for you?
10. Does your family support you being a member of The Undefeated Divas?

QUESTIONNAIRE / INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR THE COSTUME DESIGNER

1. How does The Undefeated Divas choose the colors for the annual parade?
2. What is the symbolism of the sash?
3. Why do the members have a dove on their shoulders?
4. What is the symbolism of the fan in the parade?
5. What is the symbolism of the canes?
6. What is the symbolism of the yoke?
7. Do you take measurements of each member?
8. How do you present the design for the annual parade to the group?

APENDIX 2. CONSENT FORM

Louisiana State University – School of Theatre, Phone # (225) 578-4174

Study Title: THE SECOND LINE PARADE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY THROUGH COSTUME.

The purpose of this study will be to better understand how costume, as an important part of the parade, helps to create a meaning of identity for The Undefeated Divas second line group in their annual parade.

The result of this research is to create an ethnographic body of knowledge of the design process of the second line group, The Undefeated Divas.

Participants are expected to take part in an interview conducted via video conference or answer a questionnaire in person, based on the same questions asked in the interview about the importance of costume in the second line group, The Undefeated Divas. The interview should last no longer than one hour.

The inclusion criteria for the study is broad. Eligible candidates are members of second line group in New Orleans who are at least 18 years old. The exclusion criteria are any member under 18 years of age. There are no risks involved in participating in the study. The Undefeated Divas' subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

Participants will be asked to provide photos of past annual parades wearing costumes and accessories. The photos will be used as narrative of The Undefeated Divas costume history and will be part of the thesis as a data for further research on the topic. The data will be protected by

encryption using the research team's LSU One Drive. The photos will be deleted at the end of this research.

The following investigators are available for questions about this study. Suellen Coelho sdacos1@lsu.edu or 225-424-4174. Kyla Kazuschyk. kkazuschyk@lsu.edu or 407-301-3711

Results of the study may be published. This study has been approved by the LSU IRB (Behavioral IRB). For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Alex Cohen at 225-578-8692 or irb@lsu.edu.

I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the researcher's obligation to provide me with a copy of this consent form if signed by me.

Subject Signature: _____ Date: _____

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VITA

Suellen Coelho has graduated in her home country Brazil in clothing production, with emphasis on fashion and costume design. Always interested in working with people and connected to the universe of the arts, Suellen was costume designer in various Brazilian artistic works as music and audiovisual, giving flow to her creative side. Currently, she is an MFA student in Costume Design at LSU and is a Teaching Assistant at the LSU's Costume Shop. Professional costume design credits include LSU dance ensemble, *Trouble in Mind* and *4:48 Psychosis* at Louisiana State University. She plans to receive her Masters this May 2021