

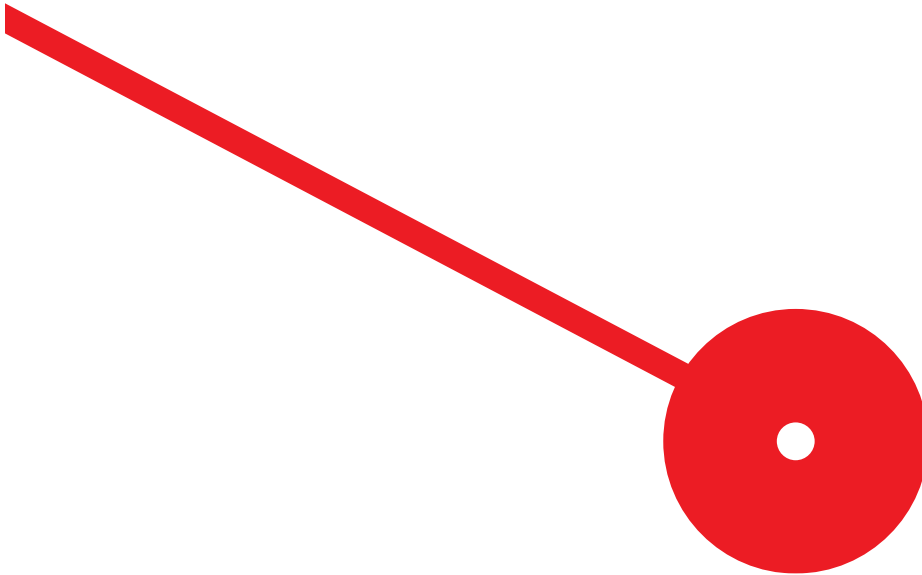


Queering Representations in the Corporate World: The case of BNP PARIBAS Portugal

José Fernando Pereira Martins

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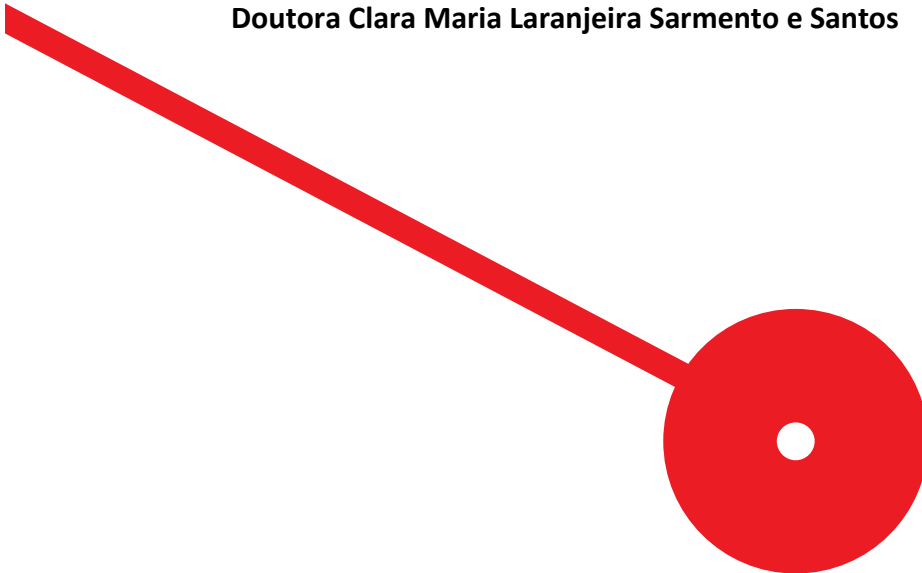




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José Fernando Pereira Martins

**Dissertação de Mestrado apresentado ao Instituto Superior de
Contabilidade e Administração do Porto para a obtenção do grau de
Mestre em Intercultural Studies for Business, sob orientação de
Doutora Clara Maria Laranjeira Sarmento e Santos**



Dedicatória

Àquele que caminhou de mãos dadas com a dúvida,
que escreveu com o corpo cansado e o peito cheio,
que resistiu quando era mais fácil desaparecer.
A mim, que fui chão e abismo,
que me reconstruí palavra a palavra,
que aprendi a ver-me com mais nitidez e a amar-me sem rodapés.
Foram dois anos de luta.
De noites inquietas, de recomeços em silêncio,
de encontros comigo mesmo onde menos esperava.
E dedico-a também a nós.
Às vozes que tremem mas não se calam.
Às identidades que não cabem nas margens e por isso criam novas formas de habitar o mundo.
À comunidade queer, que me ensinou que existir é, por si só, um ato político.
A todos os que se reinventam no silêncio,
aos que resistem com afeto,
e aos que ousam dizer: “sou”, mesmo quando o mundo responde: “não podes”.
Que este trabalho seja semente, eco e abraço.
Porque fiz o melhor que pude.
E agora que sei melhor, farei melhor.

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coragem, drama e dança. Obrigado por nunca banalizares a minha dor e por celebrares cada uma das minhas vitórias como se fossem tuas. És colo e caos bom. E isso é raro.

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Agradeço-me por ter ficado. Por ter tentado. Por ter amado sem medida, mesmo quando o mundo parecia pequeno demais para mim.

Como escrevi um dia, numa carta que guardo como quem guarda fôlego:

Tu não és o que os outros não souberam amar.

Tu és o amor que deste, mesmo sem garantias.

Tu és a coragem de continuar a sentir, mesmo quando sentir dói.

E é aí, nesse lugar frágil, mas inteiro, que finalmente me reconheço.

Resumo:

Esta dissertação explora as interseções entre identidade queer, representação cultural e inclusão no contexto corporativo, com enfoque na iniciativa PRIDE Portugal do BNP Paribas. A partir de uma abordagem interdisciplinar que articula Estudos Queer, teoria interseccional e crítica mediática, o estudo investiga de que forma as iniciativas de diversidade e inclusão (D&I) são concebidas, implementadas e vividas por pessoas LGBTQIA+ em ambientes profissionais.

Assente num estudo de caso aprofundado, o trabalho combina análise documental, entrevistas semiestruturadas e um inquérito quantitativo dirigido aos membros da rede PRIDE. Os resultados demonstram que a iniciativa tem promovido mudanças significativas na cultura interna da organização, nomeadamente ao nível da visibilidade, da segurança psicológica e do sentimento de pertença. Ainda assim, persistem desafios estruturais, como a ausência de dados desagregados, a fraca representatividade de identidades marginalizadas e a necessidade de uma abordagem mais interseccional.

A dissertação defende a co-criação como um caminho para uma inclusão mais autêntica e sustentável, sublinhando a importância da participação activa das pessoas LGBTQIA+ na definição de prioridades, na programação das actividades e na avaliação das estratégias implementadas. Sublinha também o valor das parcerias com organizações externas, enquanto ponte entre as estruturas institucionais e os saberes e vivências da comunidade.

Conclui-se que a inclusão queer nas empresas deve ir para além de gestos simbólicos e campanhas ocasionais, exigindo compromisso estrutural, escuta activa e vontade real de transformação. Este trabalho é, assim, um contributo para repensar o lugar da diversidade nas organizações, com especial atenção ao contexto português.

Palavras chave: Inclusão; LGBTQIA+; Cultura organizacional; Co-criação; Representação;

Abstract:

This dissertation explores the intersections between queer identity, cultural representation, and inclusion within the corporate context, focusing on the PRIDE Portugal initiative at BNP Paribas. Through an interdisciplinary approach grounded in Queer Studies, intersectional theory, and media critique, the study examines how diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives are conceived, implemented, and experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in professional environments.

Based on an in-depth case study, the research combines document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and a quantitative survey targeting members of the PRIDE network. The findings show that the initiative has driven significant changes in the organisation's internal culture, especially in terms of visibility, psychological safety, and sense of belonging. Nonetheless, structural challenges remain, including the lack of disaggregated data, the underrepresentation of marginalised identities, and the need for a more intersectional approach.

The dissertation advocates co-creation as a pathway toward more authentic and sustainable inclusion, emphasising the importance of active participation by LGBTQIA+ individuals in setting priorities, planning activities, and evaluating implemented strategies. It also highlights the value of partnerships with external organisations as a bridge between institutional structures and community-based knowledge and lived experience.

The study concludes that queer inclusion in the workplace must go beyond symbolic gestures and occasional campaigns, demanding structural commitment, active listening, and a genuine will to transform. This work is therefore a contribution to rethinking the place of diversity in organisations, with special attention to the Portuguese context.

Key words: Inclusion; LGBTQIA+; Organizational culture; Co-Creation; Representation;

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In recent decades, the visibility of LGBTQIA++ issues has expanded significantly across political, social, and economic domains. This heightened awareness has gradually permeated the corporate world, where diversity and inclusion are increasingly recognized not only as ethical imperatives but also as strategic assets that enhance organizational culture and drive global economic performance. Yet, we find ourselves in a moment marked by contradiction: while legislative and representational advances are celebrated in many parts of the world, other regions are experiencing troubling regressions. The current political instability in Portugal and the resurgence of conservative rhetoric in the United States, symbolized by the re-election of Donald Trump and the dismantling of diversity policies, underscore the urgent need to critically examine the role of corporations as active agents of social transformation. Against this backdrop, investigating the intersection between LGBTQIA+ identities and business practices is not merely timely, it is imperative.

This tension also manifests in the realm of cultural representation, where queerness is increasingly visible yet not necessarily empowered. Media, literature, and popular culture have long functioned as spaces where LGBTQIA+ identities are negotiated, at times celebrated, at others distorted or commodified. The proliferation of queer narratives across streaming platforms, advertising, and music has created a semblance of progress, but this visibility is often shaped by market logics rather than emancipatory politics. As scholars like Judith Butler and Paul B. Preciado contend, representation is never neutral: it can affirm identities, but also regulate them through mechanisms of performativity and consumption. In an era where queerness is aestheticized, depoliticized, and sold back to audiences under the guise of inclusion, it becomes crucial to interrogate who controls these narratives and to what end.

This dynamic is particularly relevant to the corporate world, where diversity and inclusion initiatives increasingly rely on similar forms of representational politics. In the case of BNP Paribas Portugal, understanding how queerness is constructed and circulated in the public sphere allows us to critically assess how the company frames its own LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. Does the institution engage with queer identities in a transformative way, or does it reproduce the same depoliticized aesthetics prevalent in popular media? Situating this inquiry at the intersection of media studies, queer theory, and cultural critique enables a deeper understanding of how public discourse around LGBTQIA+ identities influences, and is influenced by, the ways in which corporations articulate and perform inclusivity.

This dissertation adopts a combined theoretical and empirical approach to investigate the role of LGBTQIA+ diversity and inclusion initiatives within corporate settings, with a particular focus on the case of BNP Paribas Portugal. Anchored in a case study enriched by document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and surveys, the research explores how such initiatives shape organizational culture, influence human resources policies, inform institutional communication, and impact overall corporate performance. In addition to examining the BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal initiative, the study also incorporates insights from the APPDI (Portuguese Association for Diversity and Inclusion), whose work with national companies highlights the importance of a structured, strategic, and sustained approach to inclusivity within the business landscape.

Beyond a mere corporate analysis, this work is rooted in a profoundly personal concern: the desire to reconcile two spheres of identity that are often seen as incompatible. As someone who simultaneously inhabits the LGBTQIA+ community and the corporate world, this research emerges as an attempt to critically explore, and actively help construct, a space where both dimensions of self can coexist with authenticity, dignity, and visibility. It is both an academic inquiry and a personal journey toward understanding how professional environments can evolve to embrace, rather than erase, difference.

The choice of this topic is driven by both personal conviction and a broader collective urgency, the need to give voice to a queer identity that has, for far too long, been silenced, rendered invisible and misrepresented within diverse cultural media as well as within professional environments. Navigating a corporate culture that often rewards conformity and suppresses difference prompted a deeper reflection on identity, belonging, and the cost of self-erasure in the name of professionalism. As such, this dissertation functions not only as a personal act of affirmation, but also as a proposition for transformation.

A key part of this investigation involves analyzing how LGBTQIA+ identities have been historically represented, or distorted, across mainstream media, including cinema, television, music, literature, and journalism. These cultural domains play a powerful role in shaping public discourse, and often oscillate between two poles: symbolic inclusion that celebrates diversity on the surface, and structural erasure that perpetuates normative ideologies beneath it. Drawing on perspectives from queer theory, this dissertation explores how mediatized representations construct and circulate narratives about queerness, frequently confining it to roles that are stereotyped, commodified, or depoliticized. Yet, alongside these dominant

portrayals, counter-narratives persist: artistic, independent, and grassroots media continue to subvert expectations, reclaim agency, and offer more intersectional and disruptive imaginaries. By interrogating both dominant and alternative modes of queer representation, this work lays the foundation for understanding how these cultural scripts inform expectations within corporate spaces, where queerness is often required to conform to palatable forms of professionalism in order to be accepted.

Overall, through this research, I seek to strengthen LGBTQIA+ visibility in the workplace, advance concrete and sustainable diversity and inclusion strategies, and contribute to the academic conversation on these critical intersections, especially within the underexplored Portuguese context.

The primary aim of this dissertation is to examine the impact of LGBTQIA+ inclusion within corporate environments and to critically assess the role of diversity and inclusion initiatives in shaping organizational performance and culture. Focusing on the BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal initiative, the study explores how such efforts are perceived, implemented, and experienced within a multinational context. By analyzing the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ employees and their allies, through interviews, surveys, and internal documentation, the research provides a nuanced understanding of both the successes and limitations of existing practices. In doing so, it seeks to offer concrete, transferable recommendations for organizations aiming to develop inclusion policies that move beyond performative commitments and toward meaningful, structural transformation.

This research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies to provide a comprehensive and balanced analysis of the subject matter. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both current and former members of the BNP Paribas PRIDE commission, including two of its founding members, to trace the initiative's development, assess its internal impact, and uncover the dynamics that shape its implementation. In parallel, a survey was administered to current members of the PRIDE initiative, irrespective of their sexual orientation or gender identity, with the aim of collecting quantitative data on perceptions of inclusivity, levels of engagement, and the perceived effectiveness of the strategies in place. The survey results were processed through descriptive statistical analysis, while the interviews underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, significant narratives, and underlying meanings. This methodological design was intentionally selected to balance the experiential depth of qualitative insight with

the empirical rigor of quantitative evidence, an essential combination when engaging with a topic that is as emotionally charged as it is structurally embedded.

A central hypothesis guiding this research is that the future of meaningful LGBTQIA+ inclusion within corporate environments depends on transitioning from top-down diversity strategies to participatory, co-created frameworks. Co-creation, originally theorized within innovation and service design (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sanders & Stappers, 2008), has since gained traction in organizational studies as a model for democratizing decision-making and embedding lived experience into institutional change. Within the context of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), co-creation enables marginalized employees, not merely HR departments or executive sponsors, to shape programming, set strategic priorities, and evaluate impact. This study explores the extent to which PRIDE Portugal currently reflects co-creative dynamics and identifies pathways for deepening employee agency through shared ownership of inclusion efforts. In doing so, it assesses whether co-creation offers a viable and scalable mechanism for bridging gaps between symbolic visibility and structural transformation.

This dissertation is organized into four chapters, each contributing to a progressively layered and interdisciplinary exploration of the relationship between queer identity, cultural representation, and corporate inclusivity. Together, these chapters offer a theoretical, cultural, and empirical journey that culminates in a critical reflection on how LGBTQIA+ inclusion can be meaningfully implemented within corporate environments, beyond tokenistic gestures and into the realm of structural transformation.

Chapter one lays the theoretical and epistemological foundation of the dissertation by offering a comprehensive literature review within the interdisciplinary field of Queer Studies. It critically examines the evolution of queer thought, focusing on the deconstruction of heteronormativity and cisnormativity, and highlights the socio-cultural mechanisms that have historically marginalized non-normative identities. Drawing on the contributions of scholars such as Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, José Esteban Muñoz, and Michael Warner, the chapter explores how gender and sexuality have been constructed through binary discourses and regulated through legal, medical, and institutional systems.

A key section of Chapter One is dedicated to unpacking the term "queer", its reclamation, political potency, and ongoing tensions within both activist and academic contexts. This is followed by a conceptual exploration of Queer Theory, which interrogates identity

categories, disrupts the stability of normative assumptions, and proposes performativity and intersectionality as tools of analysis and resistance. The chapter then broadens into the field of Queer Studies as an academic discipline, tracing its development across diverse disciplines such as literature, cultural studies, sociology, and organizational theory. The interplay between queer activism and theory is also addressed, illustrating how intellectual paradigms and grassroots mobilizations have co-evolved.

Further, the chapter provides a genealogical timeline of the PRIDE movement, connecting the 1969 Stonewall Uprising to contemporary Pride initiatives, and critiques the depoliticization of PRIDE in commercial settings. It concludes by mapping the intersections between Queer Studies, feminist theory, and the Black Lives Matter movement, foregrounding the importance of intersectionality in understanding contemporary queer politics. This chapter functions as the conceptual lens through which cultural representation, corporate inclusion, and organizational dynamics are later analyzed.

Chapter Two transitions from the theoretical field to the cultural sphere, critically investigating how queer identities have been portrayed, circulated, and contested across various forms of media. It approaches media as a key site for the production of social meaning and as an influential force in shaping public attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ individuals. Through a multi-sectoral analysis, encompassing mass media, cinema, television, literature, and music, the chapter interrogates how queer visibility has emerged unevenly across time and space.

Subsections address the historical erasure or pathologization of LGBTQIA+ characters, the strategic deployment of tokenism, and the rise of neoliberal inclusivity, which often commodifies queer identities for profit while depoliticizing their radical potential. Through case analyses of landmark media texts and trends, it explores how certain representations reinforce normativity (e.g., the "gay best friend" trope or the white, cisgender gay male as default) while others disrupt expectations and enable forms of cultural resistance.

Special attention is paid to intersectional gaps in media portrayals, particularly the underrepresentation of trans, intersex, non-binary, disabled, and racialized queer bodies, and to how these absences affect both public recognition and policy development. Drawing from queer and feminist media theory, the chapter examines the difference between representation and inclusion, between symbolic visibility and structural transformation. Ultimately, this chapter offers a critical framework for understanding how cultural representations influence

broader corporate narratives and serve as precursors to institutional DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) strategies.

The third chapter moves the analysis into the corporate realm, offering a global overview of how businesses have responded to demands for LGBTQIA+ inclusion and visibility. Rather than treating corporate allyship as a homogeneous phenomenon, this chapter interrogates the complex dynamics that shape how companies engage with queer identities, dynamics that range from genuine advocacy to market-driven performativity. Drawing on international case studies, including Barilla's public transformation from homophobia-linked scandal to industry model of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, and the increasing presence of queer topics at elite economic forums like the World Economic Forum in Davos, the chapter examines how economic power and social justice narratives converge. These examples serve to highlight how LGBTQIA+ inclusion has been instrumentalized by some organizations as a reputational asset, raising questions about authenticity, accountability, and long-term commitment. The discussion is informed by critical literature on corporate pinkwashing, stakeholder pressure, and the commodification of diversity in neoliberal contexts.

The chapter then narrows its focus to the Portuguese landscape, providing a necessary bridge between global trends and the localized dynamics of the BNP Paribas case study to follow. It surveys the evolution of LGBTQIA+ rights in Portugal, examining relevant legal milestones, policy reforms, and national debates around gender identity, same-sex parenting, and workplace discrimination. Special attention is given to the Portuguese Diversity Charter and its role in shaping corporate commitments to inclusivity. The chapter further contextualizes the state of corporate LGBTQIA+ inclusion in Portugal by analyzing publicly available reports, surveys, and data from organizations such as ILGA Portugal and Sonae. Through this analysis, it becomes evident that while the country has made legislative progress, challenges around enforcement, organizational culture, and intersectional representation remain. The Portuguese context, therefore, emerges as a critical site of both innovation and limitation in implementing global diversity standards, making it an ideal location for the subsequent case study of BNP Paribas.

The fourth chapter forms the empirical core of the dissertation and presents an in-depth case study of BNP Paribas with a focus on the PRIDE Portugal initiative. It explores how LGBTQIA+ inclusivity has been operationalized within the bank, revealing the multilayered interplay between global corporate values, national legislation, and local organizational

culture. This chapter examines the strategic alignment between the bank's global diversity goals and its regional adaptations, particularly within countries that pose legal or cultural barriers to queer visibility. The analysis considers how BNP Paribas positions itself as an inclusive employer through CSR initiatives, external communications, and internal policy. It critically assesses the degree to which these commitments translate into meaningful change for LGBTQIA+ employees across its global offices, raising questions about the consistency and depth of implementation.

Methodologically, this chapter adopts a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods approach, combining semi-structured interviews, institutional document analysis, and survey data to construct a multi-perspectival understanding of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity at BNP Paribas. The interview component includes testimonies from current and former members of the PRIDE Portugal Commission, two of whom were founding figures of the initiative, allowing for longitudinal insights into its development and internal dynamics. The interviews were designed to elicit reflections on inclusion, representation, resistance, and structural influence, and were conducted with strict adherence to ethical research protocols, including informed consent and anonymization. In parallel, a survey was disseminated among current PRIDE Portugal members and allies to capture broader perceptions of corporate inclusivity, psychological safety, and ERG effectiveness. These quantitative results help validate and contextualize qualitative findings. Finally, document analysis, encompassing internal diversity reports, training materials, and public statements, was employed to examine the alignment between discourse and practice. This triangulation of methods strengthens the reliability and depth of the chapter's findings, while also foregrounding the role of researcher positionality in shaping the analysis. As a former member of the PRIDE Commission, the author integrates autoethnographic sensitivity while maintaining critical distance, acknowledging the benefits and constraints of insider access.

Chapter four proceeds to tracing the development of the PRIDE Portugal network, from its grassroots beginnings as an informal support space to its formal recognition as a strategic internal stakeholder. Particular focus is placed on the dual function of PRIDE as both an identity-based safe space and an organizational agent tasked with influencing policy, recruitment, communication, and training. The analysis reveals the tensions that emerge when employee-led advocacy intersects with institutional governance: while the network has enabled visibility, policy influence, and cross-departmental collaboration, it also faces limitations related to resource constraints, representation, and bureaucratic inertia.

Additionally, this chapter addresses the specific challenges of implementing LGBTQIA+ initiatives across diverse legal geographies. BNP Paribas' operations in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and Nigeria, where same-sex relationships are criminalized, highlight the ethical dilemmas multinational companies face in navigating global commitments to human rights while respecting national sovereignty. The chapter reflects on how BNP Paribas has managed this tension, and to what extent it protects queer employees in high-risk contexts through internal mechanisms, such as anonymous reporting, confidential support structures, or remote ERG participation. These reflections are essential to understanding the potential and the fragility of global inclusivity claims within a corporate environment that operates transnationally.

The fifth and final chapter brings together the research findings to evaluate the impact of PRIDE Portugal on both corporate practices and broader organizational representations of queerness. It provides a detailed overview of the methodological approach used to collect and analyze data, including the rationale for choosing qualitative interviews, the construction of the survey instrument, and the selection criteria for interviewees. A strong reflexive component is embedded throughout the chapter, particularly in recognizing the positionality of the researcher as both a member of the PRIDE network and a critical observer. This methodological self-awareness strengthens the reliability and ethical rigor of the findings while enriching the analysis with autoethnographic insights.

The presentation of results begins with a thematic dissertation of the interviews, identifying key patterns around identity expression, perceived support, representation gaps, and interdepartmental cooperation. Interviewees reflected on the emotional labor involved in being visible at work, the empowerment gained through participation in the PRIDE network, and the obstacles still faced when advocating for structural change. The survey data is then mobilized to complement and extend these insights, offering a broader snapshot of how inclusion is experienced by a larger pool of employees. Quantitative findings related to perceptions of leadership support, psychological safety, and intersectional belonging are triangulated with qualitative narratives to produce a cohesive and critically engaged account.

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the strategic value and potential limitations of internal LGBTQIA+ networks within corporations. While PRIDE Portugal has succeeded in creating spaces of visibility and influencing policy, it operates within a corporate framework that can co-opt activist energies or constrain more radical demands. These insights allow for

a deeper understanding of what constitutes meaningful inclusivity in a corporate context, not just the presence of diversity initiatives, but their effectiveness, autonomy, and capacity for structural change. The chapter closes by offering concrete recommendations for enhancing LGBTQIA+ inclusion at BNP Paribas and other organizations, including the strengthening of intersectional frameworks, institutionalizing ERG feedback in leadership evaluations, and fostering alliances with external queer organizations to ensure accountability and continuous learning. In doing so, the chapter not only assesses the current state of inclusion at BNP Paribas but also contributes to a broader discourse on the future of corporate diversity practices.

In synthesizing these diverse yet interrelated chapters, this dissertation positions itself at the intersection of critical theory, cultural representation, and organizational practice. It argues that meaningful LGBTQIA+ inclusion must move beyond symbolic gestures or market-driven visibility toward structures of accountability, cultural transformation, and ethical engagement. By integrating theoretical frameworks with empirical insights, anchored in both lived experience and institutional critique, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how queerness is represented, negotiated, and operationalized within the corporate world. It also highlights the strategic importance of localized advocacy in shaping global commitments, particularly within transnational organizations like BNP Paribas. Ultimately, the research invites readers to reconsider the transformative potential of queerness not only as an identity but as a mode of resistance, reimagination, and institutional renewal.

CHAPTER I – QUEER STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE AREA

Society has witnessed noteworthy advancements in recent decades regarding the acknowledgment and integration of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. This transformation, however, has not occurred in a vacuum; it is the result of sustained resistance, activism, and scholarly intervention that have sought to dismantle long-standing systems of heteronormativity and cisnormativity. Heteronormativity refers to the culturally reinforced assumption that heterosexuality is the default or natural sexual orientation, while cisnormativity presumes that all individuals inherently identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. Together, these normative frameworks uphold binary, exclusionary models of identity that systematically marginalize LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly those whose gender expressions or sexualities deviate from societal expectations.

The acronym LGBTQIA+ is an inclusive and evolving representation of various sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions. Provided below is a breakdown that elucidates the significance of each letter:

L: Lesbian refers to women who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.

G: Gay is often used to describe men who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other men. It can also be used as an inclusive term for individuals of any gender who are attracted to the same gender.

B: Bisexual refers to individuals who are emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to both their own gender and other genders.

T: Trans encompasses individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. Trans people may identify as male, female, non-binary, or other gender identities.

Q: Queer is an umbrella term that encompasses a diverse range of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. It can be used by individuals who do not conform to traditional labels or who prefer not to specify their sexual orientation or gender identity.

I: Intersex refers to individuals born with physical variations in sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex is a natural variation of human biology.

A: Asexual represents individuals who experience little or no sexual attraction to other. It does not imply a lack of emotional or romantic connection, as asexual individuals may still form intimate relationships.

+ : The plus sign functions as an open and intentionally indeterminate symbol, acknowledging the existence of identities and experiences that are not explicitly captured by the letters listed above. This includes, but is not limited to, pansexual, non-binary, genderfluid, demisexual, agender, and two-spirit identities. By resisting closure, the “+” signals an ongoing commitment to inclusivity and fluidity in the understanding of gender and sexuality. As Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele (2016) emphasize, the “+” also reflects the evolving nature of gender and sexual identities, serving as a reminder of the importance of inclusivity and acceptance.

As Warner (1991) argues, heteronormativity operates as a pervasive ideology embedded in everyday life, institutional practices, and social expectations, rendering queer lives invisible or abnormal. Similarly, Serano (2007) critiques cisnormativity for reinforcing the systemic invalidation of transgender and gender non-conforming people through policies, language, and medical discourse. These theoretical interventions have been essential in advancing critical understandings of how normativity functions as a mechanism of social control, not only in law and culture but also in workplaces, the media, education systems, and healthcare, to name but a few. Within this framework, the challenge becomes not merely to include LGBTQIA+ individuals, but to critically interrogate the structures that continue to frame inclusion through normative terms.

The journey towards equality and acceptance has been marked by the unwavering determination and resilience of individuals who have fought for their rights and social recognition. As a result of this ongoing struggle, a rich lexicon has emerged to describe the varied identities and experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community. These terms, often presented as acronyms, reflect the evolving understanding of gender and sexuality, as well as the collective effort to create a more inclusive and affirming society. This linguistic evolution also mirrors the historical shift from medical pathologization to political self-identification, for instance, the transition from “homosexual” (used in psychiatric discourse) to reclaimed terms such as “gay” and “queer,” which today serve as affirmations of resistance and pride (Butler, 1990). This introduction aims to provide an overview of these acronyms and the significance they hold in representing the diverse tapestry of identities that exist within the LGBTQIA+ community. Naming, in this context, is not neutral: it plays a central role in visibility politics, shaping how individuals claim space within public, legal, corporate, and media spheres. In intercultural settings, particularly in business environments, the adoption, or omission, of inclusive language reflects not only organizational values but

also broader sociopolitical pressures. As acronyms like LGBTQIA+ expand, their meanings become sites of negotiation, translation, and even resistance, especially when applied across different cultural and linguistic frameworks. Ansara and Hegarty (2014) argue that everyday professional language often remains rooted in binary assumptions about gender and sexuality, which can render non-normative identities invisible if not actively addressed. Similarly, the United Nations (n.d.) asserts that consistent use of inclusive language within organizations is essential to building cultures of belonging and advancing equity in communication, policy, and leadership practices. By examining these terms, we can appreciate the complexity and nuance of human experiences and reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity and respect for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Firstly, the LGBTQIA++ inclusive acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans. The "+" symbolizes the inclusion of other sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions beyond those explicitly mentioned in the acronym. It is a broad term used to represent the diverse range of identities and experiences within the community (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

After, the LGBTQIA+ acronym that expands on LGBTQIA+ by including "Queer" as an additional identity, here understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Then, LGBTQIA+ which adds further letters to the acronym to represent a broader spectrum of identities. The "I" stands for Intersex and the "A" can stand for either "Asexual" or "Allies" (supportive individuals who are not part of the LGBTQIA+ community but advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights and equality) (Barker & Scheele, 2016) It is worth noting, however, that the inclusion of "Allies" under the "A" has sparked debate within the community, as some argue that allyship, while essential, should not occupy a position within an acronym that is meant to center marginalized identities

In recent scholarship, the expanding nature of the acronym has been both celebrated and critiqued. While many view it as a necessary reflection of growing inclusivity and self-definition, others have raised concerns about acronym "inflation," arguing that increasingly lengthy formulations can become difficult to use, tokenize certain groups, or lose coherence in public and institutional discourse (Schopper et al., 2024)

It is important to note that the specific acronyms and their meanings can vary and evolve over time, reflecting the ongoing discussions and changes within the LGBTQIA+ community. Some variations may include additional letters or use different terms to represent specific identities and experiences. Respecting individual preferences and using inclusive language are essential when discussing or referring to the LGBTQIA+ community.

This complexity is particularly evident in the context of corporate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, where decisions about which acronyms to adopt, and how to define them, can influence workplace culture, legal protections, and global branding strategies (Schopper et al., 2024)

The evolution of the LGBTQIA+ acronym can be attributed to several factors which include increased awareness, understanding, and inclusivity of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Over the years, several significant factors have contributed to the evolution of this acronym, including the recognition of intersectionality, the embracing of diversity and inclusion, the defiance of the binary constructs, the representation and visibility of the community itself and the ongoing social and cultural changes.

Intersectionality, a concept introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), refers to the way systems of oppression interlock, such as racism, sexism, ableism, and classism, to shape individuals' lived experiences. In the context of LGBTQIA+ identity, intersectionality highlights how gender and sexuality are inseparable from other social categories, prompting the need for broader, more inclusive linguistic frameworks.

The initial acronym, LGBTQIA+, focused primarily on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, there was a growing recognition that individuals' experiences are shaped by multiple intersecting factors, such as race, ethnicity, class, and ability and to address this, the acronym expanded to include additional letters to represent the diverse experiences within the community.

This evolution not only mirrors shifts within grassroots activism but also reflects demands for institutional recognition in education, government, and the corporate sector. The acronym has become a tool for policy-making, branding, and corporate responsibility, yet its use is not neutral.

The enlargement of the acronym reflects a commitment to inclusivity and the acknowledgement that identities and experiences go beyond the original four letters. By

adding letters like Q (Queer/Questioning), I (Intersex), A (Asexual/Ally), and more, the aim is to recognize and validate the diverse range of identities and orientations existents.

The expanded acronym reflects a rejection of a strict binary categories of gender and sexuality by recognizing the existence and legitimacy of identities and experiences that do not fit within the traditional heterosexual and cisgender norms.

At a global level, the deployment of these acronyms presents intercultural challenges. In many cultural or national contexts, Western LGBTQIA+ terminologies may not translate effectively or may conflict with local understandings of identity, kinship, or queerness. This dissonance raises urgent questions for multinational organizations navigating DEI strategies across diverse geographies.

Overall, the evolution of the LGBTQIA+ acronym is driven by a desire to be more inclusive, representative, and affirming of the diverse range of identities and experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community. It reflects the ongoing progress towards greater recognition, acceptance, and equality for individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

At the same time, it challenges us to ensure that language does not merely symbolically include, but also structurally transform the spaces in which it is invoked, be it a policy, a workplace, or a cultural context.

1.1 Queer

Queer is an umbrella term that has broadened and been recovered by the LGBTQIA+ community to embrace an extensive spectrum of identities, experiences, and manifestations that defy gender and sexuality conventions. Historically employed as a disparaging phrase, it has been repurposed as a powerful and inclusive term for numerous LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

This reclamation has not been universally accepted; while “queer” has gained traction as an empowering self-designation among younger generations and radical activist circles, it remains contentious for some older LGBTQIA+ individuals who still associate it with trauma and slurs (Jagose, 1996).

The concept of "queer" defies and surpasses traditional sexual orientation and gender identity classifications and binaries. This covers an extensive variety of personal identities especially but not restricted to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and questioning people. Queerness additionally recognizes the intersections and

interrelationships of gender, sexuality, race, class, and other elements of identity management, acknowledging how these encounters interact and affect one's entire sense of self (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Beyond this, queer functions not only as a self-identifying label but also as a critical and political stance that resists assimilationist narratives, normative institutionalization, and essentialist identity politics. It offers a conceptual space to challenge rigid identity categories and articulate more fluid, oppositional, and intersectional understandings of selfhood (Muñoz, 1999; Butler, 1990).

Queerness can be thought of as a personal identity along with a political stance since it denies the notion of a set and normative behavior of being or expressing oneself. On the contrary, it welcomes and embraces the shifting nature, intricacy, and individuality of each individual's identities and requirements. This challenges heteronormativity, the concept that heterosexuality is the default and norm, and supports tolerance and acceptance of various gender and sexuality expressions (Jagose, 1996).

Aside from its personal relevance, the term "queer" has found use in academic and cultural contexts. As previously stated, queer studies are an academic subject that investigates and analyzes the existences, histories, and social dynamics of LGBTQIA+ people. Throughout academia, queer theory, to be addressed below, provides challenging paradigms for analyzing and deconstructing normative beliefs surrounding gender and sexuality (Jagose, 1996).

However, the increasing institutionalization of the term, particularly in marketing, corporate Diversity & Inclusion frameworks and NGO discourse, has drawn criticism from scholars and activists who argue that "queer" risks being stripped of its radical potential when detached from its anti-normative and deconstructive roots (Ferraro et al., 2023). In these contexts, "queer" may be adopted as a symbol of progressive branding while leaving structural inequalities unchallenged.

It is noteworthy that the expression "queer" is extremely subjective and could suggest a variety of things depending on the subject. There are individuals who identify purely as queer, while others incorporate it with other labels or decide on various designations to express their identity. Individual choices and self-identifications must be honored in discussions regarding LGBTQIA+ identities (Halperin, 2003).

In this sense, queerness is not only plural but also contingent, demanding that scholars, institutions, and organizations engage with it reflexively, recognizing that its political, cultural, and epistemological meanings cannot be assumed as universal or static.

Since its inception, the label "queer" has undergone modifications and covered a variety of meanings. The past of this term demonstrates both its demeaning usage and the LGBTQIA+ community's reclamation and redefining (Halperin, 2003).

Traditionally, the term "queer" was employed with a derogatory meaning to denigrate and stigmatize those who did not conform to social expectations of gender and sexuality. It was interpreted as a form of insult, with negative overtones that perpetuated prejudice and marginalization (Halperin, 2003).

Beginning in the latter part of the twentieth century, certain LGBTQIA+ activists and groups started recovering the term "queer" as a source of empowerment and self-identification. People hoped to recover their agency and visibility by embracing the phrase, which challenged the power dynamics entrenched in pejorative terminology (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Established the LGBTQIA+ community's acceptance and comprehension of multiple gender and sexual orientations evolved, the term "queer" developed as an umbrella term embracing a wide range of non-normative identities and experiences. It recognizes the community's fluidity and diversity and provides an inclusive environment for people who are not associated with specific identities (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Additionally, "Queer" has also been employed as a political and academic paradigm for critical analysis and social transformation. Queer theory to be furthered addressed below evolved as an intellectual subject that questions gender and sexuality norms. Its goal is to deconstruct binary categories, challenge power systems, and investigate the social, cultural, and political dimensions of identity and desire (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

In the last few decades, the term "queer" has come to mean more than just gender and sexuality. Some people and communities frequently employ it as a wider phrase for challenging norms and hierarchies in numerous elements of identity and society. It may include assessments of racism, class, ability, and other social constructions, emphasizing the interdependence of many forms of oppression (Jagose, 1996).

It is particularly important to keep in mind that the connotations of "queer" vary greatly depending on the individual and the environment. Not everybody in the LGBTQIA+ community accepts the term, as it nevertheless carries negative implications for particular individuals. Sensitivity towards personal preferences and self-identities should be paramount when debating or applying the term "queer."

1.1.1 Queer Theory

Queer Theory is an interdisciplinary and critical approach that challenges and questions normative understandings of sexuality, gender, and identity. It emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the limitations of traditional approaches to the study of sexuality and gender. Rather than focusing solely on sexual orientation, Queer Theory examines the broader social, cultural, and political contexts in which sexual and gender identities are constructed and understood. It seeks to disrupt and critique the prevailing binary and heteronormative assumptions that define what is considered "normal" or "deviant" in terms of sexuality and gender. The primary goal of Queer Theory is to interrogate and disrupt binary classifications, hierarchies, and power dynamics, offering fresh perspectives for understanding and analyzing social, cultural, and political matters (Jagose, 1996).

Building upon post-structuralist and anti-essentialist frameworks, both of which challenge the idea that identity categories have fixed or inherent meanings, Queer Theory interrogates the stability of labels like "man," "woman," "gay," or "straight." Post-structuralism rejects universal truths, emphasizing that meanings are produced through discourse and shaped by power relations, while anti-essentialism argues that identities are socially and historically constructed rather than biologically predetermined. Within this framework, gender and sexuality are understood not as stable essences but as fluid, performative, and contingent, open to disruption, resignification, and resistance. (Butler, 1990).

To better comprehend the importance of Queer Studies and Queer Theory, below are introduced and defined key concepts and ideas that will complement and are crucial to the understanding of this dissertation.

The first is the concept of Heteronormativity since Queer Theory critically examines the prevailing social and cultural norms that assume heterosexuality as the default and desirable sexual orientation. It investigates how heteronormativity shapes societal expectations, institutions, and power dynamics, reinforcing the marginalization and prejudice faced by non-heterosexual individuals (Butler, 1990).

The concept of the social construction of gender and sexuality challenges the assumption that these categories are fixed or inherent. As Judith Butler (1990) argues, gender and sexuality are socially produced and historically situated, shaped by cultural, political, and institutional discourses that both constrain and enable subjectivities. This understanding emphasizes the fluidity, complexity, and multiplicity of identities, contesting binary frameworks.

Queer Theory, as developed by scholars such as Butler (1990) and Annamarie Jagose (1996), extends this perspective by analyzing how identities are performed through social interaction and discursive practices. Rather than treating identity as innate, it foregrounds its constructed and contested nature, thereby opening possibilities for resistance and subversion of normative regimes.

A key dimension of this theoretical framework is intersectionality, which recognizes that experiences of gender and sexuality are intertwined with other axes of identity, including race, class, ability, and nationality. As Kimberlé Crenshaw argues, intersecting social categories produce layered experiences of privilege and oppression, which shape both subjectivities and political struggles.

Queer Theory has had a profound impact on academic research and social movements, informing fields such as sociology, anthropology, literature, and cultural studies. By deconstructing normative expectations and binary logics, it has provided critical tools to analyze power structures and to imagine alternative modes of existence and relationality. This has also inspired cultural production, activism, and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights and broader social justice (Meg-John Barker & Julia Scheele, 2016).

Intersectionality plays a crucial role, recognizing how various intersecting factors, such as race, class, and disability, shape individuals' identities and experiences. Queer Theory also engages with performativity and identity, emphasizing that gender and sexuality are not fixed but performed and negotiated. Another important focus is the exploration of sexuality and desire, highlighting the diversity of orientations and practices. Queer Theory is closely linked to politics and activism, critiquing oppressive institutions and advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights and equality. Debates within the field revolve around essentialism versus constructionism, addressing the extent to which gender and sexuality are socially constructed or have inherent qualities. The inclusivity and representation of diverse identities within queer communities is also a subject of discussion. Furthermore, the relationship between

Queer Theory and feminism is a topic of ongoing exploration, as both fields intersect in their commitment to challenging gender norms. Lastly, the issue of academic accessibility is raised, with calls for making Queer Theory more approachable and relevant to broader audiences.

1.1.2 Queer Studies

Queer Studies, commonly referred to as LGBTQIA+ Studies or Queer Theory, is a multidisciplinary field of inquiry that emerged in the late 20th century, that investigates and analyzes issues concerning gender identity, sexual orientation, and the daily experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) people. It arose in the late twentieth century as a reaction to LGBTQIA+ people's marginalization and exclusion from standard academic subjects. The field strives to develop a critical comprehension of how gender and sexuality are socially constructed, examining the influence of power structures, societal norms, and cultural contexts on these concepts. (Jagose, 1996).

Although Queer Studies and Queer Theory are closely intertwined, it is useful to distinguish the two: Queer Theory is often framed as a conceptual and critical lens rooted in post-structuralist thought, while Queer Studies refers more broadly to the interdisciplinary academic field that applies this lens across disciplines such as history, sociology, literature, and cultural studies.

This literature review highlights the diverse and evolving nature of Queer Studies, inviting ongoing critical engagement and dialogue to address the intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities.

Its development reflects a persistent effort to center marginalized voices, particularly those at the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality. In recent years, the field has increasingly engaged with global and postcolonial critiques, recognizing that Western-centric models of queerness do not always translate across cultural or geopolitical contexts. Scholars such as Emma Pérez (1999) and Zairong Xiang (2018) have emphasized the need to disrupt dominant Euro-American queer paradigms, calling attention to the ways colonial legacies continue to shape epistemologies of gender and sexuality. Scholars have thus called for a decolonial approach to Queer Studies, one attentive to local epistemologies, colonial legacies, and the situated nature of identity and resistance. This approach aligns with Walter Mignolo's (2009) notion of "epistemic disobedience," which advocates for delinking from colonial modes of knowledge and centering subaltern voices in academic and activist spaces

Scholars within Queer Studies aim to challenge and deconstruct traditional notions of sexuality, gender, and identity by exploring the social, cultural, historical, and political dimensions of LGBTQIA+ lives. They seek a critical understanding of the social construction of gender and sexuality. The field emphasizes the influence of power structures, social norms, and cultural contexts on these categories. Furthermore, Queer Studies has played a vital role in challenging social norms, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights, and promoting inclusivity and acceptance. It has inspired activism, influenced various disciplines, and contributed to the broader movement for LGBTQIA+ liberation (Jagose, A., 1996).

Key topics of investigation include LGBTQIA+ history, queer representation in media and literature, LGBTQIA+ activism, queer identities and subcultures, queer theory and philosophy, intersectionality, and the impact of heteronormativity and homophobia. Scholars analyze how these topics intersect with other critical theories, such as feminism and critical race theory, recognizing the multiple social categories that shape identities.

More recently, Queer Studies has increasingly intersected with organizational theory and business ethics, particularly in analyzing how corporate diversity discourses frame LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Scholars have emphasized that, while visibility within Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks is symbolically important, it often risks reducing queerness to a marketable identity rather than a site of political resistance. Puar's (2017) concept of homonationalism illustrates how some queer identities are selectively embraced within neoliberal institutions in ways that reinforce existing power structures. Similarly, Enguix (2009) critiques the commercialization of Pride and the depoliticization of LGBTQIA+ activism in corporate-sponsored events. Research such as the study by Guo (2022) on U.S. firms further demonstrate that corporate inclusion policies are often influenced by financial performance, revealing that commitments to LGBTQIA+ rights can be conditional rather than principled. These interventions call for a more intersectional and critical approach to corporate inclusion, one that accounts not only for representational diversity but also for structural change and long-term accountability.

Queer Studies could potentially be dated prior to the early 1980s, when academics and activists started addressing academia's disparate treatment and exclusion of LGBTQIA+ realities. Preceding this, research on the subject of sexuality and gender remained commonly

restricted to medical and psychiatric areas, whose discourse stigmatized and vilified individuals with non-heterosexual orientations and gender identities (Daring et al., 2013).

Diverse social and intellectual campaigns, including the feminist movement, the gay liberation movement, and the wider drive for equal rights and social justice, encouraged the birth of Queer Studies. These uprisings inspired an analysis of hierarchical dynamics, societal conventions, and cultural norms, clearing the way for a deeper understanding of the intersection of gender and sexuality (Daring et al., 2013).

Educational initiatives and institutions specialized to LGBTQIA+ studies slowly started to arise in the course of the 1980s and 1990s. These efforts aimed to develop academic venues to the investigation of LGBTQIA+ circumstances, histories, and cultures. They intended to question heteronormativity and create a safe space for LGBTQIA+ students and scholars (Weeks, 2018).

Queer Studies borrows from a broad spectrum of fields of study, encompassing but not exclusive to, sociology, anthropology, history, literature, cultural studies, psychology, and political science. Researchers across different industries started to address LGBTQIA+ concerns and include queer viewpoints as part of their research and instruction. They studied LGBTQIA+ history, queer theory, media and literary representation, intersectionality, and the social and political dimensions of LGBTQIA+ existence .

The field's interdisciplinarity continues to be one of its greatest strengths, offering flexible and dynamic tools for engaging with power, identity, and cultural representation across academic and applied settings, including law, education and, increasingly, business.

Queer Studies has acquired institutional acknowledgment and credibility throughout the decades, and it remains to develop and extend as fresh perspectives, theories, and investigations arise. This has proven essential in increasing awareness, combating discrimination, and campaigning to promote the rights and well-being of LGBTQIA+ people and communities (Weeks, 2018).

Nonetheless, its ongoing relevance depends on maintaining a commitment to reflexivity, accountability, and critical engagement, not only within Western academia but also through dialogue with diverse global contexts and activist communities.

Queer Studies goes beyond solely investigating the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals and delves into broader matters of social justice, equality, and human rights. Its purpose is

to confront discrimination, prejudice, and systemic oppression faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, while advocating for inclusivity, acceptance, and comprehension.

In essence, Queer Studies establishes a platform for critical examination, dialogue, and activism, shedding light on the varied experiences and viewpoints within LGBTQIA+ communities and contributing to the broader movement for societal transformation and equal treatment.

Its value lies not only in documenting queer lives but in transforming the conditions under which those lives are lived, theorized, and represented.

1.1.3 Queer Activism

Queer Activism discusses social and political activism expected at challenging discrimination, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights, and promoting inclusivity, acceptance, and equality. Queer activists work towards social change through organizing protests, advocating for policy reforms, raising awareness, supporting LGBTQIA+ communities, and promoting education and visibility. Queer Activism seeks to address systemic inequalities and fight against homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of oppression faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. It is rooted in the lived experiences and struggles of LGBTQIA+ people and aims to create a more just and inclusive society (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

In recent years, queer activism has broadened to address pressing issues such as anti-trans legislation, the precarious legal status of LGBTQIA+ asylum seekers, and persistent disparities in access to healthcare, notably gender-affirming care. These advocacy areas are shaped by both national contexts and transnational networks of solidarity. Spade (2020) underscores the importance of mutual aid and grassroots organizations in resisting systemic injustices, particularly highlighting the shortcomings of institutional responses to queer and trans needs. Additionally, Shakhsari (2014) and Puar (2007) show how global queer movements are often influenced by uneven geopolitical power relations, which call for intersectional and decolonial approaches to queer and trans rights. This evolving landscape of activism calls for a sustained critique of both state and corporate complicity in perpetuating exclusions, even under the guise of inclusion.

Queer activism and Pride Month share a strong and interconnected relationship. Pride Month, which is typically celebrated in June, emerged as a result of the ongoing advocacy

and activism of the queer community. It serves as a time to honor the history, struggles, and achievements of LGBTQIA+ individuals and their fight for equality and acceptance.

However, recent academic critiques have problematized the increasing commercialization of Pride, often referred to as "rainbow capitalism" or "pinkwashing." These terms highlight how corporations may adopt LGBTQIA+ symbols to appeal to progressive markets without engaging in substantive advocacy or systemic reform (Schulman, 2011; Dahl, 2014).

Queer activism encompasses a range of social and political movements that seek to address and challenge the injustices faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. Activism can take various forms, including protests, demonstrations, advocacy, community organizing, and raising awareness about LGBTQIA+ rights and issues.

Beyond traditional forms of resistance, queer activism also operates within institutional frameworks, including NGOs, educational institutions, and corporate environments. In recent years, employee resource groups (ERGs) and internal advocacy platforms within multinational companies have played a role in challenging workplace inequalities and promoting LGBTQIA+ visibility. These groups often function within the constraints of institutional norms and branding strategies, which can both enable and limit their impact. For instance, McKinsey & Company (2021) emphasizes that effective ERGs foster inclusion when their objectives align with both corporate goals and employee needs, highlighting the importance of clear goals, executive sponsorship, and integration into the organization's broader strategy. Additionally, the Human Rights Campaign's (2025) *Corporate Equality Index* offers a comprehensive assessment of corporate policies and practices affecting LGBTQIA+ employees, underscoring the significance of both visibility and substantive support in corporate DEI initiatives.

Pride Month acts as a platform for queer activism, providing an opportunity to highlight and amplify the voices of LGBTQIA+ activists and organizations. It serves as a time for mobilization, solidarity, and collective action. Pride events, such as parades, marches, rallies, and educational programs, often feature activism and advocacy as core components. They provide spaces for LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies to come together, celebrate their identities, raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ rights, and advocate for societal change.

Pride Month also serves as a reminder of the ongoing work that still needs to be done to achieve full LGBTQIA+ equality. It is a time to reflect on the progress made, but also to recognize the challenges and barriers that LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face. Through

activism during Pride Month and beyond, the community strives to address issues such as discrimination, violence, legal inequalities, healthcare disparities, and social acceptance.

In this context, queer activism does not merely aim to expand legal rights but to reimagine social structures through an intersectional lens, foregrounding race, class, migration status, and disability alongside sexuality and gender.

Overall, the relationship between queer activism and Pride Month is one of mutual reinforcement. Queer activism provides the foundation and impetus for Pride Month, while Pride Month serves as a catalyst and platform for queer activism. Together, they work towards advancing LGBTQIA+ rights, visibility, and social change, with the goal of creating a more inclusive and equitable society for all.

"Queer Studies," "Queer Theory," and "Queer Activism" are intersected and allocate common ambitions of confronting heteronormativity and advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion. However, they have distinct focuses and approaches:

Queer Studies is an academic discipline that analyses LGBTQIA+ experiences, histories, cultures, and social dynamics. It depicts from different fields such as sociology, anthropology, history, and literature. Queer Studies intends to supply a critical identification of how gender and sexuality are socially constructed. It explores issues such as LGBTQIA+ history, representation in media and literature, activism, queer identities and subcultures, and intersectionality. The field influences to broader knowledge production and understanding through scholarly examination of LGBTQIA+ issues.

Queer Theory is a rational and critical framework that emerged in academia during the 1990s. It challenges normative expectations of gender, sexuality, and identity, examining how power structures and cultural norms shape and regulate them. Drawing on post-structuralist, anti-essentialist, and decolonial traditions, Queer Theory interrogates how identity is formed through discourse, regulation, and resistance (Butler, 1990). It emphasizes the social construction of identities, explores the performative nature of gender and sexuality, and recognizes the intersectionality of multiple identities. Through these theoretical lenses, Queer Theory has influenced various academic disciplines and offers powerful tools for deconstructing and critiquing social norms. Although Queer Studies provides an academic understanding of LGBTQIA+ issues, Queer Theory proposes a critical framework for scrutinizing and deconstructing social norms, and Queer Activism engages in tangible efforts to advocate for change and fight for LGBTQIA+ rights.

These three spheres often intersect and inform each other, contributing to the overall goal of challenging heteronormativity and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion and equality. Together, they represent an interdependent ecosystem of analysis, resistance, and transformation, combining epistemological critique, scholarly inquiry, and political mobilization in the pursuit of queer justice.

1.2 PRIDE: A Timeline of Events

The concept of "Pride" was intentionally adopted as a response to the historical shame and discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. It served as a means to celebrate and validate diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. Pride events emerged with the objective of fostering a sense of community, increasing awareness, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights, and promoting visibility and acceptance (Holland, 2017).

The Pride movement appeared as a reaction to the oppression, discrimination, and marginalization faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. The beginnings of the Pride movement can be identified by looking back to the Stonewall uprising, a pivotal event in LGBTQIA+ history that took place in New York City in June 1969.

The Stonewall uprising commenced on June 28, 1969, when police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village. Instead of submitting quietly to the harassment and arrests as they had done in the past, patrons and community members fought back, sparking several days of protests, clashes with law enforcement, and demonstrations.

In the early morning of June 28, 1969, the New York City Police Department conducted a raid on the Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in Greenwich Village. Raids on LGBTQIA+ establishments were common at the time. Instead of complying silently, patrons and neighborhood residents began resisting the police. The crowd grew larger and more defiant as the police tried to make arrests. The confrontation turned violent, with clashes between the police and the LGBTQIA+ community. People threw objects, chanted, and refused to disperse. The conflict between the police and the community continued throughout the night, with intermittent periods of calm and unrest (Carter, 2004).

In the second and third nights, June 29-30, 1969, the news of the previous night's events spread, drawing larger crowds to the area surrounding the Stonewall Inn. The protests and clashes with the police continued. LGBTQIA+ activists, as well as other marginalized groups, joined the protests. The LGBTQIA+ community showed solidarity and resilience in

the face of oppression. Word of the riots reached other cities, sparking demonstrations and acts of solidarity across the United States (Carter, 2004).

The events at Stonewall energized the LGBTQIA+ community, leading to the formation of numerous activist organizations and advocacy groups. These organizations worked towards achieving LGBTQIA+ rights and social acceptance (Carter, 2004).

The anniversary of the Stonewall Riots has become a significant date for the LGBTQIA+ community. Protests, parades, and events are held annually to honor the legacy of Stonewall and advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights (Carter, 2004).

The Stonewall Riots are recognized as a turning point in the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, marking the birth of the modern LGBTQIA+ liberation movement. The events at Stonewall galvanize LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities to demand equal rights, visibility, and acceptance. They played a crucial role in raising awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues, sparking activism, and contributing to the fight for LGBTQIA+ rights and social progress. The events at Stonewall continue to be remembered and celebrated as a symbol of resistance and pride within the LGBTQIA+ community (Carter, 2004).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the AIDS pandemic of the 1980s forged a profound and complex relationship with the global pride movement. As the devastating disease swept across communities worldwide, it disproportionately impacted the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly gay men. The outbreak of AIDS not only posed a severe threat to public health but also intensified stigma, discrimination, and marginalization faced by the LGBTQIA+ community. This summary sets the stage to very briefly explore the intricate connection between the AIDS pandemic and the pride movement, showcasing the profound impact the crisis had on shaping the movement's trajectory and fueling the drive for greater visibility, equality, and social change.

The AIDS pandemic of the 1980s had a profound impact on the LGBTQIA+ community, mobilizing activists and organizations to unite against its devastating effects. LGBTQIA+ activists played a crucial role in raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, advocating for research, and providing support to those affected. The crisis also drew attention to the lack of healthcare resources and government inaction, sparking activism for improved access to treatment, prevention measures, and support services. LGBTQIA+ activists, alongside allies and healthcare professionals, pushed for increased funding, research, and policy changes to address the epidemic (Nelson, 2015).

Furthermore, the AIDS pandemic highlighted the intersectionality within the LGBTQIA+ community, as it disproportionately affected people of color, transgender individuals, sex workers, and intravenous drug users. This recognition led to a broader understanding of the diverse experiences within the community and the need for inclusive and intersectional approaches in addressing HIV/AIDS. Unfortunately, the crisis resulted in a tragic loss of life within the LGBTQIA+ community, fueling a determination to fight for LGBTQIA+ rights, healthcare access, and social acceptance (Nelson, 2015).

The response to the AIDS crisis galvanized the pride movement, leading to increased advocacy, support, and a stronger commitment to equality and justice. Activists rallied together to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, promote safer sex practices, challenge stigmatization and discrimination, and advocate for accessible healthcare and treatment. LGBTQIA+ organizations, such as ACT UP, played a pivotal role in pushing for policy changes, research funding, and improved healthcare for people living with HIV/AIDS through protests, civil disobedience, and demands for greater government and societal response (Nelson, 2015).

The activism and advocacy efforts of the LGBTQIA+ community significantly influenced public discourse, medical research, and the development of HIV/AIDS policies. The legacy of the AIDS crisis continues to inform ongoing efforts within the LGBTQIA+ community to fight for justice, equity, and the well-being of all individuals. Overall, the AIDS pandemic sparked a transformative period in the pride movement, bringing about increased awareness, solidarity, and a resolute commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in the face of HIV/AIDS.

In subsequent years, LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies organized various marches, protests, and demonstrations to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising and advocate for equal rights and acceptance. These events were often referred to as "Gay Pride" or simply "Pride" marches.

Over time, Pride events have gained immense significance and popularity, expanding to various cities around the world such as New York, São Paulo, Madrid, and Lisbon. They have become an annual tradition, often observed during the month of June, which is widely recognized as Pride Month. Through parades, festivals, marches, and other activities, these events offer LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies a platform to freely express themselves,

commemorate their identities, campaign for equal rights, and challenge persistent forms of discrimination (Holland, 2017).

The Pride movement has played a crucial role in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights, raising awareness about the struggles and achievements of the community, fostering visibility and acceptance, and promoting social change. It continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs and priorities of the LGBTQIA+ community, advocating for equality, inclusivity, and affirmation of diverse identities.

In the following section, a comprehensive timeline is presented to outline significant milestones and accomplishments in the rich history of the Pride movement:

- 1969: The Stonewall uprising takes place in New York City, marking a turning point in LGBTQIA+ activism and inspiring the modern Pride movement.
- 1970: The first Christopher Street Liberation Day March is organized in New York City, marking the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall uprising. This event is considered the birth of the Pride parade tradition. The first Pride parades take place in other major cities, including Chicago, San Francisco, and Boston.
- 1972: The first Pride march takes place in London, UK.
- 1974: The first International Gay Rights Congress is held in Edinburgh, Scotland, marking the first international gathering of LGBTQIA+ activists.
- 1978: The rainbow flag, designed by artist Gilbert Baker, is unveiled as a symbol of LGBTQIA+ pride and diversity.
- 1987: The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed for the first time, honoring those who lost their lives to the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
- 1990: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is signed into law in the United States, providing protections for people with disabilities, including those in the LGBTQIA+ community.
- 1993: The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) is granted consultative status with the United Nations.
- 1997: The first LGBTQIA+ rights organizations gain legal recognition in Portugal, laying the groundwork for public LGBTQIA+ activism.
- 2000: The first Marcha do Orgulho LGBT de Lisboa takes place, marking a key moment for LGBTQIA+ visibility in Portugal.

- 2000: The first WorldPride event takes place in Rome, Italy, bringing together LGBTQIA+ individuals and activists from around the world.
- 2003: The United States Supreme Court strikes down sodomy laws in *Lawrence v. Texas*, decriminalizing same-sex sexual activity in the country.
- 2004: Same-sex marriage is legalized in Massachusetts, becoming the first U.S. state to do so.
- 2010: Portugal becomes the eighth country in the world and the sixth in Europe to legalize same-sex marriage, granting marriage equality to LGBTQIA+ couples.
- 2011: The United Nations Human Rights Council passes its first resolution on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- 2013: The U.S. Supreme Court strikes down the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), granting federal recognition to same-sex marriages performed in states where it is legal.
- 2015: The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, legalizing same-sex marriage across the United States. Same-sex couples in Portugal gain the legal right to adopt children, further advancing LGBTQIA+ parenting rights.
- 2018: Portugal approves the Law on Gender Self-Determination, allowing individuals aged 16 or older to change their legal gender without medical or psychological evaluation.
- 2019: The 50th anniversary of the Stonewall uprising is celebrated globally, with WorldPride hosted in New York City.
- 2020: Portugal introduces new legislation that allows individuals to officially register their gender as non-binary, recognizing the rights of those who do not identify strictly as male or female.
- 2025: Lisbon hosts EuroPride 2025, becoming the first Portuguese city to welcome the largest LGBTQIA+ Pride event in Europe, further consolidating the country's visibility and leadership in the promotion of LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion.

Pride events continue to be held worldwide, both in-person and virtually, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights, visibility, and acceptance. The movement has a rich and diverse history, reflecting the ongoing struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights and the celebration of LGBTQIA+ identities.

1.3 Intersection with the Feminist movement and Black Lives Matter

"Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity" is a significant book written by philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler in 1990. It has had a profound impact on feminist theory and queer theory, shaping discussions on gender and identity (Butler, 1990, 2015).

One of Butler's primary arguments in "Gender Trouble" is that gender is not an inherent or fixed attribute but rather a social and cultural construction that is performed and reiterated. By challenging the notion that gender is determined solely by biological sex, Butler asserts that gender is a performative identity enacted through stylized actions. She introduces the concept of "performativity" to explain how gender is constructed and how societal norms influence gender expressions (Butler, 1990).

Moreover, Butler critiques the binary understanding of gender, arguing that it reinforces patriarchal power structures. Instead, she proposes that gender identities exist on a continuum and are not limited to male or female categories. By challenging the rigidity of gender norms, Butler highlights how the enforcement of binary gender limits individual freedom and perpetuates inequality and oppression (Butler, 1990).

Furthermore, "Gender Trouble" explores the intersections of gender with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. Butler emphasizes how these intersecting identities shape individual experiences, particularly for those who do not conform to societal norms. This intersectional perspective broadens the analysis of gender by considering the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression and privilege (Butler, 1990).

Additionally, Butler's book has had a profound impact on feminist and queer theory, sparking transformative discussions on gender and sexuality. It has been instrumental in dismantling the naturalized assumptions about gender and opening up new possibilities for understanding and challenging traditional gender norms. In short, "Gender Trouble" has played a pivotal role in shaping contemporary understandings of gender and identity (Butler, 1990).

"Gender Trouble" introduces a range of key concepts that form the foundation of Judith Butler's arguments and analysis. These concepts shed light on the complex nature of gender and its relationship to social norms and power structures. Here, we will explore some of the central concepts in the book, highlighting their significance and implications (Butler, 1990). Firstly, Butler's concept of performativity lies at the heart of her understanding of gender. She posits that gender is not a fixed identity but a set of actions and behaviors that individuals perform. These performances are not arbitrary choices but are shaped and regulated by

societal expectations and norms. By emphasizing the performative nature of gender, Butler challenges the idea that gender is an innate or biologically determined characteristic (Butler, 1990).

Secondly, Butler argues that gender is a social construct rather than a natural or inherent category. She asserts that gender is created and maintained through social practices, institutions, and cultural expectations. This perspective disrupts the notion that gender is an essential or pre-determined aspect of identity, highlighting instead its malleable and contingent nature (Butler, 1990).

Moreover, Butler critiques the binary understanding of gender, which categorizes individuals strictly as male or female. She contends that this binary system operates as a regulatory norm, reinforcing patriarchal power structures and limiting individual expression. By deconstructing the binary, Butler opens up possibilities for challenging and subverting traditional gender norms (Butler, 1990).

In "Gender Trouble," Butler also explores the notion of subversion and resistance within gender norms. She argues that by critically examining the performative aspects of gender, individuals can resist and disrupt dominant norms through acts of non-conformity. Subversive performances offer opportunities to challenge oppressive structures and create new possibilities for gender expression (Butler, 1990).

Furthermore, Butler emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that gender intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality. She highlights the interconnected nature of these identities, emphasizing how they shape individuals' experiences and subjectivities. By considering intersectionality, Butler expands the analysis of gender and underscores the need to understand the complexities of multiple forms of oppression and privilege (Butler, 1990).

Lastly, "Gender Trouble" is closely associated with the development of queer theory. Butler's analysis challenges cis heteronormative assumptions and expands the understanding of sexuality beyond fixed categories. She argues that sexuality, like gender, is performative and socially constructed, intersecting with gender in intricate ways. This perspective has significantly influenced discussions on sexuality and paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of diverse sexual identities (Butler, 1990).

"Gender Trouble," critically explores the construction of gender, the performative nature of identity, and the operation of power within societal norms. These interconnected concepts have a profound impact not only within feminist theory and queer theory but also in broader discussions of gender and identity. The book challenges traditional understandings of

gender, providing a foundation for questioning and reimagining gender while offering new possibilities for emancipatory and transformative thought (Butler, 1990).

Another important concept related to these discussions is intersectionality. Intersectionality recognizes that social identities, including gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability, intersect and shape individuals' experiences. It acknowledges the complex interplay of multiple forms of oppression and privilege, leading to interlocking systems of power and inequality. Scholars, including Judith Butler, highlight the significance of intersectionality in understanding power dynamics within social categories and challenging monolithic narratives in queer studies. This inclusive framework informs approaches to social justice and activism (Butler, 1990).

Intersectionality serves as a crucial link between the queer and feminist movements, offering a framework that sheds light on the complex interactions of oppression and privilege based on various social identities, including race, gender, sexuality, and class.

In the Queer Movement, Intersectionality has played a vital role in broadening the understanding of queer experiences and identities, moving beyond a narrow focus solely on sexual orientation. By recognizing the intersecting nature of identities, such as race, gender, and class, intersectional approaches within the queer movement aim to address the ways in which different forms of oppression converge and impact individuals' lives. Moreover, it emphasizes the urgent need to amplify the voices and experiences of queer individuals from marginalized communities, who often face compounded discrimination as a result.

In the Feminist Movement, Intersectionality has challenged the notion of a singular and uniform "universal woman" experience. Acknowledging that women's experiences are shaped not only by their gender but also by intersecting identities and social positions, intersectional feminism sheds light on the intricate interplay of factors such as race, class, and sexuality in shaping the lived realities of different groups of women. By embracing this perspective, an inclusive feminism emerges, one that actively addresses the unique challenges faced by women from marginalized communities while striving to dismantle the interconnected systems of oppression they encounter.

In summary, intersectionality serves as a crucial bridge between the queer and feminist movements, unveiling the overlapping dimensions of oppression and privilege. By adopting intersectional perspectives, these movements strive for a more nuanced understanding of the

diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals, advocating for inclusivity, amplifying marginalized voices, and dismantling interconnected systems of oppression.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a black feminist scholar, coined the term intersectionality, emphasizing the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression and identities. The LGBTQIA+ movement, feminist movement, and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement recognize the importance of intersectionality in comprehending and addressing social inequalities. However, it is crucial to note that these movements are not internally homogeneous. Each contains multiple perspectives, priorities, and power dynamics shaped by race, class, gender identity, geography, and other factors. For instance, tensions often emerge between more mainstream, institutionally recognized groups and more radical or marginalized voices within the same movement (Puar, 2007; Butler, 1990). Recognizing these internal complexities prevents the oversimplification of social movements as unified entities and highlights how power operates even within spaces of resistance.

These movements acknowledge that individuals can face overlapping forms of discrimination and advocate for inclusive approaches that consider the intersecting dynamics of race, gender, sexuality, and other identities. They strive to create a more equitable society by addressing these interconnected social issues (Nash, 2018).

In terms of solidarity and coalition building, movements such as Pride, feminism, and BLM recognize the importance of standing together. They acknowledge that social justice issues are interconnected, and by supporting one another, they enhance their collective impact. Many Pride events, feminist organizations, and BLM initiatives actively seek to form alliances and collaborate, united in their pursuit of equality, justice, and inclusivity (Nash, 2018).

These movements share common struggles and engage in activism. LGBTQIA+ individuals, women, and people of color have historically faced discrimination and marginalization. The emergence of the Pride movement, feminism, and BLM is a response to these injustices. They collectively challenge oppressive systems, aiming to disrupt societal norms and structures that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. Activists often participate in multiple movements, recognizing the interwoven nature of their struggles and advocating for justice across various dimensions (Nash, 2018).

Learning and exchange play a significant role in these movements. Pride, feminism, and BLM influence and inform each other through shared knowledge and collaboration.

Activists and scholars from these movements engage in dialogue, research, and joint efforts, contributing to a deeper understanding of how gender, sexuality, race, and other social categories intersect. This exchange of ideas and perspectives fosters growth and strengthens the movements' ability to address multiple forms of oppression (Nash, 2018).

The Pride movement, feminism, and BLM provide platforms that amplify marginalized voices. They create spaces for individuals to share their experiences, challenge existing power structures, and demand change. These movements empower people from diverse backgrounds to speak out and advocate for their rights, promoting inclusivity and driving social progress (Nash, 2018).

While recognizing the connections between these movements, it is crucial to acknowledge that each has its unique goals, priorities, and strategies. They may collaborate and intersect in specific areas, but they also maintain their distinct identities and focuses. The interconnectedness of these movements emphasizes the importance of collective action and solidarity in addressing various forms of oppression and striving for a more equitable and inclusive society.

In the upcoming chapter, we will delve into an examination and reflection on the impact of mediatized queer representations within various domains such as press, cinema, television, literature, and music. The introduction of diverse LGBTQIA+ characters and narratives into mainstream media has played a pivotal role in challenging societal stereotypes, fostering empathy, and promoting greater visibility and acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community. These representations have been instrumental in dismantling preconceived notions and fostering a more inclusive and understanding society.

Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that mediatized queer representations come with their fair share of challenges and limitations. Some portrayals may unintentionally perpetuate harmful stereotypes, thus contributing to incomplete or distorted narratives. It is important to recognize the responsibility media holds in presenting authentic and nuanced portrayals of LGBTQIA+ individuals, avoiding reductive or harmful tropes.

Furthermore, underrepresentation and misrepresentation of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly those with intersecting identities, persist as pressing issues within media representation. This gap highlights the need for greater diversity and inclusivity in media content, ensuring that the experiences of all LGBTQIA+ individuals, regardless of their race, gender, class, or other intersecting identities, are accurately depicted and given due visibility.

As we explore the impact of mediatized queer representations in the following chapter, it is crucial to consider both the progress made in challenging stereotypes and promoting acceptance, as well as the existing gaps and challenges that must be addressed for more authentic and inclusive portrayals.

CHAPTER II – THE IMPACT OF MEDIATIZED QUEER REPRESENTATIONS

In contemporary society, media plays a crucial role in shaping societal norms and ideals. However, despite the progress made in LGBTQIA+ representation in media, there exists a complex relationship between mediatized queer representations and the reinforcement of normative ideals. One will delve into the ways in which mediatized queer portrayals can simultaneously disrupt and reinforce conventional norms, influencing how society perceives concepts of gender, sexuality, and identity.

Mediatized queer representations have the potential to challenge normative ideals by providing visibility and representation to LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities. By showcasing diverse identities, relationships, and experiences, these representations challenge heteronormativity and gender binaries, presenting characters who defy stereotypical expectations, subverting the binary understanding of gender, and expanding possibilities for gender expression and subverting the binary understanding of gender, and expanding possibilities for gender expression and the articulation of non-normative identities (García, 2020; Santoniccolo et al., 2023)

Despite the potential for challenging norms, mediatized queer representations can also inadvertently perpetuate normative ideals and reinforce existing power structures. Some media representations of queer characters may rely on stereotypes or tokenism, reducing complex identities to simplistic and limited portrayals. (McInroy & Craig, 2017) Tokenism occurs when a marginalized group is included in a superficial or symbolic effort to appear inclusive, without genuinely integrating their perspectives or addressing their needs. This practice often results in characters who are defined solely by their identity as a minority, rather than being fully developed individuals with diverse traits and experiences. Tokenism can perpetuate stereotypes and fails to provide meaningful representation, ultimately hindering progress towards true diversity and inclusion (Kanter 1977). This can reinforce preconceived notions and perpetuate harmful stereotypes, limiting the representation of diverse queer experiences.

To fully harness the positive impact of mediatized queer representations, it is critical for media producers and content creators to prioritize authentic and diverse storytelling, involving LGBTQIA+ individuals in the creative process, and amplifying their voices (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). The concept of storytelling is often understood as the craft of conveying events or experiences through narrative techniques that engage audiences via characters, plot, setting, and theme (Lamott, 1995; Gottschall, 2012). Effective storytelling captivates emotions and conveys ideas, beliefs, and cultural values (Green & Brock, 2000).

In media production, storytelling significantly shapes how audiences perceive the world, influencing attitudes, behaviors, and norms (Green & Brock, 2000).

Authentic storytelling involves accurately representing the lived experiences and identities of LGBTQIA+ individuals and avoiding stereotypes or tokenism, which is most effectively achieved when queer creators are involved in production (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). Diverse storytelling must reflect intersectional identities, including people of color and transgender individuals, to represent the full spectrum of LGBTQIA+ life (Bowleg et al. 2023). From writing to directing, media producers play a crucial role in ensuring that stories are told authentically and with sensitivity. As Smith, Choueiti, and Pieper (2020) demonstrate, inclusion behind the camera, especially in the director's chair is directly linked to greater on-screen diversity and more accurate representation. Amplifying LGBTQIA+ voices not only improves representation but also fosters deeper empathy, understanding, and acceptance among broader audiences.

Thus, to mitigate the reinforcement of normative ideals, it is crucial for mediatized queer representations to adopt an intersectional and inclusive approach. Intersectionality recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, including those based on race, gender, and class. By centering the experiences of marginalized queer communities, media can challenge normative ideals and amplify diverse voices.

Authenticity and diverse storytelling are essential in mediatized queer representations. By engaging with queer writers, directors, and actors who reflect the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ communities, media can provide nuanced and accurate portrayals that challenge normative ideals.

The increased visibility and representation of the LGBTQIA+ community in media refers to the growing presence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals across various media platforms, including film, television, literature, and online content. This shift towards more inclusive and diverse representations has had several significant impacts (Ayoub, 2024; Santoniccolo et al., 2025).

To begin with, the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ identities in various media formats, such as television shows and films, has played a significant role in normalizing and reducing the stigma associated with them. These forms of media have introduced audiences to a wide array of LGBTQIA+ characters and storylines, providing insights into their daily lives, relationships, and personal experiences. Consequently, this exposure has contributed to

humanizing LGBTQIA+ individuals, enabling viewers to perceive them as multifaceted, relatable individuals who deserve equal rights and respect.

Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ depictions in media have emerged as potent instruments for education and enlightenment. They have elevated public awareness concerning LGBTQIA+ concerns, bringing attention to the hardships confronted by the community, such as discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and various intersecting forms of oppression. These portrayals have ignited crucial discussions, cultivated empathy, and promoted societal discourse on matters related to LGBTQIA+ rights and the broader spectrum of inclusion.

Queer visibility in popular culture has brought about several positive impacts, particularly for LGBTQIA+ individuals themselves. The authentic and positive portrayals of queer characters in media serve as sources of validation, affirmation, and a profound sense of belonging. Witnessing these depictions can be pivotal in helping LGBTQIA+ individuals nurture self-acceptance, overcome feelings of isolation, and foster a deep pride in their identities. Beyond this, such representations have also played a pivotal role in empowering individuals to embrace their authentic selves and advocate for their rights (McInroy & Craig, 2017; Bacaj et al., 2025).

The role of media extends beyond personal empowerment and societal understanding; it plays a substantial role in shaping social attitudes and beliefs. When media offers positive and diverse portrayals of queer characters, it actively contributes to fostering a more accepting and inclusive society. This influence helps break down barriers, diminishes discrimination, and challenges entrenched heteronormative norms. These representations further possess the transformative power to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions surrounding the LGBTQIA+ community (van Meer & Pollmann, 2021).

Furthermore, the impact on self-perception and identity is profound. Positive and authentic portrayals in media enable individuals to develop a deep sense of pride, acceptance, and affirmation in their own identities. Such representations act as mirrors that reflect their own experiences and struggles, further solidifying their self-esteem (McInroy & Craig, 2017; Koch, 2013).

On one hand, these representations serve as a wellspring of inspiration and empowerment, motivating individuals to become advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights and social change. Watching queer characters navigate and conquer obstacles in their pursuit of equality can embolden viewers to engage more actively in activism and advocacy efforts.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that mediatized queer representations can sometimes fall into the trap of tokenism or be exploited solely for commercial gain. For instance, in the 2015 film "Stonewall," directed by Roland Emmerich, the LGBTQIA+ community criticized the movie for its alleged tokenistic approach. The film, which aimed to depict the historic Stonewall riots, faced backlash for centering the narrative around a fictional, cisgender, white, male protagonist, while downplaying the significant roles of transgender women of color and other marginalized individuals who were key figures in the actual events. Critics argued that this tokenistic portrayal seemed more concerned with appealing to a mainstream audience than authentically representing the diverse and intersectional nature of the LGBTQIA+ activists involved in the Stonewall riots. This example illustrates how tokenism in media can compromise the integrity of LGBTQIA+ stories for the sake of commercial interests, perpetuating stereotypes and neglecting the rich tapestry of queer experiences.

Undoubtedly, the portrayal of the LGBTQIA+ community in media significantly affects the mental health of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Positive portrayals, as evidenced by Gomillion and Giuliano's research on media role models (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011), can contribute to improved mental well-being. These positive representations in media may foster a sense of acceptance, reduce feelings of stigma and shame, and play a role in shaping the identity and self-identification of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals. Moreover, Ilan H. Meyer's work on minority stress (Psychological Bulletin, 2003) highlights the broader environmental factors influencing LGBTQIA+ mental health, with media representation being one aspect. On the contrary, Negative or harmful media depictions, such as reports of celebrity suicides, can perpetuate societal stigma, shame, and even internalized homophobia. Meta-analyses of press coverage show a 13% increase in suicides following celebrity reports (BMJ, 2019; Niederkrotenthaler et al., 2010), and entrenched minority stress factors underscore how such narratives undermine mental health among LGBTQIA+ communities.. The influence of media representations on mental health is a nuanced interplay, emphasizing the need for accurate, diverse, and affirming portrayals to support the well-being of the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, Di Giacomo et al.'s meta-analysis on sexual orientation and suicide (JAMA Pediatrics, 2018) underscores the complexity of factors contributing to mental health disparities among LGBTQIA+ individuals, including the potential role of media influences.

Nonetheless, the media have been a powerful advocacy tool for LGBTQIA+ activists and organizations. It has been instrumental in raising awareness, challenging discrimination, and advocating for equal rights. By showcasing the lived experiences and struggles of

LGBTQIA+ individuals, media can mobilize support, rally public opinion, and bring about positive social change.

However, it is important to note that while media has fostered understanding and empathy towards the LGBTQIA+ community, there is still work to be done. Representation should continue to be diverse, authentic, and inclusive, acknowledging the intersectionality within the community and avoiding harmful stereotypes or tokenism.

In recent decades, the landscape of media, spanning from television screens to the pages of literature, the rhythms of music, and the frames of cinema, has undergone a profound transformation in its portrayal of queer identities. The next section delves into the multifaceted impact of mediatized queer representations, tracing their evolution and examining their significance within contemporary culture. From groundbreaking television series to boundary-pushing novels, from anthems of empowerment to cinematic narratives challenging societal norms, this exploration seeks to unravel the intricate relationship between media and the queer experience. Through critical analysis and contextualization, we aim to illuminate the ways in which these representations shape perceptions, foster inclusivity, and catalyze social change, while also acknowledging the complexities and limitations inherent in their portrayal.

2.1 Queer representations in the Mass Media

In general, the mass media, which refers to a diverse array of media technologies that reach a large audience via mass communication and includes broadcast media such as radio and television, print media such as newspapers and magazines, and digital media such as the internet and social media platforms (McQuail, 2010; Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001), typically serve three primary functions: to inform, entertain, and educate. Given that the media, to some extent, shape or influence the perspectives held by many on a given subject, it becomes imperative to scrutinize the accuracy of the information presented (Holtz-Bacha & Norris, 2001). This happens because the practices employed by the media have a significant impact on our perception of what constitutes news and on the manner in which we anticipate encountering and digesting such information (Corlett & Mavin, 2014).

Considering that mass media have emerged as a primary conduit for accessing a substantial portion of the global landscape, it is evident that they wield substantial influence over the creation and dissemination of societal meanings. To a significant extent, it is the media that

dictate the significance of events occurring worldwide for all cultures, societies, and social groups (Jacobs & Meeusen, 2020).

Queer representations in the mass media wield significant influence over societal attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals, shaping public perceptions, acceptance levels, and the trajectory of LGBTQIA+ rights. This influence has evolved over time, transitioning from harmful stereotypes to more affirming and inclusive depictions.

Paul B. Preciado stands at the forefront of discussions on queer representations in the media, blending scholarly insights with activism to challenge established norms and power structures (Preciado, 2018). As a leading figure in queer theory and philosophy, Preciado's work delves into the intricate interplay of gender, sexuality, and identity, advocating for a fundamental reevaluation of societal frameworks (Stedelijk Studies, 2014).

Central to Preciado's scholarly endeavors is a critical analysis of mainstream media portrayals of queer individuals across various media platforms, including literature, cinema, and popular culture. He meticulously examines how these representations often perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce heteronormative ideals, or marginalize segments within the LGBTQIA+ community. Through this scrutiny, Preciado underscores the necessity for authentic and nuanced depictions of queer experiences that resonate with diverse realities.

Moreover, Preciado's activism extends beyond academia, as he passionately advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights and bodily autonomy (Preciado, 2018). He endeavors to enhance visibility and acceptance of queer individuals within broader societal narratives, urging the dismantling of discriminatory practices and the cultivation of inclusive representations across media platforms (Preciado, 2018).

In summary, Paulo Preciado's scholarly and activist engagement with queer representations in the media reflects a commitment to critical inquiry and transformative action. His work not only deconstructs prevailing narratives but also strives to foster more inclusive and equitable discourses surrounding gender and sexuality within academic and social spheres alike.

Historically, the mass media have frequently perpetuated damaging stereotypes and inaccuracies concerning LGBTQIA+ individuals. These portrayals have, at times, depicted queer people as deviant, morally questionable, or afflicted by mental health issues. Such negative portrayals have contributed to the reinforcement of stigma, discrimination, and the

marginalization of the queer community (Gross, 2001). These portrayals serve to reinforce the fallacious notion that queerness is synonymous with abnormality or sin, thereby perpetuating harmful stereotypes and contributing to the stigma surrounding the LGBTQIA+ community (Sender, 2004).

Another prevalent stereotype embedded in the mass media is the hypersexualization of queer individuals. Media outlets frequently sensationalize and objectify queer sexuality, placing undue emphasis on promiscuity and reducing LGBTQIA+ individuals to mere sexual beings (Sender, 2004; Santoniccolo et al., 2023). This narrow focus not only reinforces harmful stereotypes but also fails to capture the multifaceted nature of their identities (van Meer & Pollmann, 2021).

Tabloid sensationalism has a well-documented history of exploiting the private lives of celebrities, often fixating on their romantic relationships and sexual encounters. This trend extends to LGBTQIA+ celebrities, with tabloids frequently reducing their identities to their sexual orientation and behavior, rather than acknowledging their talents or accomplishments. Through this lens of sensationalism, the personal lives of LGBTQIA+ figures are dissected and commodified, often without regard for their privacy or dignity.

In the case of Ellen DeGeneres and her former partner Anne Heche, tabloid coverage surged following DeGeneres' public coming out as gay in 1997. The media spotlight on their relationship often sensationalized their connection, overshadowing their respective contributions to the entertainment industry. Similarly, when Lord Ivar Mountbatten, a member of the British royal family, came out as gay and entered into a same-sex marriage, tabloids fixated on his sexuality rather than recognizing his familial ties or individual achievements.

Ricky Martin, a prominent singer, faced similar treatment in the media regarding his relationship with his ex-husband, Jwan Yosef. Tabloid coverage often emphasized speculation about their intimate lives, overshadowing Martin's musical career and philanthropic endeavors. Furthermore, tabloid media has been criticized for misgendering and misrepresenting transgender and non-binary individuals, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and erasing their identities beyond their gender or sexual orientation.

On occasion, media platforms opt to overlook or erase queer experiences and issues entirely. This invisibility sends the damaging message that LGBTQIA+ individuals are not deserving of representation or that their stories hold no significance. Consequently, it serves to further

marginalize the LGBTQIA+ community and impedes a comprehensive understanding of their diverse lives.

However, this trend is not uniform across all media. In recent years, there has been a notable shift towards more inclusive and authentic representations of LGBTQIA+ individuals. Rather than ignoring or erasing queer experiences, an increasing number of media platforms are recognizing the importance of diverse narratives and the positive impact they can have. This shift marks a turning point, moving away from invisibility and tokenism towards meaningful inclusion. By featuring well-rounded queer characters and genuine stories, these media efforts are beginning to correct past omissions and offer a more accurate portrayal of the LGBTQIA+ community. This transition is essential in promoting understanding, acceptance, and respect for LGBTQIA+ individuals and their experiences.

The mass media frequently features human interest stories that illuminate the challenges, victories, and personal journeys of LGBTQIA+ individuals. These narratives have the power to evoke empathy, forge connections, and provide education on the diverse array of experiences within the queer community.

Moreover, the mass media serves as a crucial conduit for raising awareness surrounding LGBTQIA+ rights, concerns, and activism. Through coverage of LGBTQIA+ advocacy endeavors, legal struggles, and community-driven initiatives, the mass media can catalyze public engagement, confront discriminatory practices, and propel societal transformation.

A study conducted by Meyer (2020) examined the representation of victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, FL, within LGBTQIA+ online media coverage. The study illustrates the radical potential of intersectionality in providing a more deeply critical analysis of hierarchies within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQIA+) communities. Meyer's study analyzed reports from some of the most-trafficked LGBTQIA+ websites, aiming to understand how the victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting were portrayed. The findings revealed significant shortcomings in the intersectional representation of the victims. Despite the tragedy occurring within a predominantly Latinx LGBTQIA+ community, media coverage often failed to adequately acknowledge or represent this aspect of the victims' identities. Instead, emphasis was primarily placed on their LGBTQIA+ status, while their Latinx identities were largely excluded from the narrative (Meyer, 2020).

Furthermore, while some reports did highlight Latinx queer individuals, they often did so in a manner that continued to prioritize their LGBTQIA+ identification, sometimes perpetuating stereotypical representations of Latinx communities. This failure to adopt an intersectional lens in media coverage not only obscured the diversity within LGBTQIA+ communities but also perpetuated exclusion and marginalization, particularly of those at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities (Meyer, 2020). Importantly, the study also identified a lack of consideration for xenophobia as a potential motivating factor in the shooting, and a generally neutral or positive portrayal of policing agencies within the media coverage. These findings underscore the need for a more critically intersectional approach to media representation within LGBTQIA+ communities, highlighting the ongoing challenges of exclusion and stereotyping even within marginalized groups (Meyer, 2020).

In summary, Meyer's study offers valuable insights into the limitations of LGBTQIA+ online media coverage in representing the complexities of identity and experiences within LGBTQIA+ communities. It serves as a reminder of the importance of intersectionality in understanding and addressing the diverse needs and concerns of marginalized populations, particularly in the aftermath of tragic events such as the Pulse nightclub shooting (Meyer, 2020).

There is an increasing recognition of the importance of intersectionality in queer representations in the media. Intersectional reporting acknowledges the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals who face multiple forms of marginalization based on their race, ethnicity, class, or disability. Inclusive reporting strives to represent the diversity of queer experiences and amplify the voices of underrepresented communities within the LGBTQIA+ umbrella.

The news industry has an ethical responsibility to ensure accurate, fair, and respectful coverage of queer issues. Journalists and media organizations should avoid sensationalism, misrepresentation, and perpetuating stereotypes. They should seek diverse perspectives, consult LGBTQIA+ organizations and activists, and promote positive narratives that challenge normative ideals and promote understanding.

The language used by the mass media to allude to individuals, places, and events belongs to a discursive representation process, elucidating various ideologies (van Dijk, 1993). These representations take on a normative role in discussing various topics represented in a specific way. In this case, the incorrect use of pronouns and gender in the words chosen by some

news outlets can result in a clearly unequivocal representation of the trans community (Li, 2019). Despite recent discussions focusing on the use of correct language – language that is neither sexist nor discriminatory in representing all individuals – many media outlets continue to perpetuate language that is not only offensive but also stereotypical. This occurs in a society that emphasizes its patriarchal, misogynistic, and institutional values (Wood, 2000; Mills, 2008).

In brief, the mass media wield significant influence in shaping public discourse and must remember their role as a platform for debate. They should also adhere to their core functions of informing, entertaining, and educating, as these have the potential to reshape how individuals are depicted. Despite the historical use of stereotypes, there is a growing recognition of the importance of inclusive and accurate coverage. By championing diverse and authentic LGBTQIA+ representations, the mass media can foster a more inclusive, informed, and accepting society.

2.2 Queer Representations in Cinema

Over the years, queer representations in cinema have undergone a transformation, shifting from harmful stereotypes to more authentic and diverse portrayals. This analysis delves into the significance of queer representations in cinema, their influence on society, and how filmmakers have actively challenged established norms and stereotypes.

Queer representations in cinema have been instrumental in breaking traditional stereotypes and challenging societal norms. Films like *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) directed by Ang Lee and *Moonlight* (2016) directed by Barry Jenkins depict nuanced and complex queer characters, allowing audiences to connect with their struggles and experiences beyond stereotypical portrayals.

Brokeback Mountain explores the challenges and repression faced by the characters due to societal expectations and their own internal struggles. It received critical acclaim for its sensitive portrayal of a same-sex relationship in a time when queer representation in mainstream cinema was limited.

Moonlight is a coming-of-age film that follows the journey of Chiron, a young black man grappling with his sexual identity in a rough Miami neighborhood. The film explores themes of identity, masculinity, and self-acceptance. The film won the Academy Award for Best Picture, highlighting the significance of queer storytelling and representation in cinema.

Cinema has increasingly embraced intersectionality within queer narratives, recognizing that sexual orientation and gender identity intersect with other aspects of an individual's identity. *Paris is Burning* (1990), directed by Jennie Livingston, explores the lives of Black and Latinx LGBTQIA+ individuals within the ballroom culture, highlighting the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality.

The Hours, released in 2002 and directed by Stephen Daldry, is a cinematic masterpiece that intricately weaves together the lives of three women from different time periods. Adapted from Michael Cunningham's Pulitzer Prize-winning homonymous novel, the film explores themes of identity, mental illness, and the pursuit of happiness through the lens of Virginia Woolf's iconic novel *Mrs. Dalloway*.

One of the most notable aspects of *The Hours* is its profound representation of queer experiences. The film offers a nuanced portrayal of sexuality and desire, particularly through the character of Virginia Woolf, played by Nicole Kidman. Woolf's struggles with her mental health and her same-sex desires are central to the narrative, providing a poignant exploration of the challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in different historical contexts.

The film also features other queer characters, such as Laura Brown (played by Julianne Moore) and Clarissa Vaughan (played by Meryl Streep), whose lives intersect with Woolf's in unexpected ways. Through their stories, *The Hours* offers a powerful meditation on the complexities of human relationships and the search for meaning in life.

Overall, *The Hours* stands as a thought-provoking cinematic masterpiece that continues to resonate with audiences for its compelling portrayal of queer experiences, its exploration of the human condition, and its timeless themes of love, connection, and resilience.

Additionally, authenticity in queer representations is crucial in challenging societal biases and empowering LGBTQIA+ individuals. Films like *Tangerine* (2015), directed by Sean Baker, and *A Fantastic Woman* (2017), directed by Sebastián Lelio, feature transgender characters played by transgender actors, contributing to a more accurate and respectful portrayal of their experiences.

Queer representations in cinema have the power to evoke empathy and foster understanding among viewers. *Call Me by Your Name* (2017), directed by Luca Guadagnino, and *Carol* (2015), directed by Todd Haynes, explore same-sex relationships with tenderness and emotional depth, allowing audiences to empathize with the complexities of queer love.

Filmmakers have creatively subverted stereotypes to challenge heteronormative expectations. *The Kids Are All Right* (2010), directed by Lisa Cholodenko, presents a same-

sex couple raising children, challenging the notion that only heterosexual relationships can provide a stable family environment.

However, despite advancements in LGBTQIA+ visibility, many films still predominantly feature hetero-normative narratives, focusing on the underrepresentation and marginalization of queer voices in favor of hetero-normative portrayals (Thomson, 2021).

In mainstream cinema, queer characters often serve as secondary or supporting roles, with their narratives revolving around their relationship with heterosexual characters. This perpetuates the marginalization of queer experiences, reinforcing the idea that heterosexuality is the norm while relegating queerness to a subordinate position (Thomson, 2021).

Queer characters are sometimes tokenized or reduced to stereotypical portrayals, reinforcing harmful narratives. This can include the portrayal of gay men as flamboyant and promiscuous, bisexual individuals as indecisive or hypersexual, or transgender individuals as deceptive or confused. Such limited and stereotypical representations hinder the authentic exploration of queer identities and reinforce societal biases (Cook, 2018).

The dominance of hetero-normative narratives in cinema shapes audience perceptions and reinforces societal expectations. When queer characters are consistently portrayed within the context of heterosexual relationships, it sends a message that queerness is only acceptable or valid when it aligns with hetero-normative standards. This can contribute to the erasure and invisibility of diverse queer experiences .

While queer representations in cinema have made significant strides in recent years, there is still a long way to go in challenging the dominance of hetero-normative narratives. The underrepresentation and marginalization of queer voices reinforce societal biases, limit authentic representation, and hinder the understanding and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals. It is crucial for the film industry to embrace more diverse and authentic queer narratives, empowering queer filmmakers and actors to tell their stories on their own terms. Only by breaking free from the confines of hetero-normative storytelling can cinema truly contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. However, it is important to acknowledge that there have been advancements and notable films that have challenged these norms, as seen before, and there is an ongoing progress towards more inclusive and authentic queer representation in cinema.

2.3 Queer Representations in Television

Queer depictions on television have experienced a substantial evolution, mirroring shifts in societal perceptions of LGBTQIA+ individuals. These portrayals have been pivotal in dismantling stereotypes, cultivating empathy, and offering essential representation for the queer community. This analysis examines the evolution of queer representations on television, delving into shifts in societal attitudes over time. It evaluates key milestones and groundbreaking series that have contributed to the increased visibility of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the medium, offering insights into the ongoing progression of representation and its impact on diverse audiences (Thomson, 2021).

LGBTQIA+ characters and storylines in early television were often nonexistent or relegated to subtext due to the prevailing societal norms and censorship regulations. LGBTQIA+ characters were rarely depicted, and if they were, their identities were often coded or portrayed through harmful stereotypes. Examples include characters like Jodie Dallas in *Soap* (1977-1981) and Steven Carrington in *Dynasty* (1981-1989).

As societal attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ individuals began to shift in the latter half of the 20th century, television started to reflect these changes. The Stonewall Riots in 1969 marked a pivotal moment in the LGBTQIA+ rights movement, leading to increased visibility and advocacy. This shift in public opinion paved the way for more inclusive representations in television (GLAAD, 2023).

Television shows have increasingly featured queer characters as main protagonists, showcasing their lives, relationships, and personal journeys. Examples include shows like *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005), *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019), and *Pose* (2018-2021), which have been lauded for their authentic and diverse portrayals of LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Pose stands as an exemplary television series that prominently features LGBTQIA+ creators, writers, and actors in its production. Co-created by Steven Canals, an openly gay writer, along with Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk, the show was celebrated for its commitment to authentic LGBTQIA+ representation. It not only incorporated diverse LGBTQIA+ voices into its writing team but also featured a cast that included LGBTQIA+ actors like Billy Porter, who identifies as gay, and Indya Moore, a non-binary transgender individual.

Pray Tell, Billy Porter's character, emerges a flamboyant and unapologetically queer character within the ballroom scene of New York City in the 1980s and 1990s, providing a platform for exploring the lives and struggles of LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly transgender women of color. His character challenges societal expectations and conventional

norms of masculinity and explores the complexities of being Black and queer during that era.

The series garnered critical acclaim for its genuine storytelling and its ability to shed light on vital issues within the LGBTQIA+ community, such as HIV/AIDS, discrimination, and the quest for acceptance and belonging. As such, *Pose* serves as a compelling example of how inclusive and authentic storytelling can make a profound impact not only within the realm of television but also on societal perceptions and attitudes.

Television has often explored the experience of coming out as queer, highlighting the struggles, challenges, and triumphs that individuals face when embracing their true identities. Shows such as *Glee* (2009-2015), *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* (2013-2021) and *One Day At a Time* (2017-2020) have incorporated coming out narratives to raise awareness and provide representation for viewers who may be going through similar experiences.

In the evolution of LGBTQIA+ representations on television, several series have emerged to challenge stereotypes and provide authentic portrayals of queer experiences. As referred above, *Queer as Folk* (2000-2005) broke ground with its exploration of LGBTQIA+ life in the US, while *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019) brought visibility to LGBTQIA+ characters within the context of a women's prison. *Schitt's Creek* (2015-2020) gained acclaim for its heartwarming depiction of the Rose family's journey of self-discovery, including LGBTQIA+ characters like David Rose and Patrick Brewer. *One Day at a Time* (2017-2019, 2021) addressed social issues, including LGBTQIA+ representation, featuring Elena Alvarez's exploration of her lesbian identity within a Latinx family. Finally, *Heartstopper* (2022-) beautifully chronicled the evolving connection between two teenage boys, offering a positive portrayal of LGBTQIA+ youth and their intricate experiences. These series collectively illustrate the progress and diversity of LGBTQIA+ representations on television.

Broadcasting has increasingly depicted queer families, showcasing relationships and parenting dynamics within LGBTQIA+ households. Shows such as *Modern Family* (2009-2020) have introduced diverse family structures, including same-sex couples raising children, challenging traditional notions of family and highlighting the love and resilience within these relationships.

Productions often include strong friendships between queer characters, emphasizing the importance of community, support, and understanding within the LGBTQIA+ community (GLAAD, 2023). Examples can be seen in shows like *Will & Grace* (1998-2020), *Sense8*

(2015-2018), and *Sex Education* (2019-2023), where queer friendships play a central role in the development and growth of characters .

On the other hand, some series have delved into misleading representations, such as Queer-baiting. This refers to the practice of teasing or hinting at same-sex relationships or queer identities without actually following through or providing meaningful representation. This creates false hope for LGBTQIA+ viewers and undermines the genuine representation they seek. Tokenism, on the other hand, involves including a single queer character to fulfill diversity quotas without giving them substantial storylines or depth. Both practices trivialize the experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals and hinder progress towards authentic representation (GLAAD, 2023).

However, the portrayal of queer characters on television has often faced censorship, backlash, and societal pressures (Insider Staff, 2021; van Dijk, 1993). In some cases, networks and advertisers have sought to tone down or remove queer storylines to avoid controversy or offending conservative audiences (Insider Staff, 2021). For example, the show *Ellen*, starring Ellen DeGeneres, faced significant backlash in the late 1990s after the main character came out as gay, leading to a decline in ratings and ultimately the cancellation of the series (Los Angeles Times, 1998). These challenges can discourage authentic storytelling and perpetuate a culture of fear and silence (Cook, 2018).

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on authentic representation in television, with more queer characters being played by LGBTQIA+ actors. This shift has brought a greater sense of authenticity and lived experiences to the screen, challenging the practice of casting straight actors in queer roles. Examples include *Pose* (2018-2021), *Schitt's Creek* (2015-2020) and *Euphoria* (2019-Present), which have received praise for their commitment to authentic casting.

Schitt's Creek gained widespread acclaim for its heartwarming portrayal of the Rose family's journey of self-discovery and personal growth. The show includes LGBTQIA+ characters, namely David Rose, a pansexual man, and Patrick Brewer, a gay man. *Schitt's Creek* stands out for its depiction of a same-sex relationship that is treated with warmth, respect, and normalcy. The show's emphasis on love, acceptance, and the power of chosen families has resonated with audiences worldwide and has contributed to a more positive and inclusive representation of queer relationships and experiences.

Heartstopper is a TV adaptation of Alice Oseman's beloved graphic novel series, chronicling the evolving connection between two teenage boys, Nick and Charlie. This series beautifully captures their voyage of self-discovery, love, and acceptance. Through its tender and heartfelt storytelling, *Heartstopper* offers a positive portrayal of LGBTQIA+ youth and their intricate experiences. The show strikes a chord with viewers, especially young audiences, by authentically depicting the challenges of self-identity, relationships, and personal growth within a nurturing and inclusive context.

One Day at a Time is a sitcom that addresses a range of social issues, including LGBTQIA+ representation. The show features Elena Alvarez, a teenage girl who comes out as a lesbian and explores her identity throughout the series. *One Day at a Time* offers a nuanced and authentic portrayal of the coming-out process, addressing the challenges, joys, and complexities of queer experiences within a Latinx family. By incorporating LGBTQIA+ storylines into the narrative, the show promotes understanding, empathy, and acceptance within diverse communities. It emphasizes the importance of family support and provides positive representation of queer individuals and their journeys of self-acceptance.

These examples represent a range of queer representations in television, showcasing the increasing diversity and complexity of LGBTQIA+ characters and narratives. However, it is important to note that representation can still vary across different shows, and the industry continues to evolve in its efforts to provide more authentic, inclusive, and empowering portrayals of the queer community.

In recent times, LGBTQIA+ representations in television have evolved significantly, moving away from stereotypes and towards authentic and diverse portrayals. These representations are vital for challenging biases and fostering understanding among audiences. Television's power to shape perceptions underscores the importance of celebrating and analyzing these contributions to LGBTQIA+ representation.

However, there is room for improvement. Intersectionality and diverse experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community deserve more visibility. Collaboration with LGBTQIA+ individuals in storytelling is essential for authentic portrayals. Industry-wide diversity guidelines can help avoid harmful stereotypes. Mentorship programs and support for LGBTQIA+ talent are crucial for nurturing diverse voices.

Policy support is also necessary, advocating against discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Collaborative efforts between networks, LGBTQIA+ organizations, and

advocacy groups ensure that stories are informed by lived experiences. Ultimately, a multifaceted approach, including increased representation behind the scenes, support for emerging talent, diversity guidelines, collaboration, and policy changes, can lead to a more inclusive television landscape for the LGBTQIA+ community.

As television continues to evolve, the industry must prioritize inclusivity, authentic storytelling, and challenge heteronormative narratives. By implementing these recommendations, television can be a powerful tool for positive representation and social change, creating a more equitable and diverse media landscape for all.

2.4 Queer representations in Literature

Queer literature, spanning decades and cultures, reflects the diverse and complex experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals throughout history. From clandestine whispers to bold declarations, its evolution mirrors societal acceptance, artistic expression, and the quest for authentic representation. As Audre Lorde poignantly stated, “*My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you.*” (Lorde, 2017). This quote, delivered during her speech at the Lesbian and Literature panel of the Modern Language Association’s December 28, 1977 meeting, highlights the necessity of vocalizing and embracing one’s identity, a recurring theme in queer literature that urges individuals to reject silence and invisibility.

The selection of authors and novels that follow encompasses a broad spectrum of queer literature, each chosen for their unique contributions to the narrative of LGBTQIA+ lives. From the poignant reflections of Annemarie Schwarzenbach in *Death in Persia* to the timeless wit of Oscar Wilde, and the groundbreaking gender exploration in Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*, these works capture the multifaceted nature of queer identity. Marguerite Yourcenar’s *Mémoires d’Hadrien* and James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* delve into the depths of queer love and loss, while E.M. Forster’s *Maurice* bravely tackled themes of homosexuality in a repressive society. Later works such as Rita Mae Brown’s *Rubyfruit Jungle* and André Aciman’s *Call Me by Your Name* reflect the evolving acceptance and celebration of queer relationships. More contemporary novels like Becky Albertalli’s *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, Adam Silvera’s *They Both Die at the End*, and Casey McQuiston’s *Red, White & Royal Blue* illustrate the ongoing progression towards more diverse and accessible queer storytelling. Each of these selections serves as a testament to

the richness and diversity of queer literature, highlighting the ongoing struggle for representation and the triumph of authentic voices in the literary world.

LGBTQIA+ literature with its rich and complex history was marked by significant contributions from numerous authors who have dared to challenge societal norms and explore themes of identity, love, and self-discovery. Two of the most influential figures in this genre are Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf. Their lives and works have left an indelible mark on the literary world and continue to resonate with readers today.

Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) was a prominent figure in the late 19th century, known for his wit, flamboyant style, and outspoken nature. Wilde's personal life and public persona significantly impacted LGBTQIA+ literature and culture. He lived during a time when homosexuality was not only stigmatized but criminalized. Wilde's open secret about his sexuality and the subsequent trial and imprisonment for "gross indecency" due to his relationships with men brought significant attention to the harsh realities faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in a repressive society. His trial and conviction underscored the dangers of living openly as a homosexual man in Victorian England and highlighted the need for greater advocacy and visibility for LGBTQIA+ rights (Ellmann, 1988).

Wilde's literary works address themes of homosexuality and societal constraints both subtly and overtly. His novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) explores the complexities of identity, morality, and hidden desires, with an undercurrent of homoeroticism that resonated with queer readers. The protagonist's relationship with the artist Basil Hallward and the decadent lifestyle he pursues can be seen as a metaphor for the secretive lives many gay men led during that time. Wilde's plays, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), while primarily comedic, also critique the rigid norms of Victorian society and hint at subversive themes. Wilde's clever use of wit and satire allowed him to navigate the censorship of his time while still making poignant statements about the nature of identity and desire (Small, 1993).

Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) was a central figure in the modernist literary movement and a member of the Bloomsbury Group, which included many LGBTQIA+ individuals. Woolf's own experiences and relationships, such as her intimate connection with Vita Sackville-West, influenced her exploration of gender and sexuality in her writings. Woolf's work often

challenged traditional gender roles and societal expectations, contributing to the broader discourse on LGBTQIA+ identities (Bell, 1972).

Woolf's novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928) is a groundbreaking work in LGBTQIA+ literature. The story follows the protagonist, Orlando, who lives for centuries and changes gender from male to female. This fluid portrayal of gender was revolutionary for its time and remains a seminal text in queer literature. *Orlando* challenges binary notions of gender and explores themes of identity, love, and self-discovery (Woolf, 1928). Woolf's imaginative narrative and poetic prose create a rich tapestry that resonates with LGBTQIA+ readers, offering a vision of a world where gender and identity are fluid and dynamic. The novel reflects Woolf's own contemplations on gender and her relationship with Sackville-West, making it a deeply personal and transformative piece of literature (Lee, 1996).

Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf's contributions to LGBTQIA+ literature are invaluable. Wilde's sharp critique of societal norms and Woolf's exploration of gender fluidity have paved the way for more inclusive and diverse narratives in literature. Their works continue to inspire and empower LGBTQIA+ individuals, highlighting the enduring importance of representation and authenticity in storytelling. By examining their lives and literary legacies, we gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and triumphs that have shaped queer literature and its ongoing evolution.

Annemarie Schwarzenbach's *Death in Persia* (1942) subtly but significantly contributes to the realm of queer literature by exploring queer identity and the author's personal struggles with her sexuality. While not explicitly focused on LGBTQIA+ themes, the novel offers readers insights into Schwarzenbach's journey of self-discovery and her efforts to understand her sexual orientation within the context of her era.

Schwarzenbach's introspective writing style, characterized by melancholy and contemplation, adds depth to the exploration of queerness, making it a meaningful part of her narrative. Moreover, *Death in Persia* provides valuable historical insights into the challenges, limitations, and societal norms faced by queer individuals during the early 20th century, offering a window into the historical context of queerness.

While *Death in Persia* may not present a straightforward queer narrative, it holds a significant place within the landscape of LGBTQIA+ literature. It serves as a testament to the author's individual experiences and her delicate yet impactful exploration of queer

themes, contributing to a richer understanding of queerness within the historical and literary contexts of its time.

Marguerite Yourcenar's 1951 novel, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, a celebrated work of historical fiction offers readers a fictionalized autobiography of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, conveyed through a series of letters to his adoptive son, Marcus Aurelius. A central element of this novel is Hadrian's deeply nuanced and passionate love for Antinous, a young Bithynian. It is essential to understand how it portrays queerness within the historical context while also addressing universal human experiences.

Yourcenar's meticulous reconstruction of ancient Rome sets the stage for understanding societal attitudes towards same-sex relationships during the Roman Empire, providing an authentic portrayal of queerness within the constraints of the era. At the heart of *Mémoires d'Hadrien* is the character of Hadrian himself, portrayed with a depth of sensitivity and authenticity that transcends conventional boundaries, making it relatable to readers of all orientations.

The novel's narrative technique, an epistolary format featuring Hadrian's letters, immerses the reader deeply into the protagonist's world, enhancing the exploration of queerness and love and creating a profound connection between the reader and the character. While *Mémoires d'Hadrien* is undeniably a queer narrative, it also delves into universal themes, encompassing reflections on love, mortality, power, and the quest for meaning in life. Yourcenar's skillful weaving of these themes makes the narrative universally resonant, transcending the boundaries of sexual orientation.

By presenting a sympathetic and authentic portrayal of a queer historical figure, Yourcenar's work has paved the way for other writers to explore LGBTQIA+ themes in historical settings, becoming a touchstone in the genre and inspiring further exploration of the complexities of queerness, human identity and love in history.

Giovanni's Room (1956), by James Baldwin, faced significant challenges prior to its publication due to its groundbreaking content. Baldwin's original publisher, Knopf, advised him to burn the manuscript because they feared that a novel centered on a homosexual relationship would alienate Baldwin's established reader base, who were familiar with his debut, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, which focused on African American experiences in Harlem. This stark departure from racial themes to focus on the complexities of

homosexuality in a predominantly white setting was seen as too controversial and potentially damaging to Baldwin's career at the time (Field, 2006).

Furthermore, even when Baldwin found a publisher in Dial Press, they decided to remove his author photo to avoid revealing that a Black man wrote a book about queer white characters. This decision highlights the intersectional prejudices Baldwin faced, dealing with both racism and homophobia in the literary world (Polchin, 2010). Despite these hurdles, *Giovanni's Room* was eventually published and received critical acclaim, becoming one of Baldwin's most significant works.

James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* masterfully navigates the labyrinthine terrain of sexuality, desire, and identity. Set in 1950s Paris, the novel follows the story of David, an American expatriate entangled in a passionate affair with Giovanni, an Italian bartender. As the narrative unfolds, readers are immersed in a profound exploration of the tumultuous emotions and societal pressures that accompany same-sex attraction. Baldwin's prose delves into the depths of the human psyche, illuminating the struggles faced by those who dare to love beyond societal norms.

E.M. Forster's *Maurice*, written between 1913 and 1914 but published posthumously in 1971, is a groundbreaking work in queer literature. The novel follows Maurice Hall, a young man in Edwardian England, as he comes to terms with his homosexuality and pursues a romantic relationship with Alec Scudder, a gamekeeper. *Maurice* is notable for its relatively optimistic ending, a stark contrast to the tragic fates often depicted in earlier queer literature (Forster, 1971). Forster's portrayal of Maurice's internal struggles and eventual acceptance of his sexual identity challenged the prevailing norms of his time, making *Maurice* a seminal work in the representation of queer relationships in literature.

Furthermore, Forster's narrative technique and character development offer a profound exploration of the societal constraints and personal dilemmas faced by individuals with non-normative sexual identities during the early 20th century. The novel's hopeful conclusion, in which Maurice and Alec decide to leave their old lives behind to be together, was revolutionary for its time, providing a rare portrayal of a same-sex relationship that defies societal expectations and endures.

Similarly, Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973) is a semi-autobiographical novel that broke new ground with its positive depiction of a lesbian protagonist. The story follows

Molly Bolt, a determined and unapologetically queer young woman, as she navigates her identity and ambitions in a society that often seeks to marginalize her. Brown's use of humor and resilience in Molly's character provides a refreshing and empowering narrative that contrasts with the often tragic or stigmatized portrayals of lesbian characters in earlier literature (Brown, 1973).

Moreover, *Rubyfruit Jungle* is celebrated for its boldness and its role in advancing lesbian visibility in mainstream literature. Brown's narrative challenges the conventional gender roles and expectations, presenting a protagonist who is assertive, ambitious, and boldly herself.

Queer literature has played a pivotal role in shaping LGBTQIA+ identities, challenging societal norms, and fostering understanding. It encompasses various genres and offers a rich tapestry of narratives reflecting LGBTQIA+ individuals' lived realities. This literature provides visibility, validation, and a source of inspiration for readers. It also breaks down stereotypes, broadens perspectives, and contributes to social change by humanizing LGBTQIA+ experiences. Queer literature empowers individuals on their journeys of self-discovery and explores the intersectionality of LGBTQIA+ identities. Its influence extends beyond the written word, permeating other art forms and inspiring new creations. Overall, queer literature is a powerful force for positive representation, social justice, and self-acceptance (Zankar, 2023).

Historically, queer literature has faced censorship, suppression, and marginalization due to societal biases and discriminatory practices. However, over time, there has been a growing recognition and appreciation of queer voices in literature. LGBTQIA+ authors have gained prominence, and their works have achieved critical acclaim and mainstream success. This increased visibility has contributed to a broader understanding of queer experiences and paved the way for more inclusive literary landscapes (Zankar, 2023).

Shifting to contemporary narratives, André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name* (2007) offers a poignant exploration of desire and intimacy through the lens of a summer romance between seventeen-year-old Elio and his father's house guest, Oliver. Set in the idyllic Italian countryside, the novel delves deeply into the complexities of first love, the fluidity of sexual attraction, and the intense emotions that accompany such experiences (Aciman, 2007). Aciman's lyrical prose and the novel's introspective narrative have garnered widespread

acclaim, positioning *Call Me by Your Name* as a significant contemporary work in queer literature.

In addition, the novel's impact was further amplified by its successful film adaptation, which brought the story to a broader audience. Aciman's ability to capture the ephemeral nature of youthful romance and the lingering impact of such relationships highlights the universality of love and longing, making the novel resonate with readers across diverse backgrounds.

Equally, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli (2015) is a young adult novel that centers on Simon Spier, a high school junior navigating the challenges of coming out after an anonymous email exchange with another closeted student is discovered. Albertalli's novel is praised for its relatable and positive portrayal of a gay teen's journey towards self-acceptance (Albertalli, 2015). The story's adaptation into the film *Love, Simon* further increased its visibility and impact, highlighting the importance of representation in the media for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Furthermore, *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* contributes to the growing body of young adult literature that affirms and normalizes queer identities. Albertalli's approachable writing style and the novel's engaging plot provide a supportive and affirming narrative for young readers grappling with their own identities. The novel underscores the significance of visibility and acceptance in the lives of LGBTQIA+ youth, offering a hopeful message that resonates widely.

On a different note, Adam Silvera's *They Both Die at the End* (2017) combines speculative fiction with a heartfelt exploration of life, death, and love. In a dystopian future where individuals receive a notification of their impending death, two boys, Mateo and Rufus, meet through an app designed for "End Day" companions. The novel follows their last day together, exploring themes of mortality, connection, and the urgency to live authentically (Silvera, 2017).

Silvera's work is notable for its emotional depth and its ability to convey the profound impact of brief but meaningful relationships. *They Both Die at the End* adds to the diverse landscape of contemporary queer literature by blending genre elements with poignant storytelling. The novel's unique premise and its exploration of existential themes through the lens of queer characters make it a standout work that challenges readers to reflect on the nature of life and love.

Finally, Casey McQuiston's *Red, White & Royal Blue* (2019) is a romantic comedy that imagines a love affair between the First Son of the United States, Alex Claremont-Diaz, and the Prince of Wales, Henry. The novel is celebrated for its witty dialogue, charming characters, and optimistic portrayal of a queer relationship in a high-stakes political environment (McQuiston, 2019).

McQuiston's narrative challenges traditional romance tropes and offers a fresh perspective on queer love, emphasizing themes of acceptance, public visibility, and the personal and political intersections of identity. *Red, White & Royal Blue* has resonated with readers for its hopeful and inclusive message, further cementing its place in contemporary queer literature. The novel's success also signifies a broader acceptance and enthusiasm for queer narratives in mainstream literature, marking an important cultural shift.

These literary works collectively contribute to the vibrant tapestry of queer literature, offering profound insights into the multifaceted experiences, desires, and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals. Through adept storytelling and nuanced character development, these texts engage deeply with themes of love, desire, and identity, while also serving as enduring testaments to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of societal norms and expectations. Historically, queer literature began as a niche genre, often characterized by less mainstream works with tragic conclusions. However, with the advent of social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, there has been a notable shift towards mainstream acceptance and narratives with more positive outcomes. This evolution highlights not only the changing landscape of queer literature but also its growing impact and resonance within contemporary culture. Consequently, these literary contributions continue to inspire and enrich our collective understanding of queer lives and experiences as portrayed in literature.

Queer literature has historically struggled with the dominance of hetero-representations, often shaped by non-queer authors, resulting in misrepresentations and stereotypes. However, queer authors have actively worked to reclaim their narratives, offering authentic depictions of LGBTQIA+ experiences. These authors bring authenticity and depth to their storytelling, exploring the complexities of queer identities (Abraham, 2020 Donaldson, 2022).

The emergence of queer publishing platforms has significantly expanded the landscape of literary representation for LGBTQIA+ communities. These platforms have created dedicated spaces where diverse voices can be heard, fostering a broader range of queer narratives that

reflect the multifaceted nature of queer experiences. This development is crucial in a literary history where queer stories were often marginalized or misrepresented (Banks et al., 2019).

One prominent example is the rise of independent queer publishing houses such as Arsenal Pulp Press and Bold Strokes Books. These publishers focus specifically on LGBTQIA+ literature, offering a platform for stories that might not find a place in mainstream publishing. By doing so, they provide visibility to a wide array of queer identities, including those intersecting with other marginalized communities, such as queer people of color and transgender individuals. Arsenal Pulp Press, for instance, has published groundbreaking works like *Little Fish* by Casey Plett, which explores the life of a trans woman in Canada. This novel provides an intimate portrayal of transgender experiences, addressing themes of family, identity, and resilience (Plett, 2018).

Websites like Wattpad and Archive of Our Own (AO3) allow authors to publish their work directly to a global audience. This democratization of publishing means that stories which might be considered too niche or unconventional for mainstream publishers can still find readers (Upadhyaya, 2024). For example, the fan fiction community on AO3 has been instrumental in creating and sharing stories that explore queer relationships and identities, often reimagining popular media through a queer lens (Busse & Lothian, 2018).

Furthermore, the role of social media cannot be underestimated in this context. Platforms like TikTok and Instagram have become crucial in promoting queer literature. Hashtags such as #BookTok and #QueerLit help readers discover books that resonate with their experiences, and authors can engage directly with their audience, fostering a sense of community and shared identity (Davies, 2022).

These platforms have not only increased the volume of queer literature available but have also enriched its diversity. Authors from different backgrounds and with varying experiences are now able to contribute to the literary canon, offering stories that encompass a wide spectrum of queer life (Goldsmith, 2020). This inclusivity ensures that more readers can see themselves reflected in the literature they consume, which is essential for validation and empowerment (Ahmed, 2019).

The rise of these queer publishing platforms has been instrumental in providing space for diverse voices. By fostering a broader range of queer representations, these platforms help to challenge stereotypes, promote understanding, and celebrate the richness of queer

experiences. This shift is transforming the literary landscape, making it more inclusive and representative of the world we live in (Sedgwick, 1990).

While external influences persist, it is essential to acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of queer authors who redefine queer narratives and representation in literature. Their stories amplify LGBTQIA+ voices, challenge societal norms, and promote empathy.

In conclusion, queer literature has played a vital role in amplifying LGBTQIA+ voices and challenging norms. As the literary landscape evolves, celebrating and uplifting diverse queer voices remains essential for ongoing exploration and advocacy (Abraham, 2020).

2.5 Queer representations in Music

Queer representations in music have been influential in empowering the LGBTQIA+ community, challenging societal norms, and fostering a sense of belonging. LGBTQIA+ artists and songs that explore queer themes have provided a platform for diverse identities and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights within the music industry. The visibility and celebration of openly queer musicians have helped break stereotypes, offering role models for LGBTQIA+ youth and contributing to greater societal acceptance of queer identities.

Queer musicians have used their platform to address LGBTQIA+ issues, champion equality, and challenge societal norms through their compelling lyrics. They share personal stories, struggles, and victories, creating anthems that deeply resonate with both LGBTQIA+ audiences and allies. These songs often serve as rallying cries for the community, fostering a profound sense of unity and empowerment (Jones, 2021).

Queer themes and experiences are frequently explored in music, offering a powerful platform for storytelling and representation. Artists delve into topics such as coming out, self-acceptance, love, heartbreak, and the broader spectrum of LGBTQIA+ experiences. These songs provide a profound sense of validation, solace, and relatability for LGBTQIA+ individuals who may be navigating similar life journeys and emotions.

Furthermore, queer musicians have been pioneering in pushing boundaries and subverting traditional gender and sexual norms through their performances and artistic expressions. They boldly challenge conventional gender roles, experiment with androgynous aesthetics, and blur the lines between masculinity and femininity. This fearless defiance of norms encourages listeners to question societal expectations and embrace their own authentic selves (Jones, 2021).

Iconic musicians like Madonna and David Bowie, alongside LGBTQIA+ artists such as Freddie Mercury, Elton John, Frank Ocean, Janelle Monáe, and Troye Sivan, have significantly contributed to the LGBTQIA+ movement. Their music not only entertains but also educates, enlightens, and sparks conversations about LGBTQIA+ issues. Recently, there has been a growing acceptance and celebration of queer representations in mainstream music, resulting in chart-topping success and widespread recognition for LGBTQIA+ artists. These representations offer visibility and empowerment, providing a platform for self-expression and validation.

Queer musicians have used their art to address LGBTQIA+ issues, challenge traditional norms, and explore themes of self-acceptance, love, and the broader LGBTQIA+ experience, creating anthems that resonate with the community. Through their boundary-pushing performances and artistry, they encourage listeners to question societal expectations and embrace their authentic selves (Hubbs, 2014).

Furthermore, queer representations in music have been groundbreaking in challenging conventional gender roles, sexual norms, and stereotypes. LGBTQIA+ musicians consistently defy societal conventions, pushing boundaries through their music, performances, and visual aesthetics. This broadens society's understanding of gender and sexuality. They frequently use their platform to advocate for equality and raise awareness of social injustices, addressing issues like discrimination, homophobia, transphobia, and LGBTQIA+ rights. Their music serves as a form of activism, inspiring change and promoting dialogue on these critical subjects (Taylor, 2012).

However, one must question whether the music industry is a realm where nuance and profound statements hold sway, or does it often prioritize surface-level gestures? Little Mix, for instance, garnered praise for proudly waving the LGBTQIA++ flag during a concert in Dubai, where homosexuality is prohibited. However, the mere fact that the group was able to perform in such a place, while openly LGBTQIA+ artists might face restrictions, raises questions about whether commercial interests tend to outweigh moral values (Evening Standard, 2019).

Queer musicians often incorporate their personal stories and experiences into their music, allowing listeners to emotionally connect, feel seen, understood, and validated, thereby fostering a sense of belonging within the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, these representations in music have shaped popular culture, influencing mainstream trends, music

genres, fashion, and artistic expressions. Their impact extends beyond the LGBTQIA+ community, challenging heteronormative ideals and promoting acceptance and empathy for LGBTQIA+ individuals while breaking down harmful stereotypes.

Over the years, the acceptance and celebration of queer representations in mainstream music have grown, leading to chart-topping success and wider recognition for LGBTQIA+ artists. These representations provide visibility and a sense of empowerment, offering a platform for self-expression and validation. For instance, Frank Ocean's candid exploration of his sexuality in his music has opened up discussions about bisexuality in the hip-hop and R&B genres (Elkins, 2018).

David Bowie's androgynous style and persona challenged conventional gender roles, influencing both music and fashion industries. Madonna's embrace of queer culture in her music videos and performances has similarly helped to normalize LGBTQIA+ identities in mainstream culture (Gill, 2007; Auslander, 2006; Sydney University, 2016).

In addition to her music, Madonna has been a vocal advocate for those affected by the AIDS pandemic, using her platform to raise awareness and funds. Her efforts have not only highlighted the struggles of the LGBTQIA+ community but also fostered greater empathy and support from the broader public (Gill, 2007).

Furthermore, queer representations in music have significantly shaped popular culture, influencing mainstream trends, music genres, fashion, and artistic expressions. The influence of queer culture is evident in the rise of genres like disco and house music, which have roots in LGBTQIA+ communities. Additionally, artists like Bowie and Madonna have also set fashion trends that blur gender lines, further integrating queer aesthetics into mainstream culture (Lefevre, 2022 ; Bradley & Page, 2017), towards a more inclusive cultural landscape.

Queer representations in music have not only broken barriers and pushed for equality but have also created an inclusive environment for upcoming LGBTQIA+ artists. Successful LGBTQIA+ musicians serve as role models, inspiring emerging talent to embrace their true selves and pursue their artistic dreams. In summary, queer representations in music have left an enduring mark by offering visibility, challenging stereotypes, advocating for equality, fostering emotional connections, shaping popular culture, promoting acceptance, and motivating future generations of LGBTQIA+ artists. These contributions have significantly impacted both the LGBTQIA+ community and society as a whole.

In recent years, there has been a notable surge in the representation of LGBTQIA+ artists in the music and theater industries. These artists, including Lil Nas X, Renée Rapp, Pablo Vittar, Troye Sivan, Madonna, Cyndi Lauper, David Bowie, Cher, and Freddie Mercury, have not only entertained audiences but also played a significant role in educating, enlightening, and sparking conversations about LGBTQIA+ issues (Jones, Clarke, & Annesley, 2025).

Lil Nas X, propelled to global recognition by his breakout hit "Old Town Road," has emerged as a prominent figure in queer music representation. Through his provocative music videos and lyrics, Lil Nas X openly embraces his queer identity, challenging societal norms and sparking conversations about queer representation in the music industry (Grullon, 2022).

Pablo Vittar, one of Brazil's most prominent queer artists, has made significant strides in challenging gender norms and promoting self-expression through music (Villa, 2020). With a blend of pop, funk, and drag queen aesthetics, Vittar's artistry empowers LGBTQIA+ individuals and raises awareness of queer issues on a global scale.

Australian singer-songwriter and actor Troye Sivan's introspective and honest music explores his experiences as a gay man, resonating deeply with LGBTQIA+ listeners. Sivan's songs provide a relatable soundtrack to the journeys of self-acceptance undertaken by many within the LGBTQIA+ community, fostering a sense of community and understanding (Schulman, 2019).

Legendary figures Cyndi Lauper and Cher have long been advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights and champions of queer representation in music. Through their music, performances, and activism, they have challenged societal norms and celebrated sexual liberation, paving the way for greater acceptance and visibility of queer individuals in the music industry.

Freddie Mercury, the lead vocalist of Queen, remains a queer icon whose unapologetic expression of his identity through music continues to inspire generations of LGBTQIA+ artists and fans (Knittel, 2018). Mercury's legacy serves as a testament to the enduring power of authenticity in artistry, transcending barriers and fostering inclusivity (Cook & Glass, 2017).

These artists collectively demonstrate the transformative impact of LGBTQIA+ representation in the arts, advancing social progress and promoting greater acceptance and understanding of diverse identities within society (Hastings Independent Press Staff, 2024).

In the realm of LGBTQIA+ advocacy within the music and theater industries, Madonna and David Bowie stand as iconic figures whose contributions have left an indelible mark on popular culture. Madonna, often dubbed the "Queen of Pop," has been a trailblazer in challenging societal norms and championing LGBTQIA+ rights throughout her career (Gill, 2007; Auslander, 2006). From her early hits like *Like a Virgin* to her later works such as *Vogue*, Madonna's music has celebrated sexual liberation and encouraged self-expression, resonating deeply with LGBTQIA+ audiences (Gill, 2007; Auslander, 2006).

Similarly, David Bowie, known for his eclectic musical style and gender-bending personas, defied conventions of sexuality and gender identity, paving the way for LGBTQIA+ representation in mainstream music. Bowie's alter ego Ziggy Stardust, in particular, challenged traditional notions of masculinity and sexuality (Bradley & Page, 2017).

Both Madonna and David Bowie used their platforms not only to entertain but also to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights, often incorporating themes of love, acceptance, and diversity into their music and performances. Madonna's outspoken activism, including her support for organizations like GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and her participation in LGBTQIA+ pride events, has solidified her status as an ally to the community. GLAAD is a prominent organization that works to promote accurate and inclusive representations of LGBTQIA+ people in the media. By challenging discriminatory portrayals and advocating for fair and diverse storytelling, GLAAD plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and fostering acceptance. Madonna's collaboration with GLAAD underscores her commitment to advancing LGBTQIA+ rights and visibility, (GLAAD, 2019) Similarly, Bowie's advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, though more understated, was evident in his music and public statements, influencing a generation of fans to embrace their identities without fear (Bradley & Page, 2017).

As for Renee Rapp, recent developments have brought her further into the spotlight as an advocate for LGBTQIA+ representation. Rapp's decision to come out as a lesbian has garnered attention from both fans and media outlets, amplifying her voice as an advocate for queer visibility in the theater world (Sprayregen, 2025). Her openness about her identity not only serves as a source of inspiration for LGBTQIA+ individuals but also contributes to the ongoing conversation about representation and inclusivity within the entertainment industry.

Rapp's continued success on Broadway, coupled with her newfound role as a LGBTQIA+ advocate, underscores the importance of diverse voices in shaping cultural narratives and

challenging stereotypes (Marseille, 2024). As she navigates her career with authenticity and courage, Rapp's journey serves as a reminder of the power of representation in fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance across communities (Jones, Clarke & Annesley, 2025).

These musicians have not only entertained but have also acted as trailblazers, challenging norms, advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights, and fostering a sense of community among LGBTQIA+ individuals. Their influence extends beyond the music industry, shaping culture, promoting acceptance, and inspiring future generations of LGBTQIA+ artists. These queer icons have left an indelible mark on both the LGBTQIA+ community and society as a whole, reminding us of the transformative power of music and representation.

IN SUM...

Queer representations across various forms of media have played a significant role in shaping public perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these representations have frequently been influenced by hetero-normative perspectives, often perpetuating stereotypes and misrepresentations. This section has examined how different cultural products, including the mass media, cinema, television, literature, and music, have contributed to queer representations while highlighting the need for more diverse, authentic, and self-representative portrayals.

In the mass media, queer representations have often been shaped by external agents, leading to hetero-normative biases and misrepresentations. The media should critically assess these portrayals and strive for more genuine and varied depictions that accurately reflect the LGBTQIA+ community's lived experiences.

Cinema has been a powerful storytelling medium, yet queer representations in film have predominantly been influenced by hetero-normative perspectives, relying on sensationalism and stereotypes. Efforts should be made to promote more inclusive and authentic portrayals, allowing for a broader range of queer narratives.

Television has made strides in increasing LGBTQIA+ visibility, but hetero-normative standards and external influences have still shaped many representations. Progress has been achieved with groundbreaking shows, yet more work is needed to challenge stereotypes and amplify LGBTQIA+ creators' voices in shaping their own representations.

In literature, diverse queer storytelling has emerged, but non-queer authors and publishers have often filtered these narratives through hetero-normative lenses. Amplifying authentic queer voices is essential to ensure the community has agency in shaping its own literary representations.

Music has also been a powerful tool for queer expression, but the corporate music industry can sometimes dilute authentic queer identities for profit. Prioritizing genuine representation, supporting queer artists, and amplifying their voices are vital steps forward.

Mediatized queer representations significantly impact societal perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community. However, it is imperative to critically evaluate these representations, acknowledge hetero-normative biases, and address the influence of corporate entities. Efforts should focus on promoting authentic, diverse, and self-representative portrayals across all media platforms, allowing the LGBTQIA+ community to shape its own narratives and challenge existing power dynamics within the media landscape. This will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable media environment that genuinely reflects the rich diversity of queer experiences.

Additionally, the highly mediatized nature of these representations underscores their impact within corporate environments. The next chapter aims to explore the consequences of heteronormative depictions, the involvement of external influences, and the corporate context's effect on representations of queerness.

The relevance of these cultural expressions lies in their capacity to reveal how queer identities are mediated, contested, and negotiated in the public sphere. Literature, music, and media are not neutral arenas of representation: they function as powerful sites where narratives are produced, filtered, and circulated, often reflecting broader socio-political and economic dynamics. By examining these works, this dissertation does not merely document artistic expression, but interrogates how cultural industries participate in shaping and at times constraining queer visibility and agency. This analysis provides a critical foundation for understanding how similar dynamics manifest within corporate environments, where representation and identity are often strategically instrumentalized.

CHAPTER III - THE IMPACT OF PARIBAS PRIDE ON CORPORATE PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

In recent years, the corporate world, once seen as a stronghold of entrenched norms and values, has undergone a profound transformation, with a significant shift towards increased visibility and acceptance of LGBTQIA+ individuals in professional environments worldwide. This transformation is best understood through a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted nature of LGBTQIA+ inclusiveness, which encompasses corporate policies, evolving employee benefits, workplace culture, and the persistent challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals in various corporate settings (Schadendorf, 2023: 12-21).

This chapter seeks to provide a detailed examination of the progress made thus far, while simultaneously exploring the ongoing, complex journey of *queering* the corporate world on a global scale. The rise of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in corporate spaces represents a marked shift away from the heteronormative values that once dominated these environments. To fully appreciate the significance of this shift, it is important to situate these developments within a historical context, exploring the lasting impact of discriminatory practices on LGBTQIA+ individuals in the workplace (Schadendorf, 2023; Sears & Mallory, 2014).

Historically, workplaces mirrored broader societal prejudices, often reinforcing heteronormative values that marginalized LGBTQIA+ employees and left them vulnerable to discrimination, exclusion, and harassment. The prevailing assumption of heterosexuality compelled LGBTQIA+ employees to conceal their true identities for fear of professional and social consequences (Human Rights Campaign, 2020). This created an environment where systemic prejudice flourished, manifesting in unequal pay, limited career advancement opportunities, and hostile workplace cultures (Schadendorf, 2023).

However, the latter half of the 20th century witnessed societal shifts that began to challenge these entrenched norms. Legal reforms and LGBTQIA+ activism, particularly during the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, paved the way for greater inclusivity in the workplace (Schadendorf, 2023). Companies gradually began adopting non-discrimination policies, and LGBTQIA+ employees advocated for equitable treatment, leading to notable advancements in corporate policies.

By the early 21st century, many multinational corporations had implemented comprehensive diversity and inclusion programs designed to protect employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Schadendorf, 2023). These legal protections were often accompanied by inclusive benefits for LGBTQIA+ employees, such as transgender-

inclusive healthcare, domestic partnership benefits, and family support initiatives (Human Rights Campaign, 2020).

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. LGBTQIA+ employees still face discrimination and microaggressions in certain sectors and regions. Moreover, significant disparities in inclusivity remain, with some countries and industries lagging behind in embracing diversity (Sears & Mallory, 2011) This highlights the ongoing need for advocacy and education to foster corporate environments that genuinely value and respect LGBTQIA+ employees.

The historical context of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in the corporate world reveals both the progress made and the challenges that remain. While significant strides have been taken toward inclusivity, the journey toward full equality is far from over. Continued efforts are essential to create workplaces where all employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can thrive without fear of discrimination (Schadendorf, 2023). The task ahead lies in advancing policies and cultural changes that promote diversity and celebrate the unique contributions of LGBTQIA+ individuals in professional settings.

Understanding the historical evolution of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in the workplace requires an acknowledgment of the deep-rooted discrimination that persisted for decades. For much of the 20th century, workplaces mirrored the broader societal prejudices of their time, reinforcing dominant heteronormative values and institutionalizing exclusionary practices. LGBTQIA+ employees were often forced to conceal their true identities to avoid professional and social repercussions (Human Rights Campaign, 2020).

During this period, many companies adopted rigid policies that perpetuated exclusion, resulting in discriminatory hiring practices, unequal pay, and limited opportunities for promotion for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Sears & Mallory, 2011) The pervasive assumption of heterosexuality as the norm placed immense pressure on LGBTQIA+ employees to conform, creating an oppressive atmosphere in which authenticity was seen as a liability rather than a strength.

Nevertheless, the LGBTQIA+ community continued to fight for visibility and equality. In the 1960s and 1970s, LGBTQIA+ activism, aligned with the broader civil rights movement, began to challenge the entrenched discrimination that had long defined workplace norm. This period marked a critical turning point, as activists advocated for legal reforms to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These efforts laid

the groundwork for the legal victories that would shape the future of workplace inclusivity (Adam, 1995).

By the late 20th century, LGBTQIA+ activism began to influence the corporate world, pushing many companies to adopt non-discrimination policies and foster more inclusive work environments. While this shift was driven by a combination of internal advocacy and external pressures, such as activist movements and evolving societal norms, the adoption of these policies varied widely across industries and companies. Some businesses embraced these changes as part of their corporate values, while others lagged behind, demonstrating significant disparities in the commitment to LGBTQIA+ equality (Sears & Mallory, 2011). This uneven progress highlighted the ongoing tension between societal demands for inclusivity and entrenched corporate practices that resisted change.

3.1 Barilla's Transformation: From Crisis to Inclusivity

A notable example of this tension, and of the potential for transformation, is the case of *Barilla*, an Italian multinational known for its pasta products. In 2013, *Barilla* found itself at the center of a public relations crisis after its chairman, Guido Barilla, made controversial comments regarding LGBTQIA+ representation in the company's advertising. He expressed that Barilla would not feature same-sex families in its campaigns, asserting and suggesting that those who disagreed with this stance could choose to consume other brands, which sparked immediate backlash from LGBTQIA+ activists and consumers.

The ensuing boycotts and social media campaigns threatened the company's market position, forcing Barilla to reconsider its stance. Over the next few years, the company embarked on a transformation, turning a public relations disaster into an opportunity to rebuild its brand with a focus on inclusivity and diversity.

Rather than issuing a superficial apology, Barilla chose to take a more profound approach. The company launched an internal review of its diversity and inclusion policies and established a Diversity and Inclusion Board composed of experts in LGBTQIA+ and human rights issues.

Additionally, Barilla formed partnerships with key international organizations, including the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and GLAAD, to help implement internal policies aimed at promoting equality. These measures included employee training programs focused on

inclusion and respect, as well as a comprehensive review of hiring practices to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity (Schadendorf, 2023).

Barilla further demonstrated its commitment to inclusivity through the launch of advertising campaigns under the slogan "Everyone is welcome at our table," a clear attempt to rebuild consumer trust and reposition the brand. These campaigns formed part of a broader initiative designed to promote inclusivity, not only for the LGBTQIA+ community but also for other marginalized groups such as women, people with disabilities, and refugees (Schadendorf, 2023).

A notable milestone in Barilla's transformation was its high ranking in the Corporate Equality Index (CEI) by the Human Rights Campaign, where it consistently received top scores for its workplace equality measures. The company was recognized as one of the "Best Places to Work for LGBTQIA+ Equality" for several consecutive years. Barilla's evolution from a crisis to becoming a champion of diversity highlights how inclusivity is not just an ethical responsibility but also a key factor in achieving modern corporate success.

Barilla's adoption of inclusive policies after a public relations crisis not only helped restore its brand reputation but also broadened its consumer base. The company's shift toward diversity and equality exemplifies how businesses can recover from setbacks by aligning with social movements and adapting to consumer expectations. This transformation highlights the role of external pressures, such as activism and societal changes, in influencing corporate practices (Schadendorf, 2023).

3.2 LGBTQIA+ Advocacy at Davos: A New Message for Corporate Change

As corporations increasingly recognize the value of inclusivity, global discussions around LGBTQIA+ issues have gained momentum in influential spaces. One such venue is the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, where LGBTQIA+ inclusion has evolved from a peripheral topic to a key component in discussions of corporate responsibility and economic growth. Jens Schadendorf's 2023 *Gayme Changer* recounts how these conversations at Davos have shifted, highlighting the growing recognition that diversity, particularly LGBTQIA+ representation, plays a crucial role in economic performance and corporate success (Schadendorf, 2023).

Davos, a space where power, influence, and capital converge, witnessed a shift as business leaders began to integrate diversity and inclusion into their core strategies. Schadendorf

describes how informal meetings, led by LGBTQIA+ activists and business executives, laid the foundation for broader discussions on LGBTQIA+ rights in the corporate world. These leaders recognized that LGBTQIA+ inclusion was not merely a moral issue but also a strategic business initiative capable of fostering innovation, improving talent retention, and enhancing corporate reputation (Schadendorf, 2023).

Through these private, off-the-record meetings, a new understanding emerged, LGBTQIA+ inclusivity became seen as a key driver of sustainable growth and innovation. The discussions at Davos revealed that LGBTQIA+ inclusion, once considered a marginal issue, was becoming a fundamental part of global corporate strategies. Business leaders began to realize that creating inclusive work environments could lead to tangible benefits such as greater innovation, improved retention of talent, and a stronger brand image. In highly competitive sectors like technology and finance, promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity became an important strategy for attracting top talent and ensuring long-term competitiveness (Schadendorf, 2023).

One significant outcome of these discussions was the collaboration between business leaders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Human Rights Campaign and Out & Equal. These collaborations helped create clear guidelines for companies looking to adopt more inclusive policies. Although the initial conversations took place behind closed doors, Davos eventually became an essential platform for the global advancement of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in business. The message was clear: LGBTQIA+ inclusion is not simply a matter of social justice but a strategic economic imperative capable of driving innovation and sustainable growth (Schadendorf, 2023).

The growing importance of LGBTQIA+ advocacy at Davos was further solidified in 2019 with the launch of the Partnership for Global LGBTQIA+ Equality (PGLE), a coalition supported by the World Economic Forum and backed by major corporations like Accenture and Procter & Gamble. This initiative has been instrumental in shaping global corporate policies by providing tools and resources to promote inclusivity (World Economic Forum, 2019).

Additionally, GLAAD, in partnership with the Ariadne Getty Foundation, has used the WEF to raise awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues. Their efforts included panels featuring leading figures from media and business, emphasizing how visibility and representation in advertising and corporate policies can foster inclusivity and business success (GLAAD,

2020). Companies such as Procter & Gamble have demonstrated the impact of incorporating LGBTQIA+ representation in their marketing strategies, reinforcing the connection between inclusivity, brand strength, and innovation (GLAAD, 2020).

Looking ahead, this initiative is expected to continue shaping the global economy as more companies adjust to the demands of a global market that increasingly values diversity. LGBTQIA+ inclusion is no longer just a moral obligation; it has evolved into a critical driver of competitiveness and economic success in an increasingly interconnected world (Schadendorf, 2023).

As the momentum for LGBTQIA+ rights grew in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, corporations began to reassess their internal policies to cultivate more inclusive environments. This shift was fueled not only by activism but also by a growing recognition that diversity could drive innovation, creativity, and overall business success. Companies realized that fostering an inclusive workplace, where employees could bring their authentic selves, was essential for attracting top talent and fostering employee engagement (Schadendorf, 2023).

In response to societal pressures and legal changes, many companies implemented Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) programs aimed at protecting LGBTQIA+ employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These programs typically included comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, equal pay commitments, and measures to prevent workplace harassment. Moreover, corporations established LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to provide safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ employees, enabling them to advocate for change and network within the company.

Despite these advancements, the adoption of inclusive policies varied widely across industries and regions. While many multinational corporations embraced LGBTQIA+ inclusivity as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) frameworks, smaller companies and those in conservative areas were slower to implement such changes (Sears & Mallory, 2011) This inconsistency highlights the ongoing need for advocacy and education to ensure equal rights and protections for LGBTQIA+ employees, regardless of location or sector.

While significant strides have been made globally, advancements in LGBTQIA+ rights have been uneven across regions and industries. In many Western countries, particularly North America and Europe, corporations have led the way in adopting inclusive policies, bolstered

by progressive legal frameworks that protect LGBTQIA+ employees. These regions have seen the widespread creation of LGBTQIA+ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, and diversity training programs (Schadendorf, 2023). Companies headquartered in these areas are often lauded for their leadership in promoting inclusivity, with many ranking highly on indices such as the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index, which evaluates corporate commitments to LGBTQIA+ rights (Human Rights Campaign, 2020).

In contrast, other regions, such as parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, remain resistant to change. In these areas, LGBTQIA+ employees may face systemic discrimination, harassment, or even legal consequences for expressing their identities. Cultural norms and legal frameworks in these regions often make it difficult for companies to implement inclusive policies without facing backlash from local governments, consumers, or employees. For multinational corporations, this presents a significant challenge, as maintaining consistent diversity and inclusion policies across global operations is critical. However, local legal and cultural obstacles often hinder efforts to extend protections to LGBTQIA+ employees in these regions (Sears & Mallory, 2014).

Nevertheless, some multinationals have taken proactive steps to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights on a global scale. These companies recognize that fostering an inclusive workplace is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage in attracting top talent. By engaging with local LGBTQIA+ organizations, offering inclusive benefits even in less progressive areas, and advocating for global LGBTQIA+ rights, these corporations are working to bridge the gap in global inclusivity (Schadendorf, 2023).

For example, *Google* has actively partnered with LGBTQIA+ organizations and published research showing that inclusive advertising resonates strongly with younger consumers. Similarly, *Burger King's Proud Whopper* campaign reached millions of people and generated significant engagement, particularly among millennials, by explicitly associating the brand with Pride values. While such campaigns can increase visibility, they also illustrate how queer identities are often strategically leveraged within corporate marketing logics, raising questions about the boundary between genuine inclusion and commercial instrumentalization (Smith & Lee, 2025). Likewise, *IBM* has long been a pioneer in promoting workplace equality, offering same-gender partner benefits in over 53 countries and being one of the first to include sexual

orientation in its equal opportunity policy. *Microsoft* has also been a leader in supporting LGBTQIA+ rights globally, including taking a firm stance against discriminatory laws such as India's Section 377, which criminalized same-sex relationships. These examples illustrate different strategies through which corporations engage with LGBTQIA+ issues from marketing-centered visibility efforts to institutional policy commitments.

Microsoft has also been a leader in supporting LGBTQIA+ rights globally, including taking a firm stance against discriminatory laws such as India's Section 377, which criminalized same-sex relationships. *Microsoft* has consistently advocated for federal LGBTQIA+ protections in the United States, such as the *Equality Act*, which seeks to provide legal protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Anderson & Taylor, 2011).

These examples illustrate how leading global corporations are using their influence not only to create inclusive work environments but also to push for broader societal changes that benefit the LGBTQIA+ community (Anderson & Taylor, 2011).

3.3 Challenges and Opportunities for LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity in the Corporate World

Despite the considerable progress made in advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusivity within the corporate sphere, challenges remain. One pervasive issue is the persistence of microaggressions, subtle but harmful actions or comments that convey bias against LGBTQIA+ individuals. These behaviors, often unintentional, contribute to an atmosphere of discomfort and exclusion, even in companies that have implemented comprehensive anti-discrimination policies (Sears & Mallory, 2011) Overcoming this challenge requires ongoing education and awareness to ensure that all employees are mindful of how their words and actions impact their LGBTQIA+ colleagues.

Furthermore, while many corporations have made significant strides in policy development, a gap often exists between policy and practice. Companies may publicly commit to diversity and inclusion but fail to provide adequate resources for enforcing these policies or supporting LGBTQIA+ employees. This can create a perception that inclusivity efforts are performative rather than substantive, undermining employee trust and engagement (Schadendorf, 2023).

Simultaneously, the corporate world offers considerable opportunities for fostering meaningful change. Companies that embrace diversity and inclusion, particularly LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, tend to outperform their peers in innovation, employee satisfaction,

and overall business success (Schadendorf, 2023). Diverse teams bring a broader range of perspectives and ideas, fostering creativity and collaboration. LGBTQIA+ employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to contribute fully to the organization's success.

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) play a crucial role in advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. These groups offer a platform for advocacy, networking, and raising awareness about issues affecting the LGBTQIA+ community. ERGs have become instrumental in shaping corporate policies and promoting a more inclusive workplace culture (Human Rights Campaign, 2020). They provide opportunities for employees to engage with leadership, share their experiences, and advocate for change within the company.

Corporate leadership also plays a significant role in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. As more LGBTQIA+ individuals rise to leadership positions, they help shape corporate culture and policy. Visible LGBTQIA+ leaders serve as role models, demonstrating that it is possible to succeed professionally while being open about one's identity. This visibility is crucial for breaking down barriers and encouraging other LGBTQIA+ employees to bring their authentic selves to work (Sears & Mallory, 2014).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a powerful tool for advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusivity within the corporate world. Many companies now recognize that promoting diversity and inclusion is not only a moral obligation but also a key component of their CSR strategies. By integrating LGBTQIA+ rights into their CSR initiatives, businesses can demonstrate their commitment to social justice, equality, and inclusivity, both within their operations and the broader communities they serve.

Companies like Google and Microsoft have integrated LGBTQIA+ rights into their CSR initiatives, providing comprehensive employee benefits, partnering with LGBTQIA+ organizations, and advocating publicly for LGBTQIA+ rights. These initiatives not only foster inclusive workplace environments but also improve brand reputation and help attract top talent (Fatmy et al., 2023; Microsoft Diversity & Inclusion Report, 2024).

CSR initiatives have contributed to the adoption of inclusive policies, such as comprehensive anti-discrimination measures, transgender healthcare coverage, and family support programs for LGBTQIA+ employees. Additionally, many companies have leveraged their influence to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights on a broader scale, supporting legislative reforms, public campaigns, and partnerships with LGBTQIA+ organizations (Schadendorf, 2023).

However, for these efforts to be effective, they must go beyond symbolism. Some companies have faced criticism for "rainbow-washing", publicly supporting LGBTQIA+ causes without implementing meaningful internal changes (Sears & Mallory, 2011) To avoid this, businesses must ensure that their public support for LGBTQIA+ inclusivity is backed by substantive, actionable measures. This includes fostering inclusive workplaces, offering equal opportunities, and creating robust systems to address discrimination and bias.

To truly champion LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, companies need to align their external messaging with authentic, internal transformation. This means building a culture where diversity is deeply embedded into the organization's values and daily practices, not just a facade for public approval. Genuine commitment requires long-term strategies that address structural inequalities, provide comprehensive support for LGBTQIA+ employees, and actively foster an environment of inclusivity. When companies take these steps, they not only protect their reputation but also create lasting change that benefits both their workforce and society at large.

Building on this notion of aligning external messaging with authentic internal transformation, recent studies, such as those by McKinsey (2021), shed light on the significant challenges LGBTQIA+ employees still encounter in the workplace. From underrepresentation in senior roles to microaggressions and exclusion, especially for trans employees, the path to true inclusivity requires more than symbolic gestures. It demands actionable steps and long-term strategies that address these structural inequalities (McKinsey, 2021).

According to McKinsey's insights, LGBTQIA+ employees, particularly at senior levels, continue to experience marginalization, including microaggressions and a lack of representation in leadership roles. This reality is even more severe for trans employees, who often face disproportionate challenges, including heightened discrimination and exclusion. As a result, many LGBTQIA+ employees are left feeling isolated, which can drive a higher intent to leave their organizations (McKinsey, 2021).

This lack of inclusion is not just about representation but also about creating an environment where LGBTQIA+ employees feel a sense of belonging. Without this sense of belonging, many LGBTQIA+ employees are unlikely to advance within their organizations. Those who do come out at work often find it difficult to progress in sectors or regions where LGBTQIA+ identities are less accepted. For those who are not out, the emotional labor of concealing

their identity often impacts their work performance and overall job satisfaction (McKinsey, 2021). The report offers several actionable solutions to these issues, beginning with allyship. By fostering allyship across all levels of an organization, employees can better support their LGBTQIA+ colleagues and stand up against discriminatory behaviors. The use of inclusive language and continuous education are also critical to creating a genuinely inclusive work environment (McKinsey, 2021).

Additionally, adopting an intersectional approach to inclusivity is crucial. LGBTQIA+ individuals' experiences can intersect with other forms of discrimination, such as those based on race or gender. Companies that recognize and address these overlapping identities are more likely to build effective, inclusive policies (McKinsey, 2021).

One key recommendation from the McKinsey report is the need for companies to regularly measure and track their progress. Many organizations launch initiatives without a system to measure their success, leading to stagnation. By establishing metrics and regularly assessing diversity data, companies can ensure that their LGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts remain effective and are continuously improving (McKinsey, 2021).

Furthermore, companies that demonstrate commitment to LGBTQIA+ rights not just internally but externally, through client and customer relations, enhance their brand reputation. Companies that are visibly supportive of LGBTQIA+ rights often build stronger relationships within communities that value equality and fairness (McKinsey, 2021).

In conclusion, fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusion requires year-round dedication, not just celebratory events during Pride Month. By implementing policies centered on allyship, intersectionality, and measurable outcomes, companies can create environments where LGBTQIA+ employees feel supported and valued, which, in turn, leads to higher retention and engagement within the workforce.

3.4 Bridging Global Inclusivity Trends: The Role of the Portuguese Diversity Charter in Corporate Growth

Building on these global trends, Portugal has made considerable strides in embedding diversity and inclusion within its corporate framework. One key initiative is the Portuguese Diversity Charter, overseen by the Portuguese Association for Diversity and Inclusion (APPDI - Associação Portuguesa para a Diversidade e Inclusão), which reflects a voluntary pledge by companies across various sectors to align with European values of equal

opportunity, promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion, and supporting a broad range of diversity dimensions such as gender, ethnicity, and disability. It encourages businesses to adopt inclusive practices not only as ethical imperatives but also as drivers of innovation and growth.

The following section draw on information obtained from a direct conversation with the president of APPDI (personal communication, September 23, 2023), providing insights into the Charter's creation, objectives, and its role in shaping inclusive workplaces in Portugal.

The Portuguese Diversity Charter is grounded in three core values: diversity, inclusion, and equal opportunity. These values emphasize recognizing and valuing differences among individuals, whether related to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or personal style.

The Charter aims to foster workplaces that are inclusive and equitable by promoting core values. It encourages diversity, which embraces the unique attributes, backgrounds, and perspectives individuals bring to the organization. It also emphasizes inclusion, ensuring all employees have equal access to opportunities and are integrated into every aspect of organizational life. Lastly, the Charter promotes equal opportunity, striving to guarantee that no individual is disadvantaged or excluded based on their inherent characteristics. By promoting these values, workplaces become more supportive and respectful for all employees.

The primary goal of the Charter is to develop diverse and inclusive working environments that contribute to economic growth, sustainability, and global competitiveness. Fostering diversity within companies enhances innovation and creativity while attracting a broader talent pool. This initiative also aligns with European Union directives that advocate for equal access and opportunities throughout all stages of life, promoting gender equality to boost labor market participation.

By implementing the Charter, companies aim to achieve several positive outcomes. These include reducing internal and external workplace grievances, which are often linked to feelings of exclusion or unfair treatment. With a stronger focus on diversity, organizations expect to see a decrease in employee turnover, as workers feel more valued and supported, contributing to higher retention rates. Employee development is also anticipated to improve, as a more inclusive environment encourages personal and professional growth, allowing

employees to reach their full potential. In turn, customer satisfaction may increase as a result of a more engaged and diverse workforce, leading to better products and services.

Additionally, this initiative is expected to have a profound effect on company culture. By promoting diversity and inclusion, the Charter helps align employee actions and behaviors with the company's broader strategy. This alignment is crucial for creating a cohesive and motivated workforce that is dedicated to achieving organizational goals. Ultimately, fostering these values improves attitudes and behaviors within the company, leading to a more harmonious and productive work environment.

APPDI, which was formally established in 2018, plays a crucial role in the management and oversight of the Portuguese Diversity Charter. It represents the Charter both nationally and at the European level through the European Diversity Charter Platform. APPDI's primary mission is to foster diversity and inclusion within Portuguese organizations by developing initiatives, programs, and tools to support these objectives. This organization not only promotes awareness but also actively monitors compliance with diversity legislation. Its efforts are aimed at transforming workplaces into environments where all employees, regardless of their background, feel valued and integrated into the company's daily operations.

To achieve its goals, APPDI has constructed its strategy around six primary axes that guide its activities. These strategic pillars reflect the organization's comprehensive approach to promoting diversity and inclusion across corporate structures as well as within broader communities. The first axis focuses on legislation monitoring, ensuring that member organizations comply with existing diversity and inclusion laws while also advocating for the advancement of new legislation that promotes greater equality. This legislative oversight is crucial for building a regulatory framework that enforces accountability and drives long-term change.

The second axis of APPDI's strategy involves sharing best practices. By creating platforms for organizations to share knowledge and successful diversity and inclusion strategies, APPDI encourages a culture of continuous improvement. This exchange of ideas is key to developing effective approaches that address the diverse needs of modern workforces. Companies are better able to implement policies that are tested and proven to foster inclusive environments, thus setting a standard for others to follow.

A central element of APPDI's mission, encapsulated in its third axis, is to promote diversity in the labor market. This involves ensuring that underrepresented groups, including women, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, have equal access to employment opportunities. APPDI works to break down barriers that may prevent these groups from entering the workforce or advancing within it, promoting recruitment strategies that focus on inclusion. By actively integrating diverse talent, companies are not only following ethical guidelines but also unlocking the potential for innovation and creativity within their teams.

Preparing future generations represents the fourth axis of APPDI's strategy. This focuses on equipping younger individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in diverse and inclusive workplaces. APPDI works to influence educational institutions and corporate training programs to ensure they prioritize diversity and inclusion as key components of their curricula. This forward-thinking approach helps to build a more inclusive workforce of tomorrow, ensuring that the principles of equality are deeply embedded in future professional environments.

The fifth axis involves fostering social contributions. APPDI encourages organizations to go beyond internal diversity policies by contributing to broader social inclusion efforts within the community. This involves collaborating with external partners, such as NGOs and community groups, to promote diversity initiatives that extend beyond the corporate sphere. By participating in community-based projects and campaigns, companies can help to create a more inclusive society at large.

Finally, APPDI's sixth axis is its commitment to becoming a reference point for diversity in Portugal. The organization strives to position itself as the primary resource for companies and institutions seeking guidance on diversity and inclusion issues. By establishing itself as a leader in this area, APPDI hopes to shape national discourse around diversity and inclusion, influencing both corporate practices and public policies. This includes offering expert advice, producing research on diversity trends, and providing resources that help organizations benchmark their progress against industry standards.

Overall, APPDI's strategic framework, grounded in these six axes, is designed to promote systemic change within Portuguese organizations. By focusing on legislative compliance, best practice sharing, workforce diversity, future preparation, social contributions, and leadership in diversity, APPDI seeks to create a sustainable model for inclusive workplaces

that can serve as an example across Europe. This holistic approach ensures that diversity and inclusion are not merely buzzwords, but integral aspects of corporate identity and community responsibility in Portugal.

The Portuguese Diversity Charter, initiated by the European Commission, is a voluntary tool aimed at encouraging organizations from various sectors to implement policies that foster diversity and inclusion. It provides a flexible framework for companies of all sizes to adopt practices that address cultural, ethnic, and social diversity, as well as characteristics such as gender, sexual orientation, age, and religion. By signing the Charter, organizations commit to creating inclusive workplaces through tailored Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies, which can include actions such as creating gender equality plans, celebrating cultural diversity, and offering unconscious bias training. These measures aim to promote equality, combat stereotypes, and enhance innovation, employee engagement, and competitiveness.

A key aspect of the Charter is its alignment with European Union directives, ensuring consistency with broader European diversity goals, such as the Gender Equality Strategy and the Action Plan against Racism. By fostering an intersectional approach, the Charter emphasizes the importance of promoting diversity across all levels of an organization. Additionally, it encourages knowledge-sharing and the development of internal metrics and policies to measure the success of D&I initiatives.

APPDI supports organizations in adopting the Charter by offering training, consultancy, and tools to help implement D&I strategies. APPDI also fosters a national and European network of companies committed to diversity, facilitating the sharing of best practices. Organizations that sign the Charter are not legally obligated to adopt specific measures but are encouraged to integrate D&I efforts in a way that aligns with their business needs and operational realities.

The implementation of the Portuguese Diversity Charter in companies is expected to generate significant positive outcomes by fostering a more inclusive and diverse workplace culture. A key benefit is greater innovation, as a diverse workforce introduces varied perspectives that enhance creativity and problem-solving. Additionally, better talent attraction and retention arise from an inclusive environment where employees feel valued and respected, making it easier for companies to recruit top talent. Furthermore, increased organizational competitiveness is fostered, as diverse teams often make better decisions and connect with broader market segments, aligning companies with diverse customer bases.

The Charter also helps reduce prejudice and discrimination, promoting a meritocratic environment where employees are judged based on their skills and performance rather than inherent characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. This focus on fair treatment contributes to personal and professional development, encouraging individuals to bring their full selves to the workplace.

By adopting the Charter, organizations align themselves more closely with the diverse society in which they operate. This alignment enhances both social and economic standards, as companies become more efficient and competitive while fostering a culture of respect and inclusion. Such organizations not only gain a competitive edge in the market but also create spaces where individual differences are celebrated, leading to greater employee empowerment and organizational success.

As the managing entity of the Portuguese Diversity Charter, APPDI plays a pivotal role in advancing diversity and inclusion within Portuguese organizations. It represents the Charter at both the national and European levels, ensuring alignment with broader EU standards through participation in the European Platform of Diversity Charters. APPDI actively promotes diversity across all sectors by developing various initiatives to increase female participation in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) fields, and providing resources like training programs, working groups, and consultancy services to support organizations in implementing their Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies.

One of APPDI's standout projects is its thematic working groups, where experts and organizations exchange best practices. This collaborative environment helps organizations develop tailored D&I strategies that address specific challenges and opportunities in their sectors. Additionally, APPDI provides free resources to further amplify diversity and inclusion across various sectors, ensuring organizations of all sizes can access valuable tools and information. This broad approach positions APPDI as a critical leader in creating a more inclusive work environment across Portugal.

In addition to its projects, APPDI offers training programs to raise awareness, improve organizational capacity, and promote inclusive work environments. It also provides consultancy services, offering customized guidance to organizations on enhancing their D&I practices. These consultancy services are tailored to meet the specific needs of companies, ensuring they can successfully integrate diversity into their corporate culture and operations.

Through its multifaceted approach, APPDI plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive professional landscape in Portugal. The association's broad spectrum of initiatives ensures that D&I becomes an integral part of both organizational strategies and societal values. By offering resources, expertise, and leadership in diversity and inclusion, APPDI is helping to cultivate workplaces that are more reflective of the diversity of Portuguese society.

APPDI has developed numerous initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion across various sectors in Portugal. Among its most notable projects is "Engenheiras Por Um Dia" (Engineers for a Day), a program aimed at encouraging female students to pursue careers in engineering and technology, fields traditionally dominated by men. This government-backed initiative, launched in 2017, has already reached over 18,964 students through collaborations with 186 partner organizations.

Another key initiative, "Divers@s e Ativ@s", focuses on promoting diversity and non-discrimination in the professional sphere, working closely with human resources and inclusion professionals. In partnership with EAPN-Portugal and Likestillingssenteret KUN, the project develops practical tools for creating fairer workplaces. This initiative is part of the Active Citizens Program, reflecting a broader goal of enhancing inclusion and combating discrimination.

Furthermore, APPDI's inclusive recruitment project in the retail sector emphasizes supporting vulnerable communities in overcoming barriers to labor market access. By offering both hard and soft skills training, the initiative prepares candidates for employment while facilitating their smooth integration into the workplace. This holistic approach has proven impactful, not only equipping participants with essential skills but also ensuring their long-term success within the workplace.

APPDI also provides tailored consultancy services to assist companies in developing effective Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) strategies. These services are customized to reflect the specific needs of individual organizations, ensuring practical implementation and long-term success.

Overall, these initiatives share a common goal of fostering equal opportunities and inclusive environments where individuals from diverse backgrounds can thrive and contribute meaningfully to their organizations. By creating targeted programs and offering extensive support, APPDI plays a critical role in promoting D&I throughout Portugal.

APPDI's strategy is fundamentally aligned with the objectives of the Portuguese Diversity Charter, as it was founded to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The organization operates through six strategic areas of intervention. These include monitoring diversity legislation, contributing to society through diverse workplaces, sharing best practices among organizations, integrating underrepresented groups into the labor market, preparing future generations for a diverse workforce, and becoming a national reference in diversity and inclusion. APPDI provides training, consultancy, and tools to support organizations in implementing D&I strategies that reflect their specific contexts.

To further its mission, APPDI actively works to spread awareness about the Portuguese Diversity Charter's principles and benefits, highlighting how diversity contributes positively not only to individual organizations but also to society as a whole. The organization encourages collaboration among companies by facilitating the sharing of successful diversity strategies and promoting a culture of measurable outcomes to track progress in inclusion efforts. Through these actions, APPDI seeks to embed diversity as a core value in Portugal's corporate and societal landscape, ensuring that all organizations actively contribute to a more inclusive future.

APPDI's emphasis on reporting and measurement ensures that diversity initiatives produce visible and impactful results, reinforcing the collective responsibility for advancing diversity and inclusion in Portugal. Through its comprehensive approach, APPDI continues to lead the charge in ensuring that the principles of the Portuguese Diversity Charter are adopted and integrated across diverse sectors of the labor market.

In summary, APPDI plays a critical role in promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity within Portuguese workplaces, aligning its efforts with the principles of the Portuguese Diversity Charter. Despite its success, APPDI faces several challenges in advancing diversity. These include a lack of awareness, resistance to change, limited resources, difficulties in measuring progress, and concerns about data disclosure. To overcome these barriers, APPDI focuses on comprehensive training, fostering partnerships, advocating for public awareness, collaborating with government bodies, and facilitating the sharing of best practices through meetings and workshops.

By implementing these strategies, APPDI seeks to motivate organizations to prioritize diversity, overcome resistance, and build equitable work environments. Through comprehensive training, APPDI helps organizations understand the importance of D&I and

equips them with the necessary skills to implement meaningful strategies. The partnerships APPDI builds across sectors amplify the impact of diversity initiatives and ensure the sharing of resources, making diversity efforts more sustainable even for smaller organizations.

Moreover, advocacy and public campaigns are integral in raising awareness and demonstrating the societal and economic benefits of inclusive workplaces. Collaboration with governmental bodies and private companies allows APPDI to address resistance and to advocate for necessary policy shifts, though external factors such as economic conditions may present additional hurdles. Through thematic meetings and best practice sharing, APPDI fosters a learning community where organizations can exchange experiences, gain insights into effective D&I practices, and receive peer support.

By combining these efforts, APPDI remains committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within Portuguese workplaces, ensuring that organizations continue to evolve towards a culture of respect, fairness, and equal opportunity for all employees.

Corporate diversity is a fundamental driver of economic growth and competitiveness, as it brings together varied perspectives that foster innovation, creativity, and problem-solving. Diverse teams enable organizations to anticipate and adapt to market trends, cater to diverse customer bases, and navigate international markets more effectively. Beyond economic benefits, diversity helps attract and retain top talent by creating inclusive environments where employees feel valued. APPDI aims to expand the Portuguese Diversity Charter's reach, focusing on developing tools, increasing signatories, and promoting collaboration with European Diversity Charters.

APPDI also seeks to enhance the measurement and communication of diversity initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability. Collaborations with higher education institutions will further research on diversity and inclusion to support the development of practical, evidence-based strategies. By broadening its scope, APPDI hopes to embed D&I principles not only within businesses but also within academic and other organizations, creating a more inclusive and equitable society across Portugal.

In the long term, these efforts will solidify the Portuguese Diversity Charter as a critical tool for fostering diverse and inclusive work environments and driving societal change. Through collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning, APPDI will ensure that D&I becomes an integral aspect of organizational culture and a key factor for success in a globalized world.

Before the formalization of APPDI, the Charter was promoted by an informal executive committee that included several key entities such as the Commission for Equality in Labor and Employment (CITE), the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), and the National Institute for Rehabilitation (INR). These organizations helped develop the Charter's framework and provided early informal management. The formalization of APPDI ensured long-term sustainability and allowed for a structured governance system, capable of driving diversity and inclusion across Portugal.

APPDI's governance structure includes a Board of Directors with key organizations such as EDP, CRESCER, and NATIXIS playing leading roles, while a Supervisory Board and a Consultative Council composed of founding entities and strategic partners assist with governance and strategic planning. This governance structure enables APPDI to effectively promote diversity, oversee the implementation of the Charter, and ensure its continued growth.

In terms of future directions, APPDI is focused on increasing the number of organizations signing the Portuguese Diversity Charter and continuing to raise awareness about diversity's importance in the workplace. By providing organizations with tools and support for effective diversity strategies, fostering collaboration with European Diversity Charters, and engaging in research partnerships with academic institutions, APPDI aims to deepen the understanding and implementation of diversity and inclusion in Portugal.

In essence, the Portuguese Diversity Charter goes beyond being a set of guidelines. It represents a transformative initiative that shapes inclusive, innovative, and competitive workplaces across Portugal. Through APPDI's ongoing efforts, the Charter continues to guide a more diverse corporate culture, setting an example within the broader European context. However, fostering true inclusivity requires addressing the specific challenges faced by marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQIA+I community. The Observatory of Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+I People, organized by ILGA Portugal, plays a key role in this by monitoring and documenting incidents of discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. This initiative aims to combat discrimination in various sectors, including employment and public services, through data collection and public awareness campaigns.

3.5 Overview of Discrimination Reports in Portugal and Key Findings

Between 2020 and 2022, the Observatory of Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+I People collected reports of discrimination occurring in various contexts, including domestic spaces, workplaces, public spaces, schools, and in access to goods and services across Portugal. The data highlights the pervasive nature and harmful impact of prejudice, with more than half of the reported cases classified as hate-motivated crimes or incidents. However, less than a quarter of these cases resulted in formal complaints, indicating the structural invisibility of the issue (ILGA Portugal, 2023). The pandemic further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of many victims, revealing weak support networks during these exceptional times.

Despite legal advancements in LGBTQIA+I+ rights, most discrimination cases go unreported, reducing the visibility and urgency of addressing these issues. While Portugal has progressed significantly in terms of legal protections, ranking highly in global LGBTQIA+I+ rights, the period between 2020 and 2022 saw stagnation, with both progress and significant challenges emerging during these years (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

Between 2020 and 2022, Portugal's ranking in ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map varied significantly. In 2020, the country ranked 6th with a score of 66%, moving to 4th in 2021 with 68%, and then dropping to 9th in 2022 with 62%. These scores were based on various factors including equality, non-discrimination, hate crime policies, and legal recognition of gender. In 2021, Portugal's rise was attributed to ending discrimination in blood donations from gay and bisexual men. The decline in 2022 was largely due to the expiration of the 2018-2021 Government Action Plan, which focused on combating discrimination related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression, as well as sexual characteristics. Despite Portugal's progressive legal framework, including the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030, gaps in implementation persisted (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

In 2020, ILGA-Europe emphasized the need for Portugal to adopt specific public policies, including banning conversion therapies, clarifying non-discrimination in blood donations, and establishing an LGBTQIA+I+ protection policy for international asylum seekers. While the blood donation issue was resolved in 2021 after long-standing advocacy, the expiration of government action plans in 2021 without immediate renewal contributed to the 5% drop in 2022. The new 2022-2025 Action Plans were only published in August 2023, after a period of public consultation. These plans aim to continue advancing equality by setting concrete measures, indicators, and targets for gender equality, violence prevention, and combating discrimination against LGBTQIA+I+ individuals (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

In 2021, Portugal's Constitutional Court ruled regulatory decree n. ° 7247/2019 unconstitutional, as the regulation of gender identity and sexual characteristics is the Parliament's jurisdiction. This ruling affected the implementation of Law n. ° 38/2018, which guarantees gender self-determination. In response, Bill no 332/XV was introduced in 2022 to address this issue. Additionally, Law n. ° 85/2021 prohibited discrimination in blood donation based on gender identity or sexual orientation. This legislative effort aligns with the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2022-2025 (ENIND), aimed at further promoting equality and combating discrimination across Portugal (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

Between 2020 and 2022, the Observatory of Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+I+ People received a total of 469 reports through anonymous and confidential surveys. Of these, 118 were filed in 2020, 233 in 2021, and 118 in 2022. All cases involved prejudice, discrimination, or violence based on victims' actual or presumed sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual characteristics. These incidents occurred exclusively in Portugal, including both physical and online contexts, reflecting the persistent challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+I+ community in the country during this period (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

In 2020, the Observatory of Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+I+ People recorded the highest proportion of reports filed directly by victims (62.7%). This decreased in 2021 to 45.5%, rising again to 60.2% in 2022. Other sources of reports included witnesses, services or projects from ILGA Portugal, such as victim support, psychological support, and social services. In 2021, witness reports accounted for more than a quarter of cases (25.8%). A small percentage of reports in each year came from individuals who chose not to specify their identity (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

According to the Council of Europe's definition, a hate crime against LGBTQIA+I+ people is a criminal act motivated by prejudice. These crimes may include actions such as intimidation, threats, property damage, assault, or even homicide, where the victim is targeted because of their actual or perceived association with the LGBTQIA+I+ community. While Portuguese law provides enhanced protection for crimes motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity, hate crime is not recognized as a separate legal category. Certain criminal acts like homicide (Art. 132), assault (Art. 145), and incitement to hatred (Art. 240) can have increased penalties when motivated by bias. To qualify as a hate crime,

two conditions must be met: (1) the act must be criminal under the Portuguese Penal Code, and (2) the victim must be targeted due to personal characteristics that are legally protected, whether those characteristics are real or perceived. If both conditions are not met, the case may still be classified as a hate-motivated incident rather than a full hate crime (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

In practical terms, these legal provisions aim to provide harsher penalties when the crime is driven by prejudice related to the victim's real or perceived LGBTQIA+I+ identity. This distinction, known as "message crimes," reflects the societal impact these offenses have beyond the immediate harm caused to the victim (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

Despite the two-year gap in published reports due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Observatory of Discrimination Against LGBTQIA+I+ People continued to record cases of discrimination in Portugal. The eighth report, covering a decade of activity, shows a peak in complaints in 2021, while 2020 and 2022 saw lower-than-average numbers. The pandemic played a significant role in this fluctuation, as social distancing and remote interactions increased. A large proportion of complaints related to online contexts, highlighting the challenges of adapting to the pandemic environment (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

The report also stresses the underreporting of incidents and calls for increased awareness and education, particularly for law enforcement, healthcare, and educational professionals. This underreporting underscores the need to better understand the vulnerabilities within the LGBTQIA+I+ community, especially among those with limited social support. These findings emphasize that the recorded data only represents a partial view of the broader discrimination landscape, influenced by intersecting identities and experiences (ILGA Portugal, 2023).

Given these findings, the report stresses the urgent need for targeted awareness campaigns, particularly for key professionals such as law enforcement, healthcare, and educational workers. The persistent underreporting of cases highlights the necessity for broader visibility and understanding of the issues faced by the LGBTQIA+I+ community. Furthermore, the report emphasizes that the recorded data only captures a fragment of a more complex reality, shaped by intersecting identities and experiences. Moving forward, it calls for a more comprehensive approach to effectively combat LGBTQIA+I+ discrimination in Portugal.

3.6 Corporate Diversity and Inclusion in Portugal: Leading Examples and Progress

Portugal has made significant progress in promoting diversity and inclusion within its corporate landscape, with several companies standing out as examples of how these values are being effectively integrated into business practices. The push for inclusivity is increasingly recognized not only as a moral obligation but also as a strategic asset that enhances corporate performance, innovation, and global competitiveness. Prominent Portuguese companies such as EDP (Energias de Portugal – Energies of Portugal), Sonae, and Galp Energia (Galp Energy) have made substantial strides in embedding diversity into their corporate frameworks, leading the way in both national and international rankings.

EDP has been a trailblazer in gender equality, earning high rankings in Bloomberg’s Gender-Equality Index (GEI). This international recognition reflects EDP’s longstanding commitment to diversity at all organizational levels. In 2022, EDP reported that women comprised 38% of its workforce, surpassing the European Union’s directive on gender diversity. According to this directive, adopted in 2022, by 2026, listed companies must ensure that 33% of all director positions are filled by members of the underrepresented gender, or alternatively, that 40% of non-executive directors belong to the underrepresented gender (Directive (EU) 2022/2381, 2022). The company’s proactive gender balance measures have not only fulfilled these legal requirements but have also enhanced its innovation capacity, given that diverse teams are known to generate better decision-making and creative solutions (EDP, 2023). These efforts are thoroughly documented in their *Sustainability Report* (EDP, 2023), which details the company’s progress in creating a more equitable work environment.

Sonae, another major Portuguese multinational, has cemented its commitment to diversity by becoming a signatory of the Portuguese Diversity Charter. The Charter encourages companies to adopt voluntary, comprehensive diversity policies that cover various dimensions, including gender, ethnicity, disability, and LGBTQIA+ inclusion. Sonae’s initiatives have earned it recognition in the European Diversity Awards for promoting women in leadership, supporting multicultural recruitment, and creating a genuinely inclusive corporate culture. Through its extensive diversity and inclusion policies, Sonae has managed to boost innovation, foster an inclusive work culture, and enhance its competitiveness both locally and internationally (Sonae, 2022).

Galp Energia, one of Portugal’s largest energy companies, has also made significant strides in gender diversity within its senior management. As part of the Catalyst CEO Champions

for Change initiative, Galp has committed to increasing female representation in leadership roles. This initiative encourages CEOs worldwide to prioritize diversity within their organizations. Galp's commitment is evident through its robust diversity metrics, which it reports annually in its Sustainability Report. These efforts have improved the company's brand image and expanded its appeal to a global talent pool (Galp Energia, 2022). Galp's active participation in gender diversity efforts aligns with broader European Union standards on equality, which aim to foster social cohesion across member states.

In addition to gender diversity, Portugal's corporate sector is increasingly focused on broader inclusivity efforts. For example, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has played a significant role in encouraging Portuguese companies to adopt inclusive hiring practices, particularly for individuals with disabilities. ILO's global initiatives provide a framework for companies to ensure that their workplaces are accessible and inclusive for all employees. These efforts are crucial for meeting both European and global standards on diversity and inclusion (International Labour Organization, 2021). The inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce further underscores the importance of viewing diversity as a multidimensional issue that goes beyond gender or ethnicity.

Moreover, the introduction of gender quotas for corporate boards in Portugal in 2017 marked a significant step toward improving gender diversity in leadership roles. The legislation mandates that publicly listed companies have at least 33% of their board members be women. Although this move has helped increase female representation in leadership positions, the country still faces challenges in achieving broader diversity. Nevertheless, the quota system has proven effective, especially in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as energy and finance, where women's representation has historically been low (Egon Zehnder, 2018). By setting clear and measurable targets, the quota system provides a roadmap for companies to follow in fostering more inclusive environments.

As Portugal continues to align itself with European Union directives and global best practices in diversity and inclusion, these leading companies serve as role models for others to follow. Their proactive strategies not only improve their internal corporate cultures but also contribute to Portugal's reputation as a progressive and inclusive country within the global business community. The focus on diversity as a driver of innovation, employee engagement, and corporate performance highlights the strategic advantage that inclusivity offers in today's interconnected economy.

However, it is important to note that increasing diversity alone does not automatically lead to structural inclusion or equity. As several scholars have argued, a narrow focus on representation may risk reinforcing symbolic rather than substantive change, particularly if underlying power structures and organizational cultures remain unchanged (Ahmed, 2012; Puar, 2007). Diversity metrics and gender quotas can enhance visibility and improve access, but they must be accompanied by systemic transformations such as inclusive leadership, anti-bias mechanisms, and accountability structures to ensure that marginalized groups are not merely present but genuinely empowered. This distinction between diversity and inclusion is critical for evaluating the actual effectiveness of corporate equality initiatives.

In the following sections, I will focus on BNP Paribas and its initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. As a major player in the Portuguese and global markets, BNP Paribas has made significant contributions to advancing these values within its corporate structure, providing a compelling case study on how inclusivity can be effectively integrated into business practices.

CHAPTER IV – THE CASE OF BNP PARIBAS PORTUGAL

The Historical Evolution of BNP Paribas, one of the world's most influential financial institutions, owes its current status to a long history shaped by strategic mergers, acquisitions, and its ability to navigate the changing dynamics of the global financial landscape.

The foundation of BNP Paribas began with the creation of Comptoir National d'Escompte de Paris (CNEP) in 1848, a time of significant financial instability in France. Established to stabilize the economy by offering short-term credit to businesses, CNEP gradually expanded its reach, moving beyond France to establish a strong presence in global markets, from the Americas to Asia. In parallel, the Banque Nationale pour le Commerce et l'Industrie (BNCI) was founded in 1932 to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). As the French economy surged during the post-war boom, BNCI grew into a key player, furthering industrial expansion and economic recovery (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

As global markets became increasingly interconnected during the mid-20th century, the need for consolidation within the banking industry also became clear. In 1966, this led to the merger of CNEP and BNCI, forming Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP). The newly established BNP quickly became one of the largest banks in France, enabling it to strengthen its domestic operations while expanding into international markets (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

During the same period, Banque de Paris et des Pays-Bas (Paribas), founded in 1872, had already established itself as a leading investment bank, known for its expertise in international finance, investment banking, and asset management. Paribas maintained a strong presence across Europe and beyond. By the late 20th century, the financial sector was being reshaped by deregulation, globalization, and rapid technological advancements. To remain competitive, banks needed economies of scale and an expanded global reach (Laeven & Levine, 2009)

In 2000, BNP and Paribas merged to create BNP Paribas, forming one of Europe's largest financial institutions. This merger combined BNP's expansive retail banking network with Paribas' renowned capabilities in investment banking and international finance. The newly formed entity boasted a diversified business model and a significant global presence, positioning BNP Paribas to compete on a larger scale with other major financial institutions worldwide (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

Following this merger, BNP Paribas launched an ambitious strategy focused on international expansion, particularly in North America and Asia. The acquisition of BancWest in 2001 solidified BNP Paribas' position in North American retail banking. Simultaneously, the bank's expansion into wealth management, investment banking, and asset management further cemented its leadership in various financial sectors (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

This phase marked a turning point in BNP Paribas' evolution, from a conventional banking entity to a globally integrated and socially responsible financial leader. Its transformation unfolded in parallel with intensifying demands for ethical governance and more accountable, purpose-driven capitalism within the international financial landscape.

At the same time, the bank emerged as a frontrunner in sustainable finance, introducing innovative financial products that aligned with Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards and the growing appetite for responsible investment. It notably aligned its portfolio with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), expanding offerings in green bonds and sustainability-linked loans.

By integrating ESG criteria into its corporate strategy, BNP Paribas committed itself to sustainability in its lending and investment practices, reinforcing its role as an industry leader (Schadendorf, 2023).

The early 21st century presented new challenges, particularly with the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. However, BNP Paribas demonstrated remarkable resilience, emerging from the crisis in a stronger position compared to many of its competitors. This resilience was largely attributed to the bank's diversified business model and prudent risk management, which enabled it to continue expanding its operations despite the turbulent economic climate. The bank also benefited from its balanced business mix, retail, investment, and corporate banking, which helped mitigate exposure to market volatility (Catalino et al., 2022). In the years following the crisis, BNP Paribas doubled down on its commitment to innovation, leveraging technological advancements to enhance customer experiences and optimize operations. At the same time, the bank deepened its focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR), becoming a leading advocate for diversity, inclusion, and sustainability within the financial services sector (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

These values were not only expressed through public campaigns but embedded in internal governance, including inclusive hiring practices, employee resource groups (ERGs), and strategic partnerships with civil society organizations to promote LGBTQIA+ rights, gender equity, and environmental justice.

Today, BNP Paribas operates in over 70 countries and serves millions of clients across the globe. Its adaptability to evolving global trends, coupled with a steadfast commitment to core values such as integrity, responsibility, and customer service, has solidified its status as a global financial powerhouse. It continues to score highly on the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index and has received recognition from ESG rating agencies for its transparency, ethical leadership, and inclusive governance (HRC, 2025). With a legacy built on resilience, innovation, and adaptability, and a continued focus on sustainability and inclusivity, BNP Paribas remains well-positioned to lead the global financial system for years to come (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

4.1 BNP Paribas' Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, and LGBTQIA+ Advocacy

A core value at BNP Paribas is its unwavering commitment to fostering an inclusive environment that reflects the diversity of its global operations. This dedication is evident in the bank's internal policies and its active participation in various external diversity initiatives.

BNP Paribas has demonstrated a strong and sustained commitment to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) over the past two decades. The bank's dedication to creating a more inclusive workplace is reflected in a series of strategic initiatives that have evolved over time, shaping its corporate culture and positioning it as a leader in DEI within the financial industry (BNP Paribas, 2021).

The journey began in 2004 when BNP Paribas appointed its first Head of Diversity, a move that formalized its focus on DEI. This marked a turning point for the bank, as it simultaneously launched its Diversity Charter and an Agreement on Professional Equality, which laid the groundwork for its DEI policies. That same year, the bank introduced its first employee networks, aimed at providing support to diverse groups within the organization, signaling a new era of inclusivity (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

In the years that followed, BNP Paribas continued to build on these foundational efforts. In 2008, the bank introduced the Parenthood Charter, which underscored its commitment to

supporting working parents and promoting work-life balance. This initiative was complemented by the bank's receipt of a Diversity Certification in 2009, which acknowledged its ongoing DEI efforts and bolstered its reputation as an employer of choice (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). By this time, the bank's DEI strategy was not only attracting diverse talent but also enhancing its brand image.

Further progress came in 2013 with the introduction of the First Diversity Agreement, reinforcing the bank's DEI commitments. In 2014, BNP Paribas expanded its efforts by adopting the European Agreement on Gender Equality and the Work-Life Balance Charter, broadening the scope of its initiatives to address the growing need for gender equity and work-life balance in the workplace (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

The bank's commitment to inclusivity saw additional enhancements in 2016 with the adoption of a new Code of Conduct that explicitly rejected all forms of discrimination. That same year, BNP Paribas signed the Business & Disability Charter, aligning its policies with international standards to better support disabled employees and ensuring an inclusive environment for all (Schadendorf, 2023). This alignment with global frameworks demonstrated BNP Paribas' strategic foresight in creating a workplace that is inclusive across all dimensions of diversity.

In 2019, BNP Paribas became the first bank to endorse the *#JamaisSansElles* Charter, a move that emphasized its commitment to gender equality. This initiative, which focuses on ensuring that women are present in key decision-making forums, further solidified the bank's leadership in the area of gender inclusivity. The following year, in 2020, the bank introduced a new Diversity & Inclusion Agreement, which included innovative support mechanisms for parents, reflecting its ongoing focus on work-life balance and family-friendly policies (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

Other key milestones in BNP Paribas' DEI journey include its 2006 recognition of discrimination as a significant operational risk, the signing of the Women's Empowerment Principles in 2011, and the establishment of global diversity governance structures in 2012. These initiatives highlight the bank's proactive approach to managing diversity at both an operational and strategic level. Additionally, in 2015, BNP Paribas' CEO became a Thematic Champion of the UN's HeForShe initiative, further expanding the bank's focus on gender equality and demonstrating its commitment to global movements that promote DEI (BNP Paribas, 2023; UN Women, 2015)

Recent developments have reinforced BNP Paribas' standing as a DEI leader. In 2018, top executives signed the *#JamaisSansElles* charter, marking the bank's continued participation in global forums dedicated to advancing gender equality. In parallel, internal governance mechanisms have been refined to hold management accountable for progress. This includes diversity scorecards, regular bias-awareness training, and the incorporation of inclusive metrics into leadership evaluations, measures that move beyond symbolic gestures toward structural change. By 2021, nearly 30,000 employees were actively involved in DEI networks across 40 countries, showcasing widespread engagement within the organization and reflecting the global reach of its DEI initiatives (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

The impact of BNP Paribas' DEI efforts is evident both internally and externally. Internally, the bank has seen improved employee satisfaction, higher retention rates, and enhanced problem-solving capabilities, all of which contribute to a more collaborative and innovative workplace. Externally, the bank's commitment to DEI has enhanced its corporate image, making it more attractive to diverse talent and aligning it with global DEI standards. These achievements underscore BNP Paribas' role as a leader in fostering inclusivity within the financial industry (Schadendorf, 2023).

In a sector historically shaped by rigid hierarchies and risk-averse cultures, BNP Paribas' proactive stance on DEI represents a paradigmatic shift. It illustrates how financial institutions can serve not only as economic actors, but also as social influencers capable of reshaping workplace norms and stakeholder expectations. This approach aligns with Crenshaw's (1989) theory of intersectionality, as BNP Paribas recognizes that identity-based exclusion in finance often intersects across gender, race, sexuality, and disability.

The timeline of BNP Paribas' DEI initiatives over the past two decades highlights its long-standing commitment to fostering an inclusive corporate culture. By continuously expanding and adapting its DEI initiatives, the bank not only enhances its competitive edge but also sets a benchmark for other organizations in the industry. The sustained focus on diversity, equality, and inclusion positions BNP Paribas as a trailblazer in creating a more equitable and inclusive workplace for all.

Since signing the Diversity Charter in 2004, BNP Paribas has consistently worked to ensure that its workforce mirrors the communities and customers it serves. This initiative laid the groundwork for the bank's continued efforts to promote gender equality, diversity of

thought, and inclusivity across its entire global network (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

A central element of BNP Paribas' inclusion strategy is its strong support for the LGBTQIA+ community. The bank has taken a proactive role in advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights both within its workforce and in broader societal efforts. Its participation in PRIDE events around the world demonstrates its alignment with the movement's goals of visibility, equality, and the fight against discrimination. This involvement strengthens the bank's reputation as a socially responsible and inclusive institution (Schadendorf, 2023).

Beyond its participation in PRIDE events, BNP Paribas has established Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) dedicated to promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusion. ERGs are employee-led, voluntary groups within organizations, designed to foster a diverse and inclusive workplace aligned with the company's mission and goals (Mercer, 2011).

At BNP Paribas, the PRIDE ERG provides LGBTQIA+ employees with a platform to connect, share experiences, and advocate for policies that enhance inclusivity. The PRIDE ERG has played a significant role in shaping the bank's policies and ensuring that BNP Paribas remains at the forefront of LGBTQIA+ advocacy in the financial sector (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

ERGs are essential in cultivating inclusivity and promoting a sense of belonging, particularly for LGBTQIA+ employees. These groups create safe spaces where individuals who share common characteristics, such as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community, can connect, support one another, and advocate for positive change within their organizations (Schadendorf, 2023). ERGs empower employees to voice their concerns and influence company policy, which is especially significant for those who may feel marginalized or underrepresented in traditional corporate structures. This is particularly relevant in multinational contexts, where cultural taboos or legal restrictions surrounding LGBTQIA+ identities can present additional risks. ERGs offer a protected framework through which employees can advocate safely, regardless of local sociopolitical constraints. This dual function, as both a support mechanism and a channel for strategic influence, makes ERGs a vital component of intercultural organizational practice.

Through PRIDE, BNP Paribas cultivates a supportive community where LGBTQIA+ employees can address workplace challenges, push for policy changes, and share experiences freely (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

For example, PRIDE at BNP Paribas has been instrumental in advocating for transgender-inclusive healthcare policies and gender-neutral facilities within the company (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). In addition to this, ERGs play a critical role in building allyship across the organization. By encouraging the involvement of non-LGBTQIA+ employees, BNP Paribas promotes a culture of allyship where colleagues actively support LGBTQIA+ rights. This creates a more inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and respected, regardless of their background. Allyship initiatives include educational workshops, participation in PRIDE events, and encouraging leadership to take visible stances on LGBTQIA+ issues (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

However, BNP Paribas also recognizes the risks of performance. To counteract rainbow-washing accusations, the bank invests in year-round programming, policy reform, and regular consultation with LGBTQIA+ stakeholders, ensuring that inclusivity is not relegated to symbolic campaigns but embedded into business decisions.

BNP Paribas' PRIDE network has gone beyond internal advocacy to engage in public advocacy efforts, aligning with the bank's broader commitment to social responsibility. The network has played a key role in organizing BNP Paribas' participation in global PRIDE events and LGBTQIA+ advocacy campaigns (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). In countries where LGBTQIA+ rights are less recognized, the PRIDE network ensures that LGBTQIA+ employees still have access to supportive communities and safe spaces. This global consistency is a cornerstone of BNP Paribas' diversity strategy, which strives to protect and promote LGBTQIA+ rights, regardless of local contexts (Schadendorf, 2023).

The influence of ERGs also extends to leadership development within the organization. ERGs provide LGBTQIA+ employees with opportunities to assume leadership roles within the group, helping them gain visibility, develop essential skills, and advance their careers. This also addresses the broader challenge of LGBTQIA+ representation in corporate leadership, a gap that remains even in companies with strong diversity initiatives (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007). As noted in leadership development literature, ERGs often serve as informal leadership incubators, particularly for underrepresented groups (Day et al., 2014). BNP Paribas leverages this by integrating ERG participation into talent reviews, mentoring pipelines, and visibility initiatives that connect emerging LGBTQIA+ leaders with executive sponsors.

As the influence of ERGs continues to grow, their role in shaping company culture, driving policy development, and promoting public advocacy will become even more critical. BNP Paribas has already expanded the scope and impact of its PRIDE network, ensuring that LGBTQIA+ employees are not only supported but also actively engaged in shaping the bank's future. The power of ERGs in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights within the corporate world cannot be underestimated, and their influence will undoubtedly continue to grow in the years to come (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

Ultimately, BNP Paribas' approach illustrates how a multinational corporation can leverage its structural power to normalize LGBTQIA+ inclusion not only internally, but also across the financial sector more broadly. As companies are increasingly judged by their ethical commitments, DEI becomes not a peripheral concern, but a central axis of institutional legitimacy and future-readiness.

4.2 BNP Paribas' Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Impact on LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a cornerstone of strategic planning for many organizations, as companies increasingly recognize their responsibility in driving social progress. A key area where CSR has made a profound impact is in the promotion of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. BNP Paribas has fully embraced CSR as a means to foster diversity and support LGBTQIA+ rights. By integrating its business objectives with broader societal goals, BNP Paribas ensures that inclusivity is embedded in all aspects of its operations, reinforcing its role as a socially responsible and forward-thinking institution (Schadendorf, 2023).

This positioning aligns with the broader shift from Corporate Social Responsibility to Corporate Social Justice (CSJ), where companies are not only expected to mitigate harm but actively dismantle systemic inequities (Basu & Palazzo, 2008). BNP Paribas' approach reflects this shift, particularly in its emphasis on structural advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights.

The incorporation of LGBTQIA+ rights into CSR strategies reflects the growing understanding that businesses must extend their focus beyond profit-making to include the well-being of the communities in which they operate. This shift has placed human rights, including LGBTQIA+ rights, at the core of CSR efforts. BNP Paribas consistently demonstrates its dedication to these principles by integrating diversity and inclusion into its global CSR initiatives. Through public support for LGBTQIA+ rights, participation in

events such as PRIDE, and collaborations with advocacy organizations, BNP Paribas contributes to societal change, helping to promote visibility, reduce stigma, and advocate for legal reforms that benefit the LGBTQIA+ community (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

Such initiatives demonstrate the bank's understanding of CSR not just as philanthropy, but as a transformative practice that leverages corporate influence to impact public policy. By advocating for nondiscrimination laws and participating in multilateral forums on LGBTQIA+ rights, BNP Paribas acts as a policy-shaping agent, not merely as a market actor.

In addition to the ethical case for LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, there is also a compelling business rationale. Research consistently shows that companies with robust diversity and inclusion programs outperform their peers in terms of innovation, employee satisfaction, and financial success (Hunt et al., 2020). For BNP Paribas, making LGBTQIA+ rights a core part of its CSR strategy has not only fostered a more inclusive workplace but also enhanced the bank's ability to attract and retain top talent. With younger generations, especially Millennials and Generation Z, prioritizing corporate values in their career choices, companies that demonstrate a commitment to inclusivity are better positioned to compete for this talent (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). By visibly supporting LGBTQIA+ rights, BNP Paribas aligns itself with the values of these younger workers while reinforcing its position as a progressive, forward-thinking organization.

From a branding perspective, this strategy contributes to what scholars' term "diversity signaling," where visible commitments to marginalized groups serve as cues to both internal stakeholders and external markets (Ng & Burke, 2005). For BNP Paribas, this signaling is particularly effective, due to its consistency across both internal governance and public advocacy.

Moreover, promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusive through CSR has tangible benefits for BNP Paribas' brand image and customer loyalty. Consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on a company's social stance, and businesses that actively support LGBTQIA+ rights are often viewed as more ethical and trustworthy. BNP Paribas' participation in advocacy efforts, combined with its internal focus on creating an inclusive work environment, strengthens its reputation as a socially responsible leader in the financial sector, appealing to socially conscious consumers (Schadendorf, 2023).

This outward-facing approach is grounded in the concept of “shared value” (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which emphasizes that social impact and competitive advantage are not mutually exclusive. In aligning LGBTQIA+ advocacy with strategic outcomes, BNP Paribas demonstrates that purpose-driven leadership can reinforce financial and reputational resilience.

The bank's approach to CSR and LGBTQIA+ rights has evolved over time, with BNP Paribas taking significant steps to expand its support for diversity and inclusion. A notable milestone was its signing of the LGBTQIA+ Charter of Autre Cercle in 2015, making BNP Paribas one of the first French financial institutions to formally support LGBTQIA+ inclusion. This commitment signaled the bank’s recognition of LGBTQIA+ rights as integral to its broader CSR agenda. Since then, BNP Paribas has continued to build on this foundation, becoming an influential ally in promoting equality, both within the company and in society at large (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

In addition to its internal policies, BNP Paribas has leveraged partnerships with LGBTQIA+ advocacy organizations to further its commitment to inclusivity. These collaborations allow the bank to use its influence as a global financial institution to drive positive change, advocating for broader LGBTQIA+ rights and challenging discriminatory practices across the corporate world. BNP Paribas’ efforts in this area illustrate the potential for businesses to act as catalysts for societal progress, promoting human rights while advancing their own corporate goals (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping corporate culture and driving initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity, particularly in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights. At BNP Paribas, leadership has taken a proactive stance in ensuring the company remains at the forefront of promoting inclusivity, both in internal operations and public engagements. Effective leadership is essential for integrating LGBTQIA+ inclusivity into company policies, daily practices, and the overall corporate strategy (Catalino et al, 2022).

A company’s commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusivity must originate from its leadership. Leaders have a responsibility to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives, ensuring LGBTQIA+ employees feel valued and supported. At BNP Paribas, top executives have consistently demonstrated their commitment by participating in PRIDE events, engaging with Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) such as PRIDE, and advocating for inclusive policies that protect LGBTQIA+ employees from discrimination and harassment (BNP

Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). This visible commitment from leadership sends a powerful message throughout the organization, creating a culture of acceptance and respect.

This culture is reinforced through accountability frameworks that tie executive bonuses and performance assessments to diversity outcomes. Such mechanisms ensure that inclusion is not just aspirational but measurable, and that leaders are held responsible for sustaining inclusive practices over time.

Leadership is not only critical in adopting inclusive policies but also in ensuring they are effectively implemented. Having anti-discrimination policies in place is one thing; without active leadership involvement, these policies may not be enforced or applied consistently. At BNP Paribas, leadership plays an active role in aligning inclusivity initiatives with the company's broader strategy, regularly reviewing and updating policies to reflect the evolving needs of the LGBTQIA+ community (Schadendorf, 2023).

Leaders also serve as role models for inclusivity by demonstrating through their actions how to create a supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ employees. This is particularly important for employees who may be hesitant to come out at work or have experienced discrimination in previous workplaces. When leaders actively promote inclusivity and demonstrate allyship, it fosters a sense of psychological safety, empowering LGBTQIA+ employees to be their authentic selves (Schadendorf, 2023).

These visible acts of support inspire employees at all levels to embrace diversity, contributing to a more inclusive corporate culture. LGBTQIA+ leaders themselves hold a special significance in shaping corporate culture. When LGBTQIA+ individuals occupy leadership positions, they serve as symbols of progress and representation, illustrating that success does not require concealing one's identity. Their unique perspectives help inform policies and practices that better serve the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

For long-term progress, companies must invest in developing inclusive leadership pipelines. BNP Paribas has recognized the importance of cultivating a leadership team that reflects the diversity of its workforce and customer base. The bank has implemented programs that focus on leadership development for underrepresented groups, including LGBTQIA+ employees, to ensure they have access to the resources and opportunities necessary for career advancement (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). These programs include mentorship opportunities, networking events, and skills training designed to help LGBTQIA+

employees navigate their professional journeys. By fostering an inclusive leadership pipeline, BNP Paribas ensures LGBTQIA+ representation at all organizational levels, with future leaders equipped to champion diversity and inclusion initiatives.

As companies continue to evolve in a rapidly changing world, the importance of inclusive leadership will only grow. Leaders who prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusivity are better positioned to navigate complex global markets, attract top talent, and foster innovation. BNP Paribas' dedication to inclusive leadership has already enhanced its reputation as a socially responsible and forward-thinking organization (Schadendorf, 2023).

The work of fostering inclusive leadership is ongoing. As societal attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ rights continue to evolve, leadership must remain vigilant in addressing emerging challenges and opportunities. This includes advocating for legal reforms that protect LGBTQIA+ rights, expanding support for LGBTQIA+ employees in all regions, and ensuring that inclusivity remains central to the company's strategy.

As global corporations are increasingly called upon to demonstrate ethical leadership, BNP Paribas offers a model of LGBTQIA+ inclusion that is both principled and pragmatic. Its integration of CSR, leadership accountability, and public advocacy illustrates how financial institutions can move from symbolic inclusion to systemic transformation, while simultaneously reinforcing their own long-term legitimacy and competitiveness.

4.3 Global Challenges and Opportunities for LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity at BNP Paribas

As global businesses expand into new markets, companies like BNP Paribas face both challenges and opportunities in promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. While significant progress has been made in advancing LGBTQIA+ rights within their domestic operations, global expansion introduces complexities due to the varying cultural norms, legal frameworks, and societal attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ communities. This balancing act requires navigating a delicate line between maintaining a commitment to inclusivity and respecting local laws and customs (Schadendorf, 2023).

This tension reflects a broader contradiction within globalization itself: while markets are increasingly integrated, rights are unevenly distributed. For corporations like BNP Paribas, this creates not only a compliance issue but a profound ethical dilemma: how to uphold universal human rights without being perceived as imposing foreign values.

One of the primary challenges multinational companies face is the stark regional disparities in LGBTQIA+ rights. In Western Europe and North America, for example, legal protections for LGBTQIA+ individuals are well-established, and societal support for inclusivity is generally high. However, in parts of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face legal discrimination, social stigma, and in some cases, criminalization (ILGA, 2020). For global companies like BNP Paribas, which operates in over 70 countries, this disparity complicates their efforts to ensure that their LGBTQIA+ employees are treated fairly and inclusively in every region where they conduct business (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

In some African countries, such as Uganda, Nigeria, and Tanzania, strict laws penalize homosexuality with harsh consequences, including lengthy prison terms. For instance, Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act, enacted in 2014, initially included the death penalty for "aggravated homosexuality," although it was later modified to impose life imprisonment as the maximum punishment (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Similarly, Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, introduced the same year, criminalizes not only same-sex unions but also advocacy for LGBTQIA+ rights, carrying sentences of up to 14 years (Human Dignity Trust, 2022).

The Middle East is home to some of the most punitive anti-LGBTQIA+ laws, particularly in Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Yemen. Under Sharia law, same-sex relations are considered illegal, often resulting in severe punishments. In Saudi Arabia and Iran, individuals can face the death penalty for engaging in homosexual acts. In Yemen, criminal penalties for same-sex conduct include imprisonment or corporal punishment such as flogging (Mendos et al., 2020).

Asia offers a complex patchwork of legal frameworks regarding LGBTQIA+ rights, with certain countries adopting stringent anti-LGBTQIA+ laws. In Malaysia, for example, Section 377 of the Penal Code criminalizes same-sex relations, punishable by up to 20 years in prison, along with possible whipping and fines (Human Rights Watch, 2014). Additionally, the discrimination faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly transgender persons, is pervasive in Malaysia, where government-backed policies continue to marginalize these communities (Human Rights Watch, 2022). In Indonesia, while homosexuality is not illegal at the national level, the province of Aceh enforces strict Sharia

law, punishing same-sex acts with public flogging, reinforcing the societal stigmatization of LGBTQIA+ people (BBC News, 2021).

These laws not only criminalize identity but actively silence civil society actors, creating a climate where even symbolic corporate gestures can be perceived as subversive or dangerous.

BNP Paribas, a major global banking institution operating in over 70 countries, is present in several of these regions where LGBTQIA+ individuals face serious legal and social challenges. The bank operates in countries such as Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, where discriminatory legal frameworks against LGBTQIA+ individuals are deeply entrenched (BNP Paribas, 2022). For multinational corporations like BNP Paribas, this presents significant ethical challenges, as they must reconcile their global commitment to diversity and inclusion with national laws that directly contradict those values. In Nigeria, for example, the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act imposes penalties not only on those engaging in same sex relationships but also on organizations that support LGBTQIA+ rights. In Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, the legal systems impose severe punishments, including imprisonment and, in some cases, the death penalty, placing corporate human rights commitments in direct conflict with the legal environment. In response to such contexts, BNP Paribas often adopts what international relations scholars call quiet diplomacy, engaging in discreet forms of advocacy that aim to promote inclusion while protecting local employees and respecting national sovereignty.

Operating in such environments requires BNP Paribas to navigate a delicate balance between compliance with local legal systems and upholding its global policies on diversity, equality, and inclusion. These complexities extend beyond legal obligations, as the company must ensure the safety and protection of its employees in regions where local laws conflict with its core values. This creates operational challenges, as BNP Paribas needs to avoid violations of local regulations while maintaining its reputation as a champion of human rights.

In practice, this may involve adapting internal communications, anonymizing LGBTQIA+ programming, or offering virtual safe spaces for employees in higher-risk countries, all while maintaining corporate consistency at the global governance level.

In addition to operational and legal challenges, BNP Paribas also faces potential reputational risks. Stakeholders, including international clients, investors, and human rights advocates, increasingly expect corporations to take a stand on social justice issues, such as LGBTQIA+

rights. The failure to address these issues effectively can harm the company's reputation, especially as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors become more important in the global business landscape. BNP Paribas, like many global corporations, must continuously assess how to reconcile its commitment to LGBTQIA+ advocacy with the legal and cultural restrictions in the countries where it operates.

A clear, principle-based approach, backed by measurable DEI outcomes and investor-grade ESG reporting, helps mitigate reputational risk and frame inclusion as both a business imperative and a moral stance.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for companies to act as advocates for LGBTQIA+ rights even in regions where such rights are not widely recognized. Corporate advocacy can take many forms, such as partnering with local LGBTQIA+ organizations, engaging in public campaigns to promote inclusivity, and working to challenge discriminatory laws. However, it is essential that companies approach these efforts with cultural sensitivity and respect for local norms while still promoting progress (Schadendorf, 2023).

This requires an intersectional understanding of oppression, i.e., recognizing how LGBTQIA+ identities intersect with race, class, religion, and citizenship status, especially in post-colonial contexts where Western LGBTQIA+ narratives may be met with suspicion or resistance.

At BNP Paribas, the PRIDE Employee Resource Group (ERG) has played a crucial role in advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusivity across the company's global operations. By providing a platform for LGBTQIA+ employees to connect and support one another, PRIDE ensures that LGBTQIA+ employees have access to vital resources and allies, even in regions where legal protections may be limited. The bank has also integrated LGBTQIA+ rights into its broader Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, which embeds inclusivity as a core value across all regions in which it operates (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

By linking ERGs to global leadership programs and cross-cultural mentoring, BNP Paribas ensures these networks are not merely symbolic, but actively shape organizational learning and internal policy.

Moreover, the increasing importance of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria in the investment community provides additional incentives for companies to prioritize LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. Investors are increasingly seeking out companies that demonstrate a strong commitment to diversity and social responsibility, and LGBTQIA+ rights are a key element of the broader ESG agenda. With its strong track record in CSR and LGBTQIA+ advocacy, BNP Paribas is well-positioned to attract socially conscious investors and strengthen its reputation as a leader in sustainable and inclusive business practices (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025).

This is particularly relevant for BNP Paribas' institutional investors, many of whom are now deploying capital using ESG filters that explicitly measure LGBTQIA+ equality benchmarks, such as HRC's Corporate Equality Index and Equileap's Gender Equality Scorecard.

Looking ahead, as global businesses continue to expand and operate in diverse regions, both the challenges and opportunities for promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity will grow. Companies like BNP Paribas must remain vigilant in advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights while navigating complex legal and cultural environments. This will require a flexible and nuanced approach, balancing the need for inclusivity with respect for local norms and laws.

The role of multinational corporations is no longer limited to economic exchange; they are increasingly expected to act as "norm entrepreneurs", as entities capable of shaping social norms across jurisdictions (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998).

Simultaneously, the global nature of business presents unique opportunities to promote positive change. Multinational companies have the resources, influence, and reach to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights on a global scale by working with governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to foster legal reforms and social acceptance. As more businesses recognize the value of diversity and inclusivity, the global movement for LGBTQIA+ rights will continue to gain momentum, creating a more equitable and inclusive world for all.

By adopting an intersectional approach to inclusivity, BNP Paribas ensures that its LGBTQIA+ advocacy efforts are genuinely reflective of the diversity within the community. This not only strengthens the bank's commitment to social justice but also enhances its ability to attract and retain top talent from various backgrounds. As companies increasingly recognize the business benefits of diversity, an intersectional approach to LGBTQIA+

inclusivity will become more and more a critical component of any successful corporate strategy (BNP Paribas Historical Archives, 2025). In this way, BNP Paribas is not simply reacting to social change, it is helping to lead it.

4.4 BNP PARIBAS PRIDE PORTUGAL

In my role as a member of BNP Paribas PRIDE between 2022 and 2024 and a part of the PRIDE Commission on 2024, I have been directly responsible for driving awareness campaigns and advocating for policies such as equal benefits and anti-discrimination measures. My contributions have supported the bank's global diversity goals while fostering a more inclusive environment for all employees. These efforts have helped BNP Paribas solidify its position as a leader in LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, with PRIDE Portugal playing a critical role in shaping the bank's progressive corporate culture. My engagement in these initiatives reflects not only a professional commitment but also a lived experience that informs and motivates my advocacy work, a perspective I later frame through autoethnographic analysis.

BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal was launched in 2016 with the intention of mirroring successful diversity and inclusion initiatives from other regions within the bank. Initially driven by a single individual passionate about promoting diversity, this initiative aimed to formalize an existing informal network of LGBTQIA+ employees within the company. With a straightforward mission, creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment, the initiative rapidly gained traction.

This origin story exemplifies what Sara Ahmed (2012) describes as the “willful subject” within institutions: individuals who push back against normativity to make space for others. In this case, one person's insistence has catalyzed systemic change.

The early efforts were met with enthusiastic support from both the corporate structure and staff members. Within months of its inception, an open invitation was extended to all employees interested in fostering LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. The initial group comprised mostly young professionals aged between 20 and 25, some openly queer, and others not, yet all committed to advancing LGBTQIA+ rights and building a community where everyone could feel they belonged. This trajectory also illustrates how localized inclusion efforts can evolve into broader strategic priorities, demonstrating the potential for grassroots organizational change to influence global diversity frameworks within multinational corporate structures.

PRIDE Portugal has since become a critical element of BNP Paribas' global diversity strategy, promoting social justice, empowerment, and visibility through initiatives such as networking events, educational workshops, and confidential support services. These actions have contributed to creating a dynamic, innovative, and equitable workplace, where LGBTQIA+ employees can thrive without fear of prejudice and discrimination. By aligning itself with broader corporate social responsibility goals, PRIDE Portugal continues to position BNP Paribas as a leader in diversity and inclusion both locally and globally.

Co-creation, originally developed within service design and innovation theory (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), refers to collaborative processes in which multiple stakeholders, especially end-users, jointly shape value, strategy, or solutions. Within the field of organizational development and diversity management, co-creation has been increasingly recognized as a best practice for fostering inclusive cultures by moving beyond consultation into genuine partnership. Rather than treating marginalized employees as passive recipients of inclusion efforts, co-creation positions them as agents of change, whose lived experiences and insights directly inform the structure and content of workplace initiatives (Sanders & Stappers, 2008). When applied to ERGs, this approach transforms these groups into dynamic spaces of negotiation, empowerment, and continuous learning.

A particularly promising direction for the evolution of PRIDE Portugal lies in embracing the principle of co-creation. Rather than limiting ERG activity to pre-approved agendas or top-down programming, co-creation involves actively inviting employees, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented backgrounds, to define the group's priorities, design activities, and evaluate impact. This participatory model democratizes inclusion by recognizing LGBTQIA+ individuals as knowledge holders, not just beneficiaries, and creates space for more adaptive, responsive, and contextually grounded interventions. In the case of PRIDE Portugal, co-creation could enhance engagement from queer employees who may not feel represented in dominant narratives, while also empowering allies to take on more meaningful roles. Ultimately, by embedding co-creation into ERG governance, BNP Paribas can further institutionalize a culture of shared responsibility, where inclusivity becomes a lived, collective practice rather than a managerial directive.

PRIDE Portugal's mission is to create a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ staff by promoting visibility, education, and advocacy. Open to all employees regardless of their background, PRIDE Portugal champions BNP Paribas' vision of being a

leader in equal rights and opportunities in Portugal. Through its inclusive policies, BNP Paribas ensures that all employees are valued for their individuality and contributions to the company's success.

The values of PRIDE Portugal focus on social justice, where BNP Paribas employees mobilize for intersectional justice, ensuring that the diverse workforce is empowered and protected. Empowerment remains a core tenet of PRIDE Portugal, encouraging positive change within the work community, fostering a space where differences are celebrated rather than merely tolerated. Diversity is promoted as a pillar that enhances creativity and innovation, ensuring that all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or other characteristics, feel empowered to succeed.

This language of empowerment also reflects key tenets of queer organizational theory, where queerness is not merely about identity but about disrupting normative structures in ways that generate new possibilities for belonging and leadership.

A critical component of PRIDE Portugal's work is visibility. The initiative ensures that the experiences and challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals are brought to light, contributing to a greater understanding and acceptance within the company. PRIDE Portugal also emphasizes support, encouraging the development of mentor-ally networks that create safe spaces for employees to express themselves fully at work.

These networks act as what Pullen, Thanem, Tyler, and Wallenberg(2017) term “queer coalitions”, alliances that challenge heteronormativity and redefine the cultural script of professionalism.

To achieve its goals, PRIDE Portugal organizes various events and actions aimed at promoting inclusivity. These include networking events for LGBTQIA+ staff, designed to foster community within the company, both on-site and off-site. Additionally, confidential support is offered to employees facing challenges related to their LGBTQIA+ identity at work. This support extends beyond simply providing resources, PRIDE Portugal empowers employees to take on advocacy roles within the company, driving policy changes that promote inclusivity and protection against discrimination.

These forms of “employee-led activism” underscore the shift from DEI as compliance to DEI as co-creation, where employees shape, rather than merely receive, inclusion policies.

Education and engagement are key pillars of PRIDE Portugal's strategy. Through workshops, presentations, and other resources, the initiative provides all staff with valuable insights into LGBTQIA+ issues, enhancing understanding and fostering a more inclusive work culture. By prioritizing education, PRIDE Portugal not only raises awareness but also encourages employees to be active participants in creating a more inclusive environment.

In doing so, the initiative functions as both a cultural and pedagogical project, transforming workplace norms while cultivating empathy and allyship across hierarchical boundaries.

These efforts are reflected in the broader corporate success of BNP Paribas. The company has been recognized for its diversity initiatives, such as winning the Diversity & Inclusion Award at the Prémios RH (Human Resources Awards) in 2022. Such accolades highlight the bank's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace that goes beyond symbolic gestures, embedding diversity deeply into its corporate structure.

A key initiative of PRIDE Portugal is the annual Diversity Week, which brings together employees for discussions and activities centered around the importance of diversity and inclusion. This event not only celebrates the contributions of diverse employees but also promotes technological advances as tools for creating more inclusive work environments. By highlighting the importance of such initiatives, BNP Paribas illustrates the business benefits of diversity, positioning the company as a leader in corporate responsibility and innovation.

This also aligns with emerging research on "inclusive innovation," where diversity and digital transformation are mutually reinforcing drivers of institutional agility and ethical leadership (Ciampi et al., 2021; McKinsey, 2021).

PRIDE Portugal's ongoing efforts illustrate how structured diversity programs improve the workplace for LGBTQIA+ employees while enhancing the broader corporate environment. As an employee of BNP Paribas since 2022 and a member of the PRIDE Commission since 2024, I have actively contributed to these initiatives. My responsibilities have included advocacy, organizing key events like Pride Month and Diversity Week, and helping develop inclusive policies. I have also facilitated training on LGBTQIA+ inclusion, allyship, and unconscious bias, while supporting networking opportunities and collaborating with external organizations. These experiences validate the strategic importance of fostering a workplace that champions diversity, equity, and inclusion, both in Portugal and across BNP Paribas' global operations.

In my experience, the most meaningful transformation has occurred not through mandates, but through the accumulation of relational trust, shared learning, and visible representation, elements that are often undervalued in institutional DEI metrics.

As stated at the beginning of this section, in my role as a member of BNP Paribas PRIDE since 2022 and part of the PRIDE Commission from 2024 onwards, I have been responsible for key initiatives such as awareness campaigns and advocating for inclusive policies like equal benefits and anti-discrimination measures. These contributions align with the bank's global diversity goals and have supported the creation of a more inclusive work environment. My personal involvement will be further explored in the following chapter, where I will analyze these initiatives through the lens of my professional experience, in order to provide a deeper autoethnographic insight into the topics of this dissertation.

The next and final chapter will include an analysis of the methodologies used to investigate LGBTQIA+ inclusivity within corporate structures, specifically illustrated through the case of BNP Paribas. This will involve a detailed explanation of the surveys and interviews conducted, offering insights into employee perspectives on diversity, inclusion, and corporate culture within BNP Paribas. The chapter will also provide an in-depth discussion of the research findings, drawing conclusions that highlight the key drivers of successful LGBTQIA+ inclusivity initiatives within corporate structures and offering recommendations for future research and practice. By integrating quantitative and qualitative data, this final chapter will provide a comprehensive assessment of the current state of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity in the corporate world and propose pathways for continued progress.

**CHAPTER V - THE IMPACT OF PARIBAS PRIDE ON CORPORATE
PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS**

Building on the discussion in Chapter 3, this final chapter examines the methods used to assess the effectiveness of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity at BNP Paribas Portugal. It focuses on how diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, particularly those related to PRIDE Portugal, are perceived and experienced by employees.

5.1 Research Methods and Approach

Using a mixed-methods approach, the chapter combines qualitative interviews and quantitative survey data to evaluate the impact of inclusivity efforts on workplace culture, employee well-being, and corporate performance. Key themes include policy awareness, employee satisfaction, and the role of inclusive practices in driving business success.

The decision to adopt a mixed-methods design was guided by the need to capture both the depth of individual experiences and the breadth of organizational perceptions. Qualitative interviews were selected for their capacity to explore complex, nuanced narratives and to reveal how inclusion initiatives are experienced at the personal and cultural levels within the organization. In contrast, the quantitative survey was designed to provide measurable, generalizable data, allowing the analysis to identify trends and patterns across a broader employee population. This combination ensured both contextual richness and statistical robustness.

The sequence of data collection followed an exploratory design logic: semi-structured interviews were conducted first to identify recurring themes and emerging issues. Insights from these interviews informed the design of the survey instrument, ensuring that the quantitative phase addressed relevant and grounded topics. The subsequent triangulation of data enhanced the reliability of findings, enabling convergence between individual narratives and collective trends.

As both a former BNP Paribas employee and PRIDE Commission member, I offer an insider perspective that enriches the analysis with practical insights. The chapter also explores how initiatives like awareness campaigns, policy advocacy, and training programs translate into day-to-day experiences for LGBTQIA+ employees.

Through this integrated approach, the chapter identifies success factors, areas for improvement, and broader implications for inclusive corporate strategies.

5.1.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the experiences, motivations, and perspectives of those involved in BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal. This method allowed for guided conversations while remaining open to unexpected insights, making it particularly effective in capturing both strategic and personal reflections on LGBTQIA+ inclusivity within the organization. Participants included current and former members of the PRIDE Commission, founding members of the Portuguese branch, and former Co-Chairs of the PRIDE Network. These individuals were purposefully selected through a criterion-based sampling approach, as they represent key actors directly involved in the creation, strategic development, and institutionalization of BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal. Their distinct roles, ranging from operational implementation to high-level leadership, offered a comprehensive perspective on the internal dynamics, challenges, and milestones of the initiative, making their insights especially valuable for understanding the evolution and organizational impact of LGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts within the company.

The interviews were guided by a series of open-ended questions tailored to the participants' level of involvement. Topics addressed included the inception of BNP Paribas PRIDE, its core objectives, internal and external collaboration, impact measurement, and future ambitions. Questions included:

1. Can you provide some background on the inception and evolution of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
2. What motivated the creation of this initiative?
3. How has BNP Paribas PRIDE contributed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ employees and stakeholders within the organization?
4. What are some of the key objectives and goals of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
5. How do you measure the success of these initiatives?
6. Can you share some examples of specific events, programs, or initiatives organized by BNP Paribas PRIDE that have had a significant impact on the LGBTQIA+ community?
7. How does BNP Paribas PRIDE collaborate with external organizations or community partners to promote LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusivity?
8. In your opinion, what has been the most significant achievement or milestone of BNP Paribas PRIDE to date?

9. Have there been any challenges or obstacles encountered while organizing and implementing BNP Paribas PRIDE initiatives?
10. How have you overcome these challenges?
11. What steps are taken to ensure that BNP Paribas PRIDE represents and addresses the diverse needs and experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community?
12. How do you engage and involve allies within the organization to support the goals and initiatives of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
13. Looking ahead, what are the future plans and aspirations for BNP Paribas PRIDE? Are there any new initiatives or projects in the pipeline?
14. How do you envision the long-term impact of BNP Paribas PRIDE on the LGBTQIA+ community and the wider society?
15. What message or advice would you like to share with other organizations or individuals looking to create their own LGBTQIA+ initiatives?

Former Co-Chairs were also invited to reflect on how their work contributed to BNP Paribas' corporate culture and inclusivity practices, describing their responsibilities and key achievements during their time leading the network. In doing so, they emphasized the importance of visibility and advocacy in laying the groundwork for more systemic changes, such as equal benefits and anti-discrimination policies. Strategic engagement with internal departments like Human Resources and Corporate Social Responsibility was also explored, alongside external collaboration with LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups.

To complement the internal corporate perspective with a broader national framework, an in-depth interview was conducted with a representative from the Portuguese Association for Diversity and Inclusion (Associação Portuguesa para a Diversidade e Inclusão - APPDI), the entity responsible for managing the Portuguese Charter for Diversity (Carta Portuguesa para a Diversidade). This conversation focused on the Charter's origins, theoretical underpinnings, and practical implementation across Portuguese organizations. The questions included:

1. What is the Portuguese Charter for Diversity and how does it function in both theoretical and practical terms?
2. What is the main goal of the Charter and how is it related to the promotion of diversity and inclusion in companies?
3. What specific measures are organizations encouraged to implement when they sign the Charter?

4. How is the Charter aligned with European directives and efforts to promote equal opportunities in the labor market?
5. What are the expected results of implementing the Charter in companies?
6. How is APPDI, as the managing body, involved in promoting diversity and inclusion in Portuguese organizations?
7. Are there examples of initiatives or projects developed by APPDI that have contributed to promoting diversity and inclusion?
8. How is APPDI's strategy oriented to achieve the objectives of the Charter?
9. What are the main challenges faced by APPDI in promoting diversity and inclusion in Portuguese organizations?
10. What is the importance of corporate diversity for growth and economic competitiveness in the labor market?
11. What are APPDI's future plans regarding the Portuguese Charter for Diversity?
12. In what context and how was APPDI created?

This external perspective proved crucial in contextualizing BNP Paribas' efforts within a broader ecosystem of institutional diversity practices in Portugal. It reinforced the Charter's function as both a symbolic commitment and a strategic instrument to foster inclusive, equitable, and competitive workplaces. Together, the interviews provided a multi-layered qualitative foundation that enriched the survey analysis and helped situate corporate practices within evolving local and international frameworks of LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Strategic collaborations were a key line of inquiry, with participants discussing how they engaged internal departments, such as Human Resources (HR) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), to build support for Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) initiatives. In some cases, interviewees reflected on the intersection between corporate sustainability and LGBTQIA+ inclusion, underscoring the importance of embedding social sustainability into broader organizational frameworks. Current members focused on the personal and cultural impact of PRIDE initiatives, highlighting growing visibility of LGBTQIA+ issues, stronger support networks, and greater openness across teams.

All interviews were conducted confidentially, recorded with consent, and transcribed for thematic analysis. Recurring themes such as leadership commitment, interdepartmental collaboration, advocacy strategies, and evolving definitions of inclusion emerged from the data, providing a rich qualitative complement to the survey findings.

5.1.2 Surveys: Data Collection and Analysis

Surveys were used as a key quantitative method to complement the qualitative insights gathered from interviews, aiming to collect broader feedback from members of BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal. Conducted anonymously through Microsoft Forms, the survey allowed participants to respond openly, offering valuable data on experiences, perceptions, and suggestions related to the company's D&I efforts.

The anonymous format of the survey encouraged open and honest feedback, ensuring participants felt safe to express themselves on topics that can often be sensitive or personal. The use of Microsoft Forms allowed for accessible participation across different departments and levels of the organization, facilitating broad representation.

The survey included closed questions assessing awareness, engagement, and perception of the PRIDE Commission.

To ensure statistical reliability, it is worth noting that the survey was distributed to 432 employees, of whom 164 responded, yielding a response rate of approximately 38%. This sample size corresponds to a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 6.4\%$. The margin of error was calculated using the standard formula for finite populations (adapted from Taherdoost, 2017), which ensures a statistically valid estimate of the results' representativeness within the surveyed population.

$$ME = Z \times \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} \times \sqrt{\frac{N-n}{N-1}}$$

$$ME = 1,96 \times \sqrt{\frac{0,5(1-0,5)}{164}} \times \sqrt{\frac{432-164}{432-1}}$$

$$ME \approx 6,03\%$$

where n is the sample size (164), N is the population size (432), and p is the estimated proportion (set at 0.5 to reflect maximum variability). The Z value corresponds to the chosen confidence level, in this case, 1.96 for a 95% confidence level, which is a standard value derived from the normal distribution. This combination ensures a conservative and statistically valid estimate of the survey's margin of error.

Overall, the survey provided critical quantitative depth to the study. It captured the collective voice of the PRIDE community within BNP Paribas Portugal and helped validate the themes identified through interviews. Together, these insights contributed to a more holistic understanding of how PRIDE initiatives function in practice and offered guidance for future improvements in the organization’s diversity and inclusion strategy.

To deepen the understanding of employee perspectives, the survey included a series of targeted questions addressing both internal PRIDE-related initiatives and broader issues of LGBTQIA+ representation in the media. The following results provide quantitative insight into awareness, participation, and suggestions for improvement within BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal, as well as perceptions of queer visibility and accuracy in mediatized narratives.

These findings are summarized in the table below.

1.How did you become aware of BNP PARIBAS PRIDE?	
Internal communication within the organization	139
External promotion or media coverage	43
Word of mouth from colleagues	116
2.What types of BNP Paribas Pride events or activities have you participated in or would you be interested in participating in? (Select all that apply)	
Pride parades/marches	105
Panel discussions or workshops on LGBTQIA+ topics	149
Networking events for LGBTQIA+ employees	130
Employee resource group (ERG) activities	55
Volunteer opportunities with LGBTQIA+ organizations	124
3.What additional initiatives or improvements could be implemented to enhance the impact of BNP Paribas Pride within the organization?	
Increased visibility and promotion of events	150
More educational workshops and trainings	113
Enhanced support for LGBTQIA+ employee networks	139
Partnerships with external LGBTQIA+ organizations	141
All of the above	2

4. Why is it important for organizations like BNP Paribas to support and celebrate PRIDE?	
Promote Diversity and Inclusion	160
Enhances employee morale and engagement	116
Aligns with corporate social responsibility	68
Improves brand reputation	17
5. How important is it for BNP PARIBAS to align its PRIDE initiatives with broader social justice issues and intersectionality?	
Extremely not important	6
Somewhat not important	0
Neutral	2
Somewhat important	4
Extremely important	152
6. How do you believe mediatized queer representations have influenced public perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community?	
Significantly negative influence	7
Moderately negative influence	6
Little to no influence	0
Moderately positive influence	96
Significantly positive influence	55
7. To what extent do mediatized queer representations contribute to the visibility and representation of the LGBTQIA+ community?	
To a great extent	110
To a moderate extent	52
To a small extent	0
Not at all	0
Unsure	2
8. Do mediatized queer representations accurately depict the diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community?	
No, very inaccurately	3
No, somewhat inaccurately	46
Neutral	13

Yes, somewhat accurately	95
Yes, very accurately	7
9. Have you noticed any negative stereotypes or harmful portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters or storylines in the media?	
Yes, frequently	13
Yes, occasionally	149
Neutral	0
Rarely	2
No, never	0
10. How do you think negative portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters impact public perception?	
Significantly negative impact	66
Moderately negative impact	55
Little to no impact	0
Moderately positive impact	43
Significantly positive impact	0
11. How influential are mediatized queer representations in shaping the self-identity and self-esteem of LGBTQIA+ individuals?	
Not influential at all	6
Slightly influential	1
Neutral	2
Moderately influential	57
Very influential	98
12. Do you think mediatized queer representations have contributed to a more inclusive media landscape overall?	
No, not at all	0
No, not really	38
Neutral	1
Yes, somewhat	79
Yes, significantly	46
13. How important is it for media producers and creators to include diverse LGBTQIA+ representations in their content?	
Extremely not important	6

Somewhat not important	0
Neutral	0
Somewhat important	43
Extremely important	115
14. What steps can be taken to ensure that mediatized queer representations accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of the LGBTQIA+ community?	
Conduct thorough research and consultations with LGBTQIA+ communities	156
Hire LGBTQIA+ writers and creators	146
Provide diversity and sensitivity training for production teams	150
Implement regular reviews and feedback mechanisms	139
All of the above	2

Table 1 – Survey Results: Perceptions of PRIDE Commission Initiatives

Results show a broadly positive reception, though some respondents noted limited knowledge of specific initiatives, suggesting communication gaps.

Once collected, the survey data was analyzed to identify key trends. Responses showed strong support for increasing educational offerings, improving event visibility, and aligning PRIDE efforts with broader social equity issues. The findings also highlighted employees' interest in deeper engagement with both internal and external stakeholders and their desire for continuous improvement in how the company supports LGBTQIA+ inclusion.

5.1.3 Case Study: BNP Paribas Portugal and the PRIDE Commission

This research presents a case study of the PRIDE Commission at BNP Paribas Portugal to examine how diversity and inclusion are implemented in practice. The focus lies on the development and impact of LGBTQIA+ initiatives within the organization.

The PRIDE Commission promotes LGBTQIA+ inclusion through events, training sessions, and policy advocacy, with the goal of fostering a workplace where all employees feel respected and valued.

The case study evaluates how the Commission's actions align with corporate objectives, how they are perceived by employees, and their influence on workplace culture, highlighting both

achievements and areas needing improvement, such as internal communication and broader employee engagement.

Challenges encountered by the Commission, including resistance, limited participation, and visibility issues, are discussed along with strategies used to address them. Leadership support, the involvement of allies, and the integration of inclusion into corporate identity emerge as central drivers of progress.

BNP Paribas Portugal thus provides a concrete example of how structured inclusion efforts can reshape organizational culture. This case offers relevant insights for other companies seeking to develop or strengthen their own diversity strategies, emphasizing both barriers and enablers of success.

A total of 174 individuals participated in this research, comprising 10 semi-structured interviewees and 164 survey respondents. The interview participants were aged between 24 and 54 years, providing insights from early- to mid-career professionals. A majority of the respondents self-identified as LGBTQIA+, while a considerable proportion identified as allies. This composition enabled the inclusion of multiple perspectives within the organizational context, reflecting both lived experiences and allyship positions.

Participants occupied diverse functions across operational, administrative, and managerial levels at BNP Paribas Portugal. All individuals were based in Portugal and were recruited through voluntary participation, primarily via internal communication channels and employee network outreach initiatives. This recruitment strategy sought to ensure openness, accessibility, and the inclusion of a broad spectrum of employees engaged or interested in diversity and inclusion topics.

In accordance with ethical research principles, no personally identifiable information was collected at any stage of the study. All sociodemographic data were gathered and analyzed in aggregate form, thereby safeguarding the confidentiality and anonymity of participants while enabling a contextualized interpretation of the findings.

5.2 Data Analysis

The combination of semi-structured interviews, surveys, and a case study enabled a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity at BNP Paribas Portugal. This mixed-methods approach, supported by data triangulation, enhanced the

reliability of the findings by cross-validating insights across different sources and perspectives.

Each method contributed distinct value: interviews offered depth and personal insight into employee experiences, surveys provided quantitative data from a broader group, and the case study contextualized both within the organizational framework. This integration allowed for the identification of key themes such as leadership support, external partnerships, and the need for ongoing diversity training.

The alignment between individual narratives and broader organizational trends was evident. For example, recurring themes in interviews often mirrored patterns in the survey responses, such as positive perceptions of inclusivity efforts and areas where communication or engagement could be strengthened. The case study further grounded these insights, illustrating how corporate strategies translate into everyday practices.

Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Interview data were thematically coded to identify recurring patterns and perceptions, while survey responses, collected via Microsoft Forms, were analyzed statistically. Likert scale data, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulations highlighted trends in perceived inclusivity, satisfaction with PRIDE initiatives, and suggested improvements, allowing a demographic breakdown of responses.

By combining these methods, the study achieved a multi-dimensional perspective. Qualitative data captured personal stories of empowerment and challenges, while quantitative results provided evidence of broader trends. The case study tied these together, offering a practical look at how inclusivity initiatives have shaped the company's culture.

This triangulated approach reinforced the validity of the findings and provided actionable insights into the effectiveness of BNP Paribas Portugal's LGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts. It also highlighted areas for development, offering recommendations for other organizations seeking to implement or refine their own diversity strategies.

5.2.1 Interviews: Analysis of Results

According to participants, PRIDE was created to offer a more visible and structured support system for LGBTQIA+ employees, responding to the historical marginalization of queer identities in corporate spaces. By formalizing what had previously been informal networks, BNP Paribas established a safe, inclusive environment where employees could express their

identities openly. This shift signaled a deeper cultural change, aiming to position inclusivity as a core organizational value rather than a symbolic gesture (Interviewee 2, 2023).

Interviewees highlighted that fostering an inclusive environment not only benefits LGBTQIA+ individuals, but also improves overall workplace culture. Employees who feel respected and accepted are more engaged and productive. Several participants emphasized how inclusivity promotes collaboration, innovation, and empathy across teams, reinforcing BNP Paribas' position as a socially responsible employer (Interviewee 3, 2023).

A key factor behind the initiative's success has been its holistic approach, which combines education, visibility, and leadership engagement. Awareness-raising events and open discussions involving both employees and senior leaders have played a crucial role in normalizing LGBTQIA+ identities in the workplace. As noted by interviewees, leadership visibility is essential, when top management openly supports LGBTQIA+ inclusion, it signals that these values are embedded in the company's mission, helping to reduce bias and discrimination across the organization (Interviewee 4, 2023).

The active involvement of senior leadership has also contributed to a sense of safety, making it easier for employees to be open about their identities. Participants shared that this top-down support was fundamental in overcoming initial resistance and promoting long-term cultural transformation (Interviewee 5, 2023).

Beyond the company's internal structures, BNP Paribas PRIDE has established partnerships with LGBTQIA+ organizations such as ILGA and Casa Qui. These collaborations have expanded the reach of the initiative, connecting the company's CSR efforts with wider societal movements. According to participants, these partnerships enriched the initiative by bringing in external expertise and aligning the company's goals with broader social justice efforts (Interviewee 6, 2023).

Public visibility has also played a role in PRIDE's impact. BNP Paribas was the first financial institution in Portugal to publicly support the Lisbon Pride March, an act that, according to interviewees, not only enhanced the company's public image but helped normalize corporate involvement in LGBTQIA+ advocacy (Interviewee 7, 2023).

Nevertheless, the initiative has faced challenges. A major issue has been balancing corporate neutrality with LGBTQIA+ advocacy in diverse sociopolitical environments. As a multinational company, BNP Paribas operates in countries with varying attitudes toward

LGBTQIA+ rights. Interviewees acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining consistent diversity policies while navigating different legal and cultural contexts. These tensions illustrate the complexities of implementing global inclusion strategies in a politically sensitive landscape (Interviewee 1, 2023).

Another challenge lies in data collection. Although PRIDE aims to support the entire LGBTQIA+ spectrum, the lack of detailed demographic data complicates efforts to tailor initiatives to specific subgroups, such as transgender and non-binary employees. Several participants noted that the company lacks sufficient data to evaluate the full impact of its policies or to assess the specific needs of these underrepresented groups (Interviewee 9, 2023).

The interviews also revealed that while sexual orientation has received increased visibility, the needs of transgender and non-binary employees remain less addressed. Participants expressed the importance of expanding PRIDE's focus to ensure equitable representation and support for all members of the LGBTQIA+ community (Interviewee 10, 2023).

In response, PRIDE has adopted a more intersectional approach, recognizing that experiences of discrimination are shaped by multiple factors, including race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Recent workshops have addressed the intersection of LGBTQIA+ identity with race and disability, aiming to foster a more inclusive and holistic view of diversity within the company (Interviewee 4, 2023).

Looking forward, PRIDE aims to strengthen its support for transgender and non-binary employees through targeted training programs and educational resources. These efforts are designed to raise awareness of gender diversity and promote an inclusive environment for all gender identities. Interviewees described this as a vital step in creating a workplace where every employee feels safe, respected, and valued (Interviewee 5, 2023).

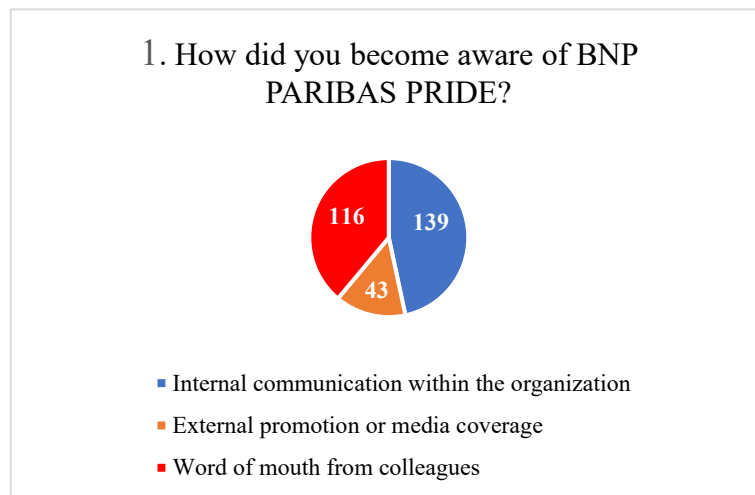
Externally, the initiative seeks to deepen its collaborations with other networks and advocacy groups. Beyond participating in public events, PRIDE aspires to advocate for broader policy changes and act as a thought leader in corporate inclusion practices. According to participants, this outward-facing strategy is central to BNP Paribas' long-term vision of aligning internal values with broader social change (Interviewee 6, 2023).

In terms of measurable impact, interviewees noted that PRIDE has significantly transformed the internal culture of BNP Paribas Portugal. LGBTQIA+ employees report feeling more

empowered, visible, and engaged. Moreover, the initiative’s success serves as a reference point for other companies in the financial sector, demonstrating that inclusive practices can thrive even in traditionally conservative industries (Interviewee 3, 2023).

Ultimately, BNP Paribas PRIDE represents a shift in how corporations approach inclusion, not as a peripheral initiative but as a structural component of corporate identity. Through education, community-building, and strategic partnerships, PRIDE has advanced both employee well-being and organizational transformation. While challenges remain, particularly in global alignment and representation of underrepresented groups, the initiative continues to evolve, offering a powerful example of how corporate structures can promote social equity from within (Interviewee 1, 2023).

5.2.2 Surveys: Analysis of Results

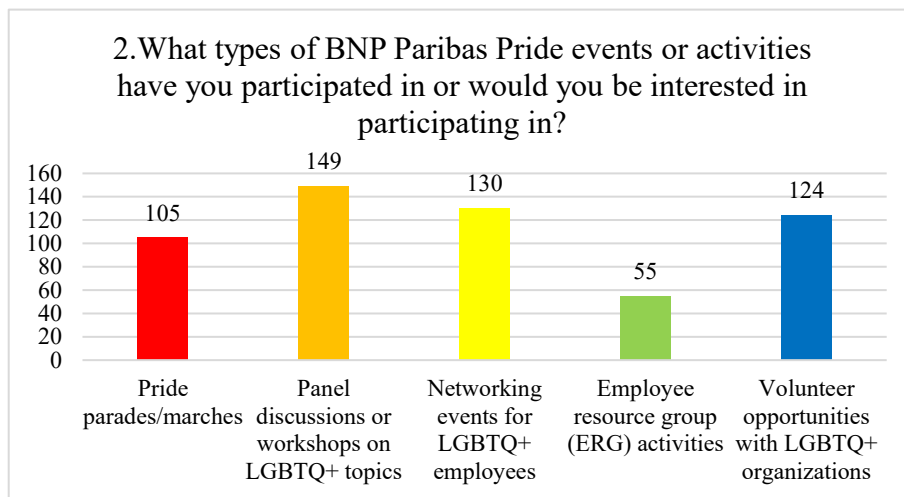


Graph 1: Distribution of Employee Awareness Channels

The survey results offer valuable insight into how BNP Paribas employees first became aware of PRIDE initiatives, revealing the relative effectiveness of different communication channels. Internal communication emerged as the most impactful, with 139 respondents reporting they learned about PRIDE through internal emails, newsletters, intranet updates, or internal campaigns. This reflects a strong internal communication structure and highlights the company's commitment to embedding diversity and inclusion (D&I) into its everyday culture.

In contrast, only 43 employees cited external media or promotional content as their source of information, suggesting that BNP Paribas’ public-facing communication may lack the consistency or reach of its internal messaging. This indicates room for improvement in external outreach, particularly in increasing visibility among broader audiences such as prospective employees, partners, or the general public.

Notably, 116 participants reported learning about PRIDE through word of mouth, emphasizing the power of informal networks within the organization. This highlights the role of employees themselves in promoting a culture of inclusion, where D&I efforts are supported not only by leadership but also through peer engagement. The prevalence of interpersonal communication suggests that BNP Paribas fosters an environment where open conversations about diversity are welcomed and normalized.



Graph 2: Participation and Interest in BNP Paribas Pride Events and Activities

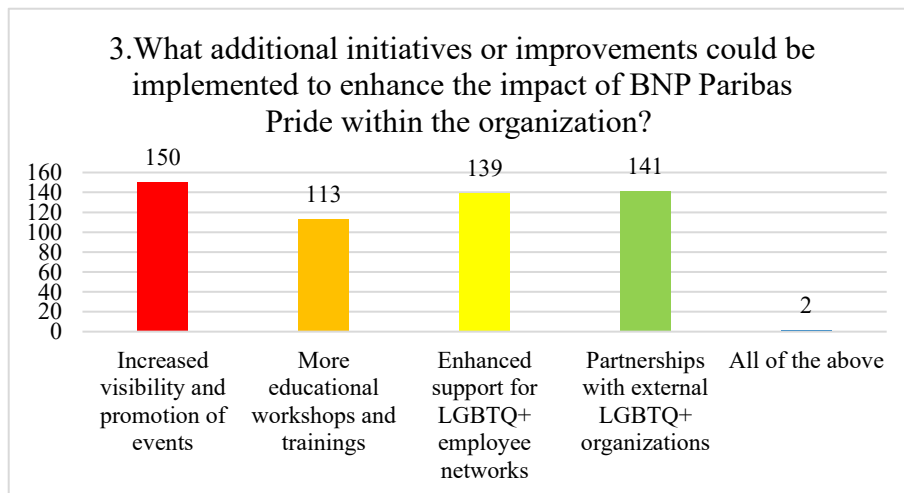
Survey responses revealed a strong interest in panel discussions and workshops, with 149 employees indicating a preference for educational events focused on LGBTQIA+ topics. This suggests a clear demand for structured learning opportunities that promote awareness, empathy, and deeper understanding, aligning with the company’s broader inclusion goals.

Networking events were also highly valued, with 130 responses. These gatherings help foster peer support, visibility, and a sense of belonging among LGBTQIA+ employees, highlighting their role in both professional development and workplace inclusion.

Volunteer opportunities with external LGBTQIA+ organizations attracted 124 responses, reflecting employees’ interest in engaging beyond the company and contributing to wider social causes. This underscores the potential for BNP Paribas to strengthen community partnerships and expand socially responsible initiatives.

Participation in Pride parades and marches, while still notable at 105 responses, was slightly lower than other forms of engagement. This may suggest that employees prefer more intimate or reflective environments over large public events, though support for LGBTQIA+ advocacy remains evident.

Employee Resource Group (ERG) activities saw the lowest engagement, with only 55 responses. This may indicate a need to improve the visibility, relevance, or diversity of ERG programming to ensure it resonates with a broader audience and strengthens internal support networks.



Graph 3: Proposed Initiatives to Enhance BNP Paribas PRIDE Impact

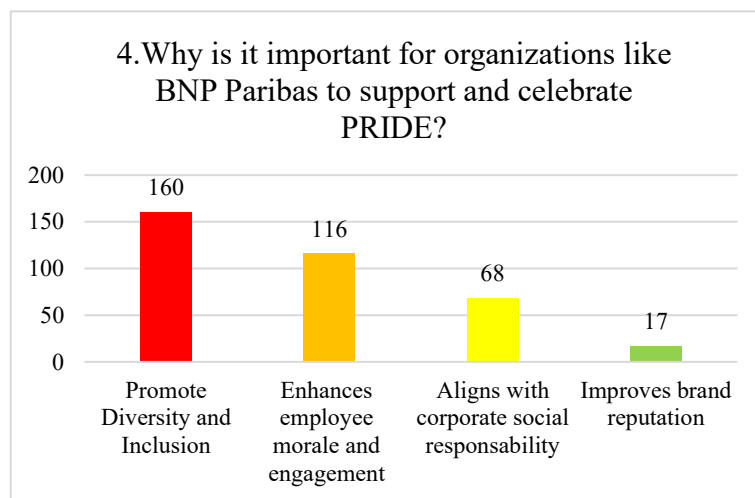
The most frequent suggestion, cited by 150 respondents, was the need for increased visibility and promotion of PRIDE events. This highlights a perception that current communication efforts could be improved to boost awareness and engagement across the company.

Partnerships with external LGBTQIA+ organizations were also emphasized, with 141 respondents advocating for stronger community connections. This reflects a desire for broader engagement, allowing employees to contribute beyond the workplace and reinforcing the company’s public commitment to inclusion.

Enhanced support for internal LGBTQIA+ networks was identified by 139 respondents, underscoring the importance of community-building within the organization. Strengthening these networks through increased resources or leadership backing could foster a more inclusive internal culture.

Additionally, 113 respondents prioritized more educational workshops and training, reinforcing the demand for continued learning around LGBTQIA+ issues.

Notably, only two participants selected “all of the above,” suggesting that employees tend to prioritize specific areas of improvement. This indicates that targeted strategies, in communication, partnerships, internal networks, and education, may be more effective than general approaches.



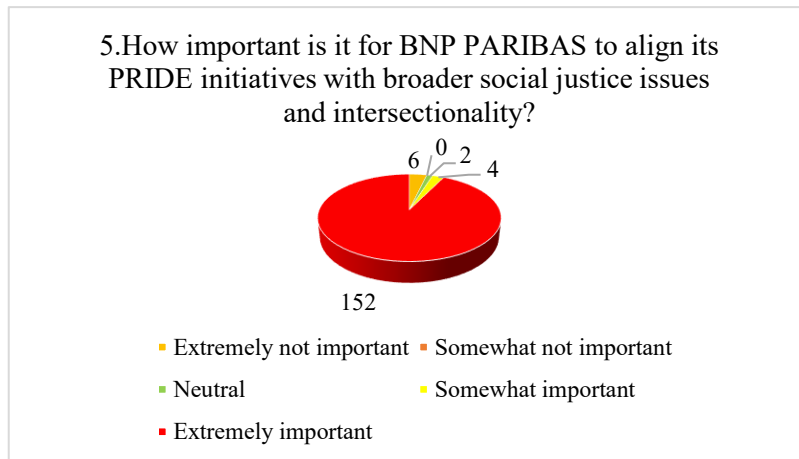
Graph 4: : Importance of Supporting and Celebrating PRIDE at BNP Paribas

Survey responses shed light on why employees support PRIDE initiatives at BNP Paribas. The most cited reason, with 160 responses, was the promotion of diversity and inclusion, highlighting that employees view inclusivity as a core organizational value and essential to a supportive work culture.

Additionally, 116 respondents linked PRIDE to improved morale and engagement, indicating that these initiatives contribute to a positive and motivating workplace environment. This reinforces the idea that inclusivity enhances not just ethics but also employee well-being and organizational health.

For 68 respondents, PRIDE’s alignment with the company’s corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy was key, showing that many see LGBTQIA+ inclusion as part of BNP Paribas’ broader ethical commitments.

Notably, only 17 respondents identified brand reputation as the main motivator, suggesting that employees perceive PRIDE as driven by genuine values rather than image management, further reinforcing the authenticity of the company’s commitment to diversity

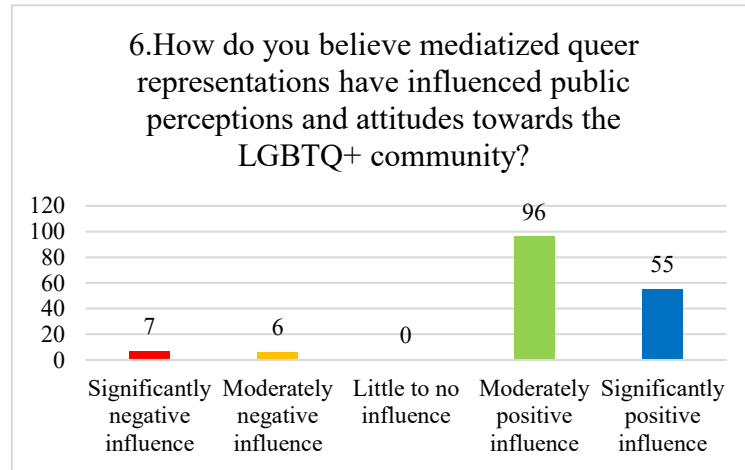


Graph 5: Importance of Aligning PRIDE Initiatives with Broader Social Justice Issues and Intersectionality

Survey results using a Likert scale revealed strong support for aligning PRIDE initiatives with broader social justice themes. A significant majority, 152 respondents, rated this alignment as *Extremely Important*, highlighting a shared belief that PRIDE is part of the company’s wider commitment to equality and diversity.

A smaller group of 4 participants selected *Somewhat Important*, acknowledging the relevance of social justice alignment while possibly prioritizing other organizational goals. Only 2 respondents chose *Neutral*, and 6 considered the alignment *Extremely Not Important*, suggesting a minority of employees hold differing views or prefer a more traditional corporate focus.

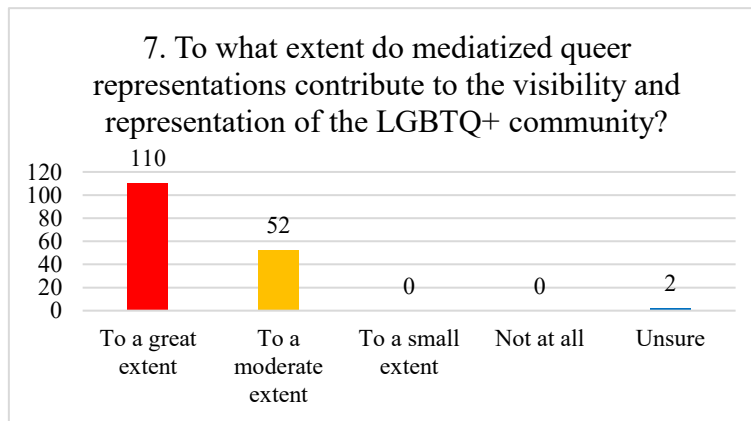
Overall, these results point to a clear consensus: most employees value connecting PRIDE efforts with broader social justice movements, offering strategic direction for the future development of diversity and inclusion initiatives.



Graph 6: Influence of Mediatized Queer Representations on Public Perceptions and Attitudes

Survey responses using a Likert scale revealed clear perceptions about the impact of mediatized queer representations on public attitudes. A majority of respondents, 96, viewed media as having a *Moderately Positive Influence*, suggesting that while representation is seen as beneficial, there's still a need for more nuanced and diverse portrayals.

Another 55 respondents believed the influence was *Significantly Positive*, highlighting the view that media plays a crucial role in promoting acceptance and visibility for the LGBTQIA+ community. In contrast, a small minority, 6 and 7 respondents, respectively, selected *Moderately Negative* and *Significantly Negative Influence*, reflecting concerns about stereotyping or superficial representation. Notably, no one selected *Little to No Influence*, reinforcing a shared belief that media significantly shapes societal perceptions. Overall, the responses point to a consensus that media is a powerful tool for inclusion, though continued improvement in representation is still necessary.



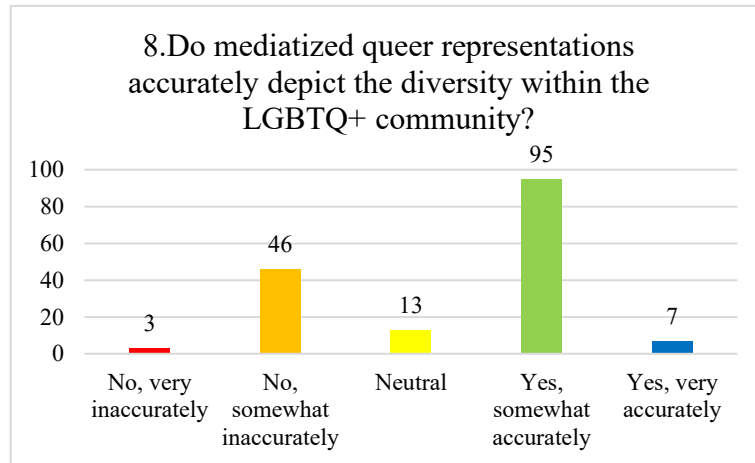
Graph 7: Contribution of Mediatized Queer Representations to LGBTQIA+ Visibility

Graph 7, based on Likert scale responses, reveals strong organizational consensus on the role of media in promoting LGBTQIA+ visibility. A majority of 110 respondents indicated that media contributes *To a Great Extent*, reflecting the belief that mediatized queer representations are key to raising awareness and advancing acceptance. These portrayals are seen as essential in normalizing LGBTQIA+ identities and fostering broader societal understanding.

An additional 52 respondents selected *To a Moderate Extent*, acknowledging media's influence but noting limitations, such as lack of diversity, superficiality, or the underrepresentation of marginalized identities like trans people, queer people of color, or those with disabilities. This group highlights the need for more authentic and intersectional representations that move beyond tokenism.

No respondents selected *To a Small Extent* or *Not at All*, and only two marked *Unsure*, indicating a near-unanimous recognition of media's importance in shaping public perceptions of LGBTQIA+ communities.

These results underscore that while media is widely valued as a tool for visibility, there is also a call for deeper, more inclusive narratives. The use of the Likert scale provides clear insight into both the strength of consensus and the nuanced expectations employees hold regarding queer representation in media.



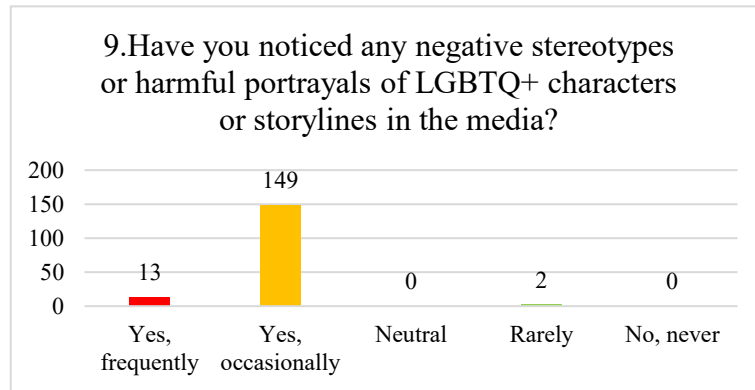
Graph 8: Accuracy of Mediatized Queer Representations of LGBTQIA+ Diversity

The graph illustrates employee perceptions of how accurately mediatized queer representations reflect the diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community. Most respondents (95) selected *Yes, Somewhat Accurately*, suggesting that while some aspects are portrayed, media often lacks depth and fails to capture the full spectrum of identities and experiences.

Another 46 employees answered *No, Somewhat Inaccurately*, pointing to concerns about underrepresentation and stereotyping, particularly of trans, nonbinary, disabled, and racialized queer individuals. This highlights a persistent gap in inclusive and intersectional media portrayals.

A smaller group of 13 responded *Neutral*, possibly reflecting mixed or uncertain views on media accuracy, while only 7 selected *Yes, Very Accurately*, indicating that highly representative portrayals are still rare. Just 3 respondents chose *No, Very Inaccurately*, expressing strong dissatisfaction with current portrayals.

Overall, the results show broad agreement that media makes some progress in representing LGBTQIA+ diversity, but falls short of capturing its full complexity. These insights highlight the need for richer, more authentic narratives across media platforms.

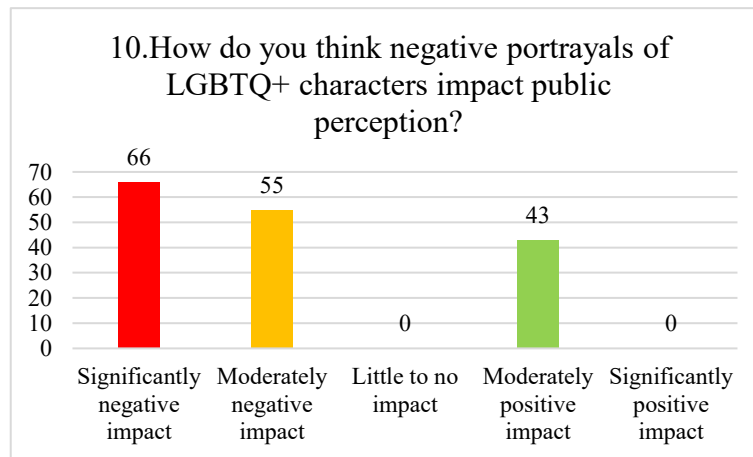


Graph 9: Perception of Negative Stereotypes or Harmful Portrayals of LGBTQIA+ in Media

The graph illustrates employee perceptions of how often they encounter negative stereotypes or harmful portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters in media. The majority, 149 respondents, answered *Yes, Occasionally*, indicating that while such portrayals are not constant, they occur frequently enough to raise concern.

Thirteen respondents selected *Yes, Frequently*, reflecting a view that negative depictions remain a persistent issue in certain media contexts, suggesting ongoing frustration with stereotypical or inaccurate portrayals.

Only two respondents chose *Rarely*, and none selected *Neutral* or *No, Never*, showing that all participants acknowledged the existence of negative LGBTQIA+ portrayals to some degree. This near-universal awareness underscores a shared concern about the persistence of harmful media representations, despite growing progress in visibility and inclusion.

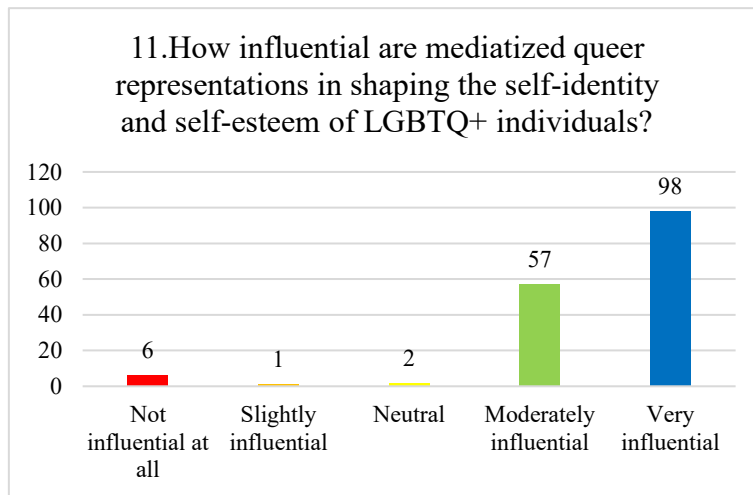


Graph 10: Impact of Negative Portrayals of LGBTQIA+ Characters on Public Perception

The graph reveals employee perceptions of how negative portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters in media influence public attitudes. Most respondents, 66, believe such portrayals have a *significantly negative impact*, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and fostering misunderstanding.

Another 55 selected a *moderately negative impact*, suggesting that even subtle or less direct portrayals can sustain existing biases. Meanwhile, 43 respondents viewed the impact as *moderately positive*, perhaps seeing these portrayals as conversation starters that raise awareness and drive demands for better representation.

Notably, no one selected *Little to No Impact* or *Significantly Positive Impact*, indicating a shared understanding that negative media portrayals are never neutral. Overall, the data reflects strong concern over media’s power to shape perceptions, while also recognizing its potential to inspire critical reflection and advocacy.

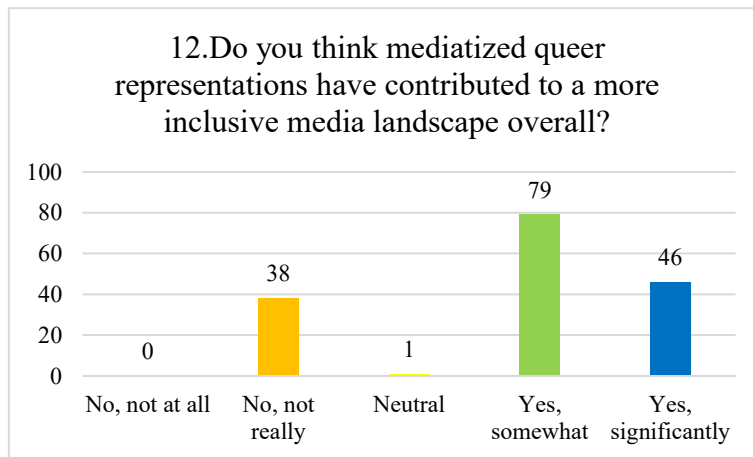


Graph 11: Influence of Mediatized Queer Representations on LGBTQIA+ Self-Identity and Self-Esteem

The bar graph illustrates employee perceptions of how mediatized queer representations influence LGBTQIA+ individuals' self-identity and self-esteem. A clear majority, 98 respondents, believe media is *very influential*, emphasizing its powerful role in shaping feelings of acceptance, belonging, and self-worth. This underscores the importance of authentic and empowering portrayals.

Another 57 respondents consider media *moderately influential*, suggesting that while impactful, media works alongside other factors such as personal relationships or community support. Only a few employees, 1 and 6 respectively, rated media as *slightly* or *not at all influential*, reflecting a minority view that other influences play a larger role in shaping identity.

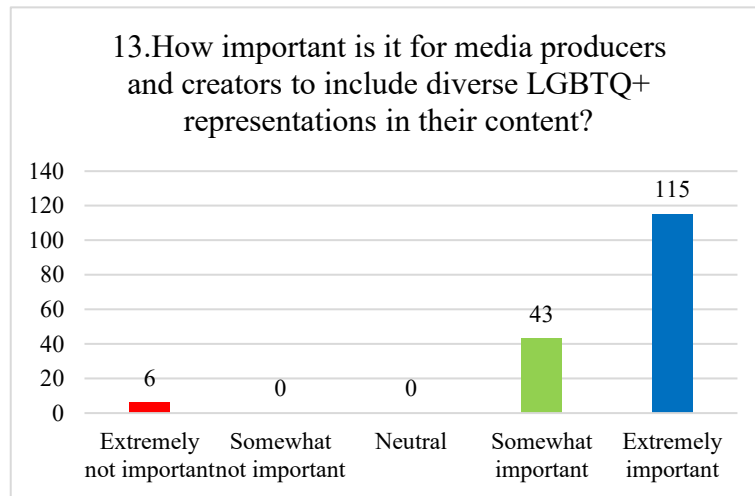
With only 2 neutral responses, there is strong consensus that media significantly affects how LGBTQIA+ individuals perceive themselves. These insights highlight the responsibility of media creators to offer diverse and respectful representations that support positive identity formation within the community.



Graph 12: Contribution of Mediatized Queer Representations to a More Inclusive Media Landscape

The bar graph reveals employee perceptions of how mediatized queer representations have contributed to a more inclusive media landscape. Most respondents (79) believe these portrayals have *somewhat* contributed, acknowledging progress while pointing to the need for broader and more diverse representation.

A further 46 employees view media’s impact as *significant*, highlighting queer visibility as a central force in challenging stereotypes and promoting inclusion. Conversely, 38 respondents feel media has *not really* advanced inclusivity, citing continued reliance on narrow or stereotypical depictions. Only one respondent chose *Neutral*, and none selected *No, not at all*, indicating a general consensus that queer representation has had at least some positive influence. Overall, while progress is recognized, many employees call for richer, more varied portrayals to reflect the true diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community and deepen media inclusivity.

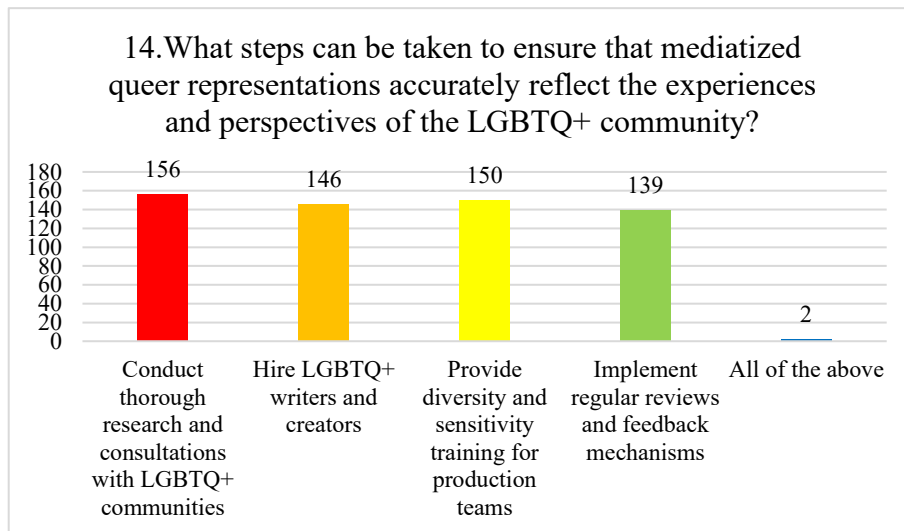


Graph 13: Importance of Including Diverse LGBTQIA+ Representations in Media Content

The bar graph shows strong employee consensus on the importance of including diverse LGBTQIA+ representations in media. A clear majority, 115 respondents, rated it as *extremely important*, reflecting a shared belief that inclusive media is vital for visibility, understanding, and challenging stereotypes. This highlights expectations that media producers actively contribute to social progress through authentic and varied portrayals.

Another 43 respondents considered it *somewhat important*, acknowledging its value while possibly balancing it with other production factors. Only 6 selected *extremely not important*, representing a small minority who view diversity in media as less of a priority.

No respondents chose *neutral* or *somewhat not important*, indicating definitive views across the board. Overall, the data reveals a strong organizational expectation for media to reflect the diversity of LGBTQIA+ experiences and help shape a more inclusive cultural narrative.



Graph 14: Steps to Ensure Accurate Queer Representations in Media

The graph presents employee views on steps to improve the accuracy of queer media representations, allowing multiple selections or *All of the Above*. The most selected option, chosen by 156 respondents, was conducting thorough research, reflecting the belief that authentic portrayals must be grounded in real LGBTQIA+ experiences and direct community input.

Close behind, 150 respondents emphasized the need for diversity and sensitivity training for media teams, while 146 supported hiring LGBTQIA+ writers and creators to ensure authentic and nuanced storytelling. These results highlight a clear preference for direct inclusion and education as tools for improving representation.

Additionally, 139 employees supported regular review and feedback mechanisms, showing the importance of continuous evaluation and community accountability. Notably, only 2 selected *All of the Above*, suggesting most employees prioritized specific, impactful actions over a broad strategy.

Overall, the graph reveals strong support for a multifaceted but targeted approach to achieving accurate and respectful queer representation in media.

While the findings of this study provide meaningful insights into LGBTQIA+ representation and inclusivity at BNP Paribas, several limitations must be acknowledged to ensure a balanced interpretation of the results.

One of the primary limitations is the margin of error, which reflects potential variation in results due to sample size and response rate. With 164 responses out of 432 employees invited (a response rate of under 40%), the study faces the risk of non-response bias. It is possible that those who chose to participate are more engaged or supportive of PRIDE initiatives, meaning the perspectives of the 268 non-respondents remain unknown. This could have skewed the results toward more favorable feedback, especially if those less involved with PRIDE did not feel compelled to respond.

Another concern is social desirability bias. BNP Paribas is widely recognized for its inclusive policies and visible support for LGBTQIA+ rights, which may have led respondents to answer in ways that reflect organizational values rather than personal beliefs. Even though the survey was anonymous, some participants may have felt internal pressure to provide socially acceptable responses or avoid critical feedback.

Temporal factors also play a role. Although the survey was open for over a year to allow broader participation, events such as PRIDE Month or external developments in LGBTQIA+ rights could have influenced responses. For instance, those responding during periods of heightened visibility may have been more likely to express positive sentiments. While the extended window helped balance this effect, it remains a factor worth considering when interpreting the results.

Limitations in survey design also impacted the study. The use of Likert scales and binary questions facilitated data analysis but may have constrained participants' ability to express more nuanced views. Some questions lacked open-ended options or "Other" selections, which limited opportunities for respondents to elaborate on personal experiences or suggest alternatives.

To address these limitations, the study incorporated qualitative interviews with current and former PRIDE Commission members. These interviews provided deeper context and helped explain patterns in the quantitative data, offering insights into both the strengths and challenges of the initiatives.

Looking forward, several methodological improvements can enhance future research. Increasing the response rate is crucial to reduce non-response bias. This could be achieved through personalized invitations, reminders, or small incentives, as well as ensuring that surveys are accessible on multiple platforms (desktop, mobile, in-person, or online). A

broader and more diverse respondent pool would increase representativeness and data reliability.

Incorporating more qualitative elements, such as open-ended questions, follow-up interviews, or focus groups, would also enrich the findings. These approaches allow for more detailed feedback and a better understanding of the emotional and cultural dynamics underlying employee perceptions.

To minimize social desirability bias, future surveys should emphasize confidentiality even more explicitly and consider indirect questioning techniques. Asking participants to reflect on workplace perceptions more generally, rather than their personal views, may help them respond more freely and authentically.

Shortening the survey window or conducting it in shorter, periodic intervals throughout the year could help reduce the influence of specific external events, offering a more consistent view of employee attitudes.

Improving the survey instrument itself is also important. Including more flexible response options, piloting the survey with a small group beforehand, and refining question wording can help ensure clarity and better capture the range of employee experiences.

A valuable next step would be to conduct a comparative study using the same methodology in another organization. This would allow researchers to examine how different organizational cultures affect employee perceptions of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity. For instance, comparing BNP Paribas, where LGBTQIA+ inclusion is highly visible, with a company where such initiatives are less central could reveal patterns of bias or response behavior shaped by internal values. Such comparisons could also help generalize findings and identify which survey elements need adaptation for use across various corporate contexts.

In conclusion, while the study offers valuable insights into LGBTQIA+ inclusivity at BNP Paribas, limitations related to response rate, bias, timing, and survey design must be taken into account. By improving recruitment strategies, integrating more diverse qualitative methods, refining survey tools, and expanding research across multiple organizations, future studies will be better equipped to generate robust, representative, and actionable findings that support inclusive practices in different corporate environments

5.2.3 BNP Paribas Pride and Corporate Inclusivity: Analysis of a Case Study

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the role and impact of BNP Paribas PRIDE in promoting inclusivity within the corporate environment. By examining insights gathered from both semi-structured interviews and survey responses, it highlights the initiative's successes, challenges, and areas for improvement in fostering a more inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ employees.

The BNP Paribas PRIDE initiative illustrates how multinational corporations can act as agents of social change by embedding diversity and inclusion into their organizational culture. Launched in 2016 as part of the company's broader corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, PRIDE Portugal reflected an effort to formally integrate LGBTQIA+ inclusion into the workplace. Initially driven by French leadership and later adapted to the Portuguese context, the initiative marked a turning point in the company's commitment to equity, representation, and human rights (Interviewee 1, personal communication, May 2023). As a PRIDE member since 2022 and Commission participant since 2024, I offer both researcher and insider perspectives, providing firsthand insight into internal dynamics.

The interview data provided qualitative depth, offering personal perspectives from employees, members of the PRIDE initiative, and internal stakeholders. These responses shed light on the real-world impact of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity efforts and their significance for individuals within BNP Paribas Portugal. Each interview question is analyzed to identify recurring themes and to better understand the drivers behind the initiative's perceived impact.

In parallel, the survey data collected anonymously from BNP Paribas PRIDE members is presented and analyzed in detail. The use of both multiple-choice and Likert scale questions enabled the quantification of employees' perceptions and experiences. Each survey item is examined individually, accompanied by graphs and visual representations to clearly illustrate patterns and trends in the responses.

The analysis focuses on key metrics such as how employees became aware of BNP Paribas PRIDE, their participation in related events, and the perceived importance of aligning the company's inclusivity efforts with broader social justice issues. In addition, the survey explored employee perceptions of mediatized queer representations, offering insight into how such portrayals influence both public attitudes and internal corporate inclusivity.

This analysis is not only relevant to the assessment of PRIDE's internal impact, but also aligns closely with BNP Paribas' broader commitment to diversity and inclusion. As outlined in the Group's Code of Conduct and CSR strategy, BNP Paribas aims to create a work environment where all employees feel respected, valued, and able to thrive, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or background. The PRIDE initiative at BNP Paribas Portugal serves as a concrete extension of these global policies, translating institutional values into local action.

By combining data-driven visuals with qualitative insights, this section offers a holistic understanding of how BNP Paribas PRIDE contributes to building an inclusive corporate culture. It also identifies areas where further development is possible, ensuring that the company's efforts continue to evolve in line with both employee expectations and the Group's strategic commitment to fostering equality, representation, and belonging.

Beyond the internal corporate context, however, representation also plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions externally, particularly through the media. Ensuring that media accurately reflects the diversity and complexity of the LGBTQIA+ community requires a multifaceted approach. Several key strategies can help media creators and institutions enhance LGBTQIA+ representation in a meaningful and sustainable way.

One of the most important steps is conducting thorough research. Media producers should actively engage with LGBTQIA+ communities, particularly underrepresented groups such as transgender people, nonbinary individuals, queer people of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals with disabilities, to ensure that portrayals are grounded in real lived experiences. This kind of collaboration helps move away from generic or stereotypical narratives, allowing for more authentic and representative storytelling.

Equally essential is the implementation of diversity and sensitivity training for media production teams. Ongoing education, which may include workshops, panel discussions, or guest lectures by LGBTQIA+ advocates and scholars, can help content creators identify and address unconscious biases. By deepening their understanding of LGBTQIA+ perspectives and broader societal contexts, media professionals become better equipped to represent these identities accurately, respectfully, and without resorting to tokenism.

In addition to training, the active recruitment of LGBTQIA+ writers, directors, and creators is fundamental. Ensuring that LGBTQIA+ voices are present behind the scenes enriches the creative process and allows for more complex, layered, and genuine narratives. Media

organizations should invest in mentorship and professional development opportunities for LGBTQIA+ creatives, so that their contributions are recognized, supported, and amplified.

Another strategy involves the implementation of regular review and feedback mechanisms. Media organizations should develop formal processes to assess the accuracy and impact of their LGBTQIA+ portrayals, incorporating feedback from diverse internal teams as well as LGBTQIA+ viewers. These feedback loops encourage accountability and ensure that representation evolves in response to community input and social change.

To complement these efforts, media institutions must also advocate for inclusive practices across the industry. This includes the adoption of editorial guidelines that promote intersectional and balanced storytelling, support for content that features marginalized LGBTQIA+ voices, and collaboration with advocacy groups or progressive creators committed to social justice. Proactive measures like these help reshape public narratives and promote lasting cultural shifts.

Finally, fostering direct engagement with LGBTQIA+ communities remains a critical component of inclusive media production. Involving LGBTQIA+ individuals through consultations, focus groups, and partnerships ensures that media content remains relevant, respectful, and representative of the community's evolving needs and aspirations.

In parallel, BNP Paribas can implement a targeted set of recommendations to further strengthen its commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion and ensure that its PRIDE initiatives align with broader social justice values. An intersectional approach should guide future programming. The company can develop internal campaigns and training sessions that explore how LGBTQIA+ identities intersect with race, gender, disability, and socio-economic background. Hosting events that address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ employees of color or LGBTQIA+ individuals with disabilities would ensure broader representation and foster a deeper culture of inclusion.

BNP Paribas would also benefit from building stronger partnerships with external LGBTQIA+ and human rights organizations. Collaborating on joint projects, community initiatives, or awareness campaigns would help extend the reach of its PRIDE efforts beyond internal policies, demonstrating a meaningful commitment to equality in the broader social landscape.

To ensure that PRIDE initiatives remain aligned with employee needs, BNP Paribas should establish robust feedback mechanisms. These might include anonymous surveys, focus groups, or open forums for employee input. Such structures ensure that programming is responsive and grounded in real experiences, allowing initiatives to be adapted and improved continuously.

It is also important that PRIDE is integrated into the company's storytelling practices. By featuring the real stories and experiences of LGBTQIA+ employees and allies in both internal and external communications, BNP Paribas can humanize its diversity efforts and build stronger emotional connections with its workforce.

Additionally, PRIDE initiatives can be embedded into employee well-being strategies. Events that blend education, social engagement, and wellness, such as inclusive workshops, awareness days, or themed gatherings, can reinforce a sense of community and care, while also enhancing morale.

There is also value in explicitly linking PRIDE to the company's corporate social responsibility objectives. Incorporating PRIDE achievements and goals into CSR reporting would solidify BNP Paribas' public positioning as an ethical, inclusive organization. It would signal to internal and external stakeholders that diversity and inclusion are not just internal HR policies but integral to the company's mission and societal impact.

Finally, external communication strategies should highlight the company's commitment to LGBTQIA+ inclusion. By investing in strategic public relations, engaging storytelling, and social media campaigns, BNP Paribas can increase awareness of its diversity efforts, attract socially conscious talent, and strengthen its reputation as a leader in inclusive corporate culture.

Taken together, these recommendations offer a clear and actionable roadmap for advancing LGBTQIA+ inclusion in both media and corporate contexts. By championing diverse and authentic representations and reinforcing internal commitment through the PRIDE network, BNP Paribas can position itself as a forward-thinking, socially responsible organization. These efforts not only enhance employee well-being and engagement but also contribute to broader cultural and societal change.

5.3 The importance of Diversity and Inclusion initiatives

The findings from this chapter do not exist in isolation; rather, they represent the culmination of a broader interdisciplinary journey that began in Chapter 1 with the theoretical foundations of Queer Theory, was expanded in Chapter 2 through the critical analysis of mediatized queer representations, further contextualized in Chapter 3 with a global overview of corporate LGBTQIA+ inclusivity efforts, and then grounded in Chapter 4 through a detailed case study of BNP Paribas Portugal's PRIDE initiative.

These empirical results offer a valuable opportunity to bridge theoretical frameworks with concrete workplace dynamics, particularly within the context of BNP Paribas Portugal. As outlined in Chapter 1, Queer Theory critiques the binary and normative structures that regulate gender and sexuality, urging instead a fluid, performative understanding of identity (Butler, 1990; Preciado, 2018). Crenshaw's (1991) concept of Intersectionality further deepens this critique by emphasizing how various systems of oppression, such as sexism, racism, and homophobia, interact to shape the lived experiences of individuals who embody multiple marginalized identities. The responses collected through the survey and interviews clearly reflect a growing internalization of these concepts among BNP Paribas employees. Notably, the overwhelming majority of respondents (152) indicated that aligning PRIDE initiatives with broader social justice movements is "extremely important." This strong consensus demonstrates a collective recognition of the need to move beyond tokenistic inclusion and toward genuinely intersectional practices that address the specific needs of LGBTQIA+ employees from diverse racial, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

This insight provides a solid foundation for future strategic planning. To meet the expectations expressed by employees, BNP Paribas should reinforce the intersectional dimension of its PRIDE programming by organizing targeted events and campaigns that focus on the unique challenges faced by queer individuals of color, trans and non-binary employees, and other underrepresented subgroups within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. Collaborations with external advocacy groups, such as ILGA or Casa Qui, could be intensified to bring greater expertise and representation into these initiatives. Additionally, the integration of intersectionality into all training sessions and internal communications would signal a deeper commitment to structural change rather than superficial diversity efforts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this intersectional turn within corporate inclusivity practices affirms the critical importance of Crenshaw's framework (1997) and validates Queer

Theory's call for a destabilization of normative identity categories. By centering employee feedback and implementing these intersectional strategies, BNP Paribas not only reaffirms its inclusive values but also positions itself as a forward-thinking leader in corporate diversity. This proactive stance will be essential as workplaces continue to evolve in response to global social justice movements and the demands of an increasingly diverse workforce.

In Chapter 2, we examined how media frequently functions as a site of distortion for queer identities, often portraying LGBTQIA+ individuals through stereotypical, tokenistic, or invisible lenses (Gross, 2001; Sender, 2004; Preciado, 2018). These mediatized representations, while sometimes well-intentioned, tend to flatten the complexity of queer lives, reinforcing normative frameworks rather than challenging them. However, the empirical data collected from BNP Paribas employees nuance this narrative, suggesting that while such harmful portrayals persist, media is also widely recognized as a potential catalyst for social transformation. An overwhelming majority of respondents acknowledged media's significant impact on public attitudes, LGBTQIA+ visibility, and even self-perception. Specifically, 55 participants identified queer media portrayals as having a "significantly positive influence" on public perception, and 98 respondents felt that such representations are "very influential" in shaping LGBTQIA+ self-identity and self-esteem.

These insights reveal a collective awareness among employees that media can both hinder and empower, and more importantly, that its power must be harnessed responsibly. Notably, employees did not merely critique media representations; they proposed concrete solutions for improvement. These included prioritizing the hiring of LGBTQIA+ writers and producers (146 respondents), conducting in-depth research prior to content creation (156 respondents), and implementing ongoing diversity and sensitivity training for media teams (150 respondents). This level of engagement with the production side of media content reflects a sophisticated understanding of how change occurs, through institutional reform, informed representation, and participatory practices.

For BNP Paribas, this presents a unique opportunity to align internal PRIDE initiatives with broader cultural advocacy. As a company deeply invested in both media presence and corporate responsibility, BNP Paribas could take an active role in promoting media literacy within the organization and in its external partnerships. Internally, workshops could be developed to help employees critically engage with LGBTQIA+ representations in

advertising, television, film, and social media, deepening their understanding of how narratives shape workplace inclusion. Externally, BNP Paribas could collaborate with LGBTQIA+ content creators, fund inclusive storytelling initiatives, or sponsor visibility campaigns that challenge dominant media tropes.

From a future-oriented perspective, these results underscore the necessity of treating media not just as a reflection of culture, but as an active agent in constructing culture. Employees' critical engagement with mediatized queer narratives signals an appetite for change, one that BNP Paribas is well-positioned to support. By fostering media partnerships grounded in intersectionality and authenticity, the company can contribute meaningfully to the dismantling of harmful stereotypes and the promotion of diverse queer narratives. In doing so, BNP Paribas would extend its internal inclusion efforts into the broader public sphere, effectively bridging corporate advocacy with cultural transformation.

Chapter 3 examined the global landscape of corporate LGBTQIA+ inclusion, highlighting the growing responsibility of organizations not only to reflect but actively reshape cultural norms around gender and sexuality. BNP Paribas Portugal emerges as a compelling case study within this global trend, affirming many of the patterns discussed, namely, the pivotal role of visible leadership, the value of employee resource groups (ERGs), strategic partnerships with civil society, and the importance of continuous internal education. These elements are present in the company's PRIDE initiative, which has successfully embedded inclusivity into its broader corporate ethos. For instance, strong employee participation in workshops (149 responses) and networking events (130 responses) suggests a genuine desire for learning and connection, indicating the success of PRIDE's educational and social programs.

However, the survey results also point to areas that require further development. Notably, participation in ERG-specific activities was significantly lower, with only 55 respondents indicating involvement. This suggests that while structural frameworks for inclusion exist, they may not yet fully resonate with all employees. These findings echo Chapter 3's assertion that inclusion must move beyond symbolic gestures and become integrated into everyday workplace dynamics. Structural availability alone is not enough; there must also be cultural and emotional resonance, rooted in employees' lived experiences. The relatively limited engagement with ERGs may reflect a lack of visibility, accessibility, or perceived relevance,

particularly for employees who hold intersecting marginalized identities and may not see themselves fully represented within existing programming.

To address this gap, future strategies at BNP Paribas should focus on reinvigorating ERG participation through intentional outreach, co-creation of events with members, and deeper alignment with employees' diverse realities. For instance, expanding ERG activities to include intersectional themes, such as queerness and disability, race, or socio-economic background, would likely make these spaces more inclusive and dynamic. Providing ERG leaders with additional resources, visibility, and executive sponsorship could also help reinforce their value within the organization's broader D&I efforts.

Looking ahead, BNP Paribas has the opportunity to evolve its approach from event-based engagement to sustained, year-round inclusion strategies. This involves embedding PRIDE values into team goals, performance reviews, and leadership KPIs, ensuring that inclusivity is not an isolated effort but a continuous and measurable part of corporate culture. Moreover, expanding collaborations with external LGBTQIA+ organizations could offer fresh perspectives and help ERGs remain relevant, informed, and impactful.

In line with the global insights presented in Chapter 3, these findings reinforce that the most effective inclusion efforts are those that are intersectional, co-created, and sustained across time, not limited to performative gestures or singular calendar moments like Pride Month. By embracing a holistic and participatory approach to LGBTQIA+ inclusion, BNP Paribas can not only strengthen its internal culture but also continue setting a precedent for other corporations operating within both Portuguese and international contexts.

Chapter 4 brings together the theoretical frameworks and structural commitments explored throughout the dissertation into a grounded, empirical analysis of BNP Paribas Portugal, as a case study. Through semi-structured interviews and survey responses, the internal operations of the PRIDE Commission are illuminated, offering insights into how inclusivity is experienced not only through formal policy but also through everyday cultural practices. The interviews revealed the layered nature of change-making within a corporate environment, highlighting the role of leadership in legitimizing inclusivity efforts, the influence of informal peer support networks, and the gradual embedding of LGBTQIA+ narratives into organizational discourse. These findings resonate with the broader literature on Queer Activism and Intersectionality, reinforcing that systemic change requires both institutional will and grassroots engagement.

The survey data corroborate and expand upon these qualitative insights, providing a triangulated view of how BNP Paribas' diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategies are perceived by employees. For instance, 139 respondents indicated that they became aware of PRIDE through internal communication channels, while 116 credited word of mouth, underscoring the effectiveness of both formal and informal means of engagement. Additionally, over 150 employees identified increased visibility and promotion of PRIDE initiatives as a top recommendation, indicating that while awareness is high, there remains a demand for more proactive communication and broader outreach across departments and hierarchies. These findings suggest that inclusive culture is not merely top-down or bottom-up, but the result of active interaction between both.

Moreover, the data reveal overwhelming support for aligning PRIDE with broader social justice movements, 152 employees considered this "extremely important", suggesting that BNP Paribas' workforce is not only receptive to inclusion but is also eager for deeper, intersectional engagement. This aligns with the interviews, where respondents stressed the need to move beyond symbolic gestures and integrate LGBTQIA+ inclusion into wider conversations on equity, race, gender, and disability. Such feedback points toward an evolving employee consciousness that mirrors developments in contemporary Queer Theory and Intersectionality (Butler, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Preciado, 2018).

Despite these strengths, areas for improvement remain. Only 55 participants reported involvement in ERG activities, and several interviewees noted that trans and nonbinary experiences continue to be underrepresented in current programming. Additionally, survey responses concerning media representations show that while employees view media as a powerful tool for shaping perceptions, they also express concern over the persistence of negative portrayals and a desire for more accurate and complex queer narratives. For example, 95 respondents felt that queer representations were only "somewhat accurate," and 149 said they still encounter harmful stereotypes "occasionally", highlighting a clear call for improved media literacy and more robust critical engagement within corporate trainings.

Looking forward, BNP Paribas can strengthen its PRIDE initiative by implementing several of the recommendations offered by its own employees: co-creating content with LGBTQIA+ individuals, conducting regular sensitivity training, ensuring trans and nonbinary voices are not only included but centered, and enhancing the visibility and strategic relevance of ERG activities. These steps are not simply about inclusion, they reflect a deeper institutional

commitment to transformation, one that aligns with the company's broader CSR strategy and positions it as a leader in inclusive corporate culture.

In short, Chapter 4 demonstrates how theory becomes praxis within BNP Paribas Portugal. The combination of interviews, survey responses, and case analysis reveals a corporate environment that is both reflective of global inclusion trends and responsive to local employee realities. By continuing to evolve its efforts in line with employee feedback and academic insight, BNP Paribas can serve as a living example of how corporate spaces can become agents of queer, intersectional, and systemic change.

Crucially, the recommendations emerging from each survey graph offer a concrete roadmap for future action. These include enhancing the internal visibility of PRIDE events, strengthening external communication strategies, building sustained partnerships with LGBTQIA+ organizations, providing ongoing educational programming, and embedding intersectional thinking more deeply into the company's culture. Together, these recommendations align with the theoretical imperatives outlined in Chapter 1, directly address the representational challenges raised in Chapter 2, and extend the global best practices discussed in Chapter 3.

Looking ahead, the study calls for a paradigmatic shift in corporate LGBTQIA+ inclusion strategies, from performative, seasonal engagement toward a more continuous, integrated, and intersectional framework grounded in data and employee participation. BNP Paribas' efforts provide a strong foundation for this transformation, but the findings indicate that deeper engagement is still required, particularly in amplifying underrepresented voices (such as trans, nonbinary, and racialized employees), improving the scope and depth of internal communication, and developing media-aware training programs that empower employees to critically engage with cultural narratives.

In sum, this chapter has demonstrated how theory, media critique, and corporate practice can be woven into a cohesive strategy for inclusion. The PRIDE initiative at BNP Paribas Portugal is more than a localized case study, it is a living embodiment of how queer theory can inform practice, how intersectionality can shape policy, and how corporate environments can respond critically and creatively to the narratives perpetuated by mainstream media. It shows that corporations are not merely passive reflections of social change but can actively participate in driving it forward.

As the global economic and cultural landscape continues to evolve, future research should continue to bridge theory and practice by integrating empirical data with conceptual frameworks from queer studies, media criticism, and organizational sociology. This kind of interdisciplinary, multi-method approach is essential not only for advancing academic insight but also for informing corporate strategies with meaningful, long-term impact. When inclusivity is grounded in both critical reflection and concrete action, it ceases to be a buzzword and becomes a cornerstone of ethical, sustainable, and transformative growth.

This dissertation set out to examine the complex and evolving intersections between queer identity, media representation, corporate culture, and the transformative potential of diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives within multinational organizations. Grounded in the in-depth case study of BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal, the research explored how LGBTQIA+ inclusion strategies are designed, implemented, and experienced by those directly affected. Through this lens, the study investigated the broader implications of such initiatives for corporate identity, internal culture, and the role of the private sector in advancing social responsibility.

By drawing on the theoretical foundations of Queer Theory and Intersectionality, augmented by insights from media studies and organizational sociology, this dissertation adopted an interdisciplinary framework capable of addressing both the symbolic and structural dimensions of inclusion. It sought to understand how systems of power, representation, and normativity operate within the corporate sphere, and how they may be challenged, reimaged, or reinforced through D&I initiatives. The work thus moves beyond the evaluation of isolated policies to consider the deeper cultural logics that shape inclusion efforts, making a case for queer-informed, critically reflexive, and context-sensitive approaches to institutional change.

The findings of this research suggest that BNP Paribas PRIDE may function as more than a symbolic or performative initiative, contributing to meaningful cultural shifts within the corporate environment. By establishing formalized support systems for LGBTQIA+ employees, fostering leadership visibility and accountability, building strategic partnerships with external advocacy organizations, and investing in continuous internal education, the PRIDE initiative appears to support the gradual reshaping of the company's internal culture. These actions were perceived by participants as legitimizing queer presence within professional spaces and indicating an evolving institutional commitment to equity and human rights.

Employee testimonies and survey data indicate several positive outcomes: increased visibility for LGBTQIA+ identities, a stronger sense of psychological safety, higher levels of engagement, and a growing feeling of belonging within the organization. These subjective experiences were also associated, in participants' perceptions, with broader organizational benefits, such as improved internal cohesion, stronger alignment with corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitments, and an enhanced external reputation as a socially conscious employer. Taken together, these perceptions point to the potential of well-

designed D&I strategies to act as catalysts for ethical transformation and cultural alignment, even if causal organizational impacts were not directly measured in this study.

Despite these encouraging findings, the research also revealed a number of persistent challenges that underscore the complexity of implementing inclusive practices within multinational corporate environments. One of the most pressing issues identified by participants concerns the difficulty of balancing global inclusion strategies across diverse legal, political, and cultural landscapes. As a multinational entity, BNP Paribas operates in jurisdictions where LGBTQIA+ rights are unevenly recognized, or, in some cases, openly suppressed. This geographical and ideological fragmentation complicates the development of unified D&I frameworks, requiring context-sensitive approaches that uphold fundamental values while responding to local realities.

Notable gaps also emerged in the collection and analysis of demographic data, particularly with respect to trans and non-binary employees. The lack of disaggregated data limits the organization's ability to design targeted initiatives, assess the effectiveness of existing policies, and address the specific needs of more vulnerable subgroups within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum. This absence is not merely technical, it reflects a structural blind spot that risks perpetuating invisibility within inclusion efforts that claim to be comprehensive.

Participation in employee resource groups (ERGs) was found to be inconsistent, suggesting that these spaces, while available, may not yet feel accessible, relevant, or inclusive to all potential members. This reflects a broader challenge: although LGBTQIA+ inclusion has gained institutional support, it has yet to fully integrate an intersectional lens that actively considers the interconnected dimensions of race, disability, religion, age, and socioeconomic status. Without such a lens, D&I efforts risk reinforcing dominant narratives while overlooking those most marginalized. These findings highlight the need for deeper engagement, broader representation, and sustained commitment to evolution, both in principle and in practice.

In response to these challenges, this dissertation puts forward a series of evidence-informed recommendations to enhance the depth, reach, and sustainability of LGBTQIA+ inclusion within corporate structures. First, it advocates for the systematic integration of an intersectional framework into all PRIDE-related programming. This involves moving beyond surface-level representations of diversity, like the ones often portrayed by mainstream media, and instead embracing the complex ways in which gender identity and sexual orientation intersect with race, disability, class, age, and other axes of marginalization. Intersectionality should inform not only the content of initiatives but also

the composition of leadership teams, the design of internal policies, and the metrics by which success is evaluated.

To increase the accessibility and impact of employee resource groups (ERGs), the research recommends a shift toward co-creation, inviting employees themselves to shape programming, define priorities, and initiate events that reflect their lived realities. This participatory model can be strengthened through targeted outreach strategies aimed at engaging employees who may feel disconnected from existing structures, particularly those from underrepresented or multiply-marginalized groups.

Strengthening strategic partnerships with external LGBTQIA+ organizations is also vital. Collaborations with advocacy groups, such as ILGA Portugal or Casa Qui, can provide specialized expertise, foster mutual learning, and amplify the company's social impact beyond internal boundaries. These alliances serve to bridge the gap between corporate initiatives and grassroots activism, anchoring inclusion efforts in real-world needs and justice-oriented practices.

Furthermore, inclusive values should be embedded across all dimensions of internal governance, from communications and employee training to performance evaluations and CSR reporting. Doing so helps normalize inclusion as a core organizational value, rather than an optional add-on. Finally, this dissertation emphasizes the importance of aligning D&I initiatives with critical media literacy. As the research suggests, media representations play a significant role in shaping perceptions of queerness both inside and outside the workplace. By fostering media awareness and promoting accurate, diverse, and respectful representations, companies can extend their influence into the cultural sphere, contributing to broader narratives of equality and systemic change.

While this study provides meaningful insight into the implementation and perceived impact of LGBTQIA+ inclusion initiatives within a corporate context, its findings must be interpreted within their methodological and contextual limitations. One notable constraint is the potential for response bias, particularly within the survey component. As participation was voluntary and limited to current members of the PRIDE initiative, there is a possibility that the responses reflect more engaged or supportive viewpoints, while more critical or indifferent perspectives remain underrepresented. This dynamic may have skewed results toward a more favorable assessment of the initiatives under review.

Additionally, the survey design, while methodologically sound, presented certain constraints. The use of fixed-response questions, such as Likert scales and multiple-choice formats, facilitated statistical analysis but may have limited participants' ability to express

complex or nuanced perspectives. The absence of open-ended questions in some sections reduced opportunities for respondents to elaborate on their experiences or share insights not captured by predefined categories.

Temporal factors must also be taken into account. As the survey remained open over an extended period intersecting with key LGBTQIA+ awareness events such as Pride Month and significant national and international developments, the data may have been influenced by the timing of participation, resulting in fluctuations in sentiment or emphasis.

To address these limitations, future research should consider employing more diverse and mixed methodological approaches. Integrating a broader range of qualitative tools, such as focus groups, ethnographic observation, or longitudinal interviews, would deepen understanding of lived experiences and capture emotional, relational, and cultural dimensions that often elude standardized surveys. Moreover, expanding the scope of research to include comparative case studies across different organizations, sectors, or cultural contexts would allow for a more robust analysis of how institutional frameworks and corporate cultures influence the success and sustainability of inclusion efforts.

Particular attention should also be given to underrepresented and often marginalized subgroups within the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, especially trans, non-binary, racialized, and disabled individuals, whose experiences continue to be insufficiently documented in corporate inclusion literature. A more deliberate and intersectional research agenda is therefore essential to ensuring that future D&I practices are informed by the full spectrum of queer experiences, needs, and aspirations.

Ultimately, this dissertation affirms that true inclusivity cannot be reduced to seasonal campaigns, symbolic gestures, or checkbox exercises in corporate branding. Genuine inclusion requires depth, consistency, and courage. When rooted in critical theory, co-created with employees, and embedded into long-term institutional commitment, diversity and inclusion initiatives can contribute to meaningful cultural transformation. BNP Paribas PRIDE Portugal illustrates this potential, not by offering universal proof, but by suggesting pathways and practices that may inspire other organizations to engage in more authentic, participatory, and sustained inclusion efforts.

In a world where queer lives remain contested, politicized, and too often pushed to the margins, the existence of inclusive spaces within professional environments is not merely beneficial, it is vital. These spaces signal that dignity, visibility, and belonging are not conditional upon conformity, but recognized as intrinsic rights. For many, such spaces can

mean the difference between silence and expression, between fear and confidence, between invisibility and impact.

On a personal level, this research has been more than an academic project , it has been an act of reclaiming. It has taught me that identity, research, and work do not have to exist in isolation; that I can inhabit the corporate world without hiding or fragmenting who I am; that queerness is not a liability, but a source of insight, empathy, and resilience. By embracing this complexity, I not only become a better researcher and professional but also contribute to making the spaces I move through more just, more open, and more human.

The findings and reflections presented here are just a starting point. It is now up to companies, scholars, and communities to continue this work , to challenge norms, to amplify unheard voices, and to build organizations where diversity is not managed but embraced, not tolerated but celebrated. There is still much to do. But there is also momentum, knowledge, and collective will. In that, there is hope, and a tangible path forward.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I - Semi-Structured Interview

1. Can you provide some background on the inception and evolution of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
2. What motivated the creation of this initiative?
3. How has BNP Paribas PRIDE contributed to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for LGBTQIA+ employees and stakeholders within the organization?
4. What are some of the key objectives and goals of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
5. How do you measure the success of these initiatives?
6. Can you share some examples of specific events, programs, or initiatives organized by BNP Paribas PRIDE that have had a significant impact on the LGBTQIA+ community?
7. How does BNP Paribas PRIDE collaborate with external organizations or community partners to promote LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusivity?
8. In your opinion, what has been the most significant achievement or milestone of BNP Paribas PRIDE to date?
9. Have there been any challenges or obstacles encountered while organizing and implementing BNP Paribas PRIDE initiatives?
10. How have you overcome these challenges?
11. What steps are taken to ensure that BNP Paribas PRIDE represents and addresses the diverse needs and experiences within the LGBTQIA+ community?
12. How do you engage and involve allies within the organization to support the goals and initiatives of BNP Paribas PRIDE?
13. Looking ahead, what are the future plans and aspirations for BNP Paribas PRIDE? Are there any new initiatives or projects in the pipeline?
14. How do you envision the long-term impact of BNP Paribas PRIDE on the LGBTQIA+ community and the wider society?
15. What message or advice would you like to share with other organizations or individuals looking to create their own LGBTQIA+ initiatives?

Appendix II – Structured interview to APPDI

1. What is the Portuguese Charter for Diversity and how does it function in both theoretical and practical terms?
2. What is the main goal of the Charter and how is it related to the promotion of diversity and inclusion in companies?
3. What specific measures are organizations encouraged to implement when they sign the Charter?
4. How is the Charter aligned with European directives and efforts to promote equal opportunities in the labor market?
5. What are the expected results of implementing the Charter in companies?
6. How is APPDI, as the managing body, involved in promoting diversity and inclusion in Portuguese organizations?
7. Are there examples of initiatives or projects developed by APPDI that have contributed to promoting diversity and inclusion?
8. How is APPDI's strategy oriented to achieve the objectives of the Charter?
9. What are the main challenges faced by APPDI in promoting diversity and inclusion in Portuguese organizations?
10. What is the importance of corporate diversity for growth and economic competitiveness in the labor market?
11. What are APPDI's future plans regarding the Portuguese Charter for Diversity?
12. In what context and how was APPDI created?

Appendix III - Questionnaire Distributed to PRIDE Portugal Members

1. How did you become aware of BNP PARIBAS PRIDE?

- Internal communication within the organization
- External promotion or media coverage
- Word of mouth from colleagues

2. What types of BNP Paribas Pride events or activities have you participated in or would you be interested in participating in? (Select all that apply)

- Pride parades/marches
- Panel discussions or workshops on LGBTQIA+ topics
- Networking events for LGBTQIA+ employees
- Employee resource group (ERG) activities
- Volunteer opportunities with LGBTQIA+ organizations

3. What additional initiatives or improvements could be implemented to enhance the impact of BNP Paribas Pride within the organization?

- Increased visibility and promotion of events
- More educational workshops and trainings
- Enhanced support for LGBTQIA+ employee networks
- Partnerships with external LGBTQIA+ organizations
- All of the above

4. Why is it important for organizations like BNP Paribas to support and celebrate PRIDE?

- Promote Diversity and Inclusion
- Enhances employee morale and engagement
- Aligns with corporate social responsibility
- Improves brand reputation

5. How important is it for BNP PARIBAS to align its PRIDE initiatives with broader social justice issues and intersectionality?

- Extremely not important
- Somewhat not important
- Neutral
- Somewhat important
- Extremely important

6. How do you believe mediatized queer representations have influenced public perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community?

- Significantly negative influence
- Moderately negative influence
- Little to no influence
- Moderately positive influence
- Significantly positive influence

7. To what extent do mediatized queer representations contribute to the visibility and representation of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- To a great extent
- To a moderate extent
- To a small extent
- Not at all
- Unsure

8. Do mediatized queer representations accurately depict the diversity within the LGBTQIA+ community?

- No, very inaccurately
- No, somewhat inaccurately
- Neutral
- Yes, somewhat accurately
- Yes, very accurately

9. Have you noticed any negative stereotypes or harmful portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters or storylines in the media?

- Yes, frequently
- Yes, occasionally
- Neutral
- Rarely
- No, never

10. How do you think negative portrayals of LGBTQIA+ characters impact public perception?

- Significantly negative impact
- Moderately negative impact
- Little to no impact
- Moderately positive impact
- Significantly positive impact

11. How influential are mediatized queer representations in shaping the self-identity and self-esteem of LGBTQIA+ individuals?

- Not influential at all
- Slightly influential
- Neutral
- Moderately influential
- Very influential

12. Do you think mediatized queer representations have contributed to a more inclusive media landscape overall?

- No, not at all
- No, not really
- Neutral
- Yes, somewhat

- Yes, significantly

13. How important is it for media producers and creators to include diverse LGBTQIA+ representations in their content?

- Extremely not important
- Somewhat not important
- Neutral
- Somewhat important
- Extremely important

14. What steps can be taken to ensure that mediatized queer representations accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of the LGBTQIA+ community?

- Conduct thorough research and consultations with LGBTQIA+ communities
- Hire LGBTQIA+ writers and creators
- Provide diversity and sensitivity training for production teams
- Implement regular reviews and feedback mechanisms
- All of the above

Appendix IV - Informed Consent Form

José Fernando Pereira Martins

Masters in Intercultural Studies for Business

Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto

Consent Form

Research Objectives:

- 1.Examine queer theory and the portrayal of various identities in the media.
- 2.Explore the impact of these media representations on the queer community.
- 3.Analyze the integration of the PRIDE network within BNP Paribas.
- 4.Assess the influence of initiatives like PRIDE on queer representations and practices in the corporate sector.
- 5.Propose measures and actions to enhance queer representation and practices in corporate environments.

Participation: By signing this form, you agree to participate in this study, which aims to understand and improve the representation and treatment of queer individuals in corporate settings, specifically within BNP Paribas.

Confidentiality: Your responses and personal information will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of this research. Data will be anonymized to protect your identity.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences.

I ask for your consent to record the interview and to use the interview findings in my thesis. If you permit, the audio of the interview will be recorded, the recording from the interview will be handled confidentially and will not be shared with any third party. When all analysis of the interview data is completed, the files will be deleted, and all data will be anonymized. The thesis will summarize input from the interviews, as well as from other data sources.

References or quotes from the interviews will be anonymized and will not include information that will identify individual interviewees.

Contact Information: If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at josefernandopmartins@gmail.com.

Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.