

“Ballroom is Here!” Or is it?

A study on the portrayal of the Ballroom and LGBTQ+ community in the Netflix series Pose, through the entertainment-education strategy approach

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Master's Thesis
June 2022

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Abstract

The media through which we are constantly staying informed and learning new things has increased significantly, whether it's through watching television series or scrolling through social media applications. While being entertained through television series, we can also gain knowledge on various topics and issues. This is an example of the entertainment-education strategy. In recent years, series like 'Pose' 'One Day at a Time', and 'Elite' have been introduced to the streaming platform Netflix. A common topic that these series focus on is LGBTQ+ issues. A unique topic that Pose focuses on is Ballroom culture. Ballroom is considered to be a safe space for Black and Brown LGBTQ+ individuals made by them and for them. Within the culture, members of the community host functions where they come together to celebrate each other and compete for trophies. During these functions, participants walk different categories like 'Vogue Femme' and 'Old Way'. Considering that Pose discusses and educates audiences on Ballroom and its culture, it is interesting to understand how members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Ballroom scene are being represented in the series Pose and how do members of this community value and identify with these representations. To answer this question, in-depth interviews were carried out with individuals part of the LGBTQ+ and Dutch Ballroom community, who are between the ages of 20 to 40 years old. During the interview, 6 visual probes were shown to the respondents. These visual probes consisted of different scenes from the series Pose, which focused on topics like the deeming ceremony, HIV, transphobia, and housing within the community. Data gathered from the interviews were then analyzed through thematic analysis and divided into 4 main themes: an introduction of ballroom, support, sexual health and sex work, and queer identity. Based on the findings, it was evident that Pose is informative on the history of Ballroom but is not entirely representative of the community and its culture. In addition to watching Pose, to understand Ballroom and its culture, it is important for individuals to communicate with members part of the community and watch documentaries like 'Paris is Burning' and 'Kiki'.

Keywords: LGBTQ+, Ballroom, Pose, Representation, Entertainment-education

Word Count: 353

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Introduction

As a society that constantly consumes media, we are constantly keeping up to date through news applications, television, and social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter (Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). One of the benefits of this digital age is that users can gain knowledge on various topics and issues through online networks and television series. Gaining knowledge in an entertaining manner is known as the Entertainment-Education (EE) communication strategy. As defined by Bouman (1999), “the essence of the entertainment-education strategy is to use mass-media characters as models of behavior for influencing people towards social change” (p. 23). Essentially, entertainment-education deals with addressing social issues in an entertaining format to provide knowledge to the audience about a specific educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior. The strategy of entertainment-education can be seen in series like ‘Pose’, ‘One Day at a Time’, and even ‘Sex Education’ (Portwood, 2021). These series are also available on the streaming service Netflix.

Living in a digital age where technology surrounds us and plays a huge role in our daily routines, we are likely to hear the terms ‘Instagram’, ‘Netflix’, or even ‘Google’ at least once a day. However, it is interesting to look at how many hours a day we spend on these platforms. Statistics reveal that the average Netflix user has put in about over 1,130 hours or 49 days worth of content just watching shows or movies since opening their accounts (Cook, 2022). Netflix has over 17,000 titles globally with 1,500 of those titles being original titles produced by Netflix themselves, which gives users enough options of series to choose from. Considering that Netflix is accessible internationally and that the platform offers international series and movies, it is easy to believe that people from all over the world are active Netflix users. In fact, statistics show that Netflix users can access programs in 190 different countries, making the percentage higher than in the USA alone (19.1%) (Aleksander, 2022).

Different studies show how Netflix is accessible in different parts of the world, catering to individuals from different backgrounds. However, an important factor to consider is how many of the programs accessible through Netflix cater to different communities within those countries, for instance, the LGBTQ+ community. According to Opie (2019), the streaming service, Netflix, provides programs like *Elite* and *Sex Education* where some of the casts are not only members of the LGBTQ+ community but where the show also discusses subjects regarding

the community. In their report, Opie (2019) mentions that Netflix does not have an LGBTQ+ section on the platform for every region around the world. In other words, Opie (2019) suggests that since Netflix avoids the inclusion of a queer category in specific countries, the platform still plays it safe depending on how locals respect LGBTQ+ individuals instead of standing for what they personally believe in. This raises the question if Netflix supports the LGBTQ+ community or if it is just for profits.

A common educational topic in series like *Pose* and *Elite* is LGBTQ+ issues; from the AIDS epidemic to coming out experiences. According to Wang, Bih, and Brennan (2009), the process of coming out is strongly based on the specifics of a local culture. Essentially, it is when a member of the LGBTQ+ community chooses to openly disclose their sexual identity.

Along with the AIDS epidemic and coming out experiences, series like *Pose* also discuss an important aspect of the LGBTQ+ community, which is Ballroom. Ballroom is just one word for the whole community and culture behind it. In their study, Bailey (2005) explains that members of the LGBTQ+ community created a safe space, Ballroom, for themselves. This is where the so-called minority groups, such as trans Black individuals come together and live their lives as they want to. And in this space, they are considered the queens and not looked at or treated as a minority. Ballroom is here, when entering common spaces, members of the Ballroom scene mention that ‘Ballroom is Here’ as a way to take up space and make their presence known.

Societal & Scientific Relevance

With more and more series being introduced to the platform Netflix, it is important to study how such series can educate the public on the issues and lifestyle of members that are part of the LGBTQ+ community and how representative this is. As Banducci, Donovan, and Karp (2004) mention in their study, representation plays a huge role in forming a perception of a specific group. The LGBTQ+ community is already looked at as part of a minority group and is often treated as the ‘other’, thus it is socially relevant to pay attention to and study matters revolving around the community. By doing this, a sense of acceptance and inclusion can be given to members of the community, specifically the trans members of the community.

Since the LGBTQ+ community is hardly being represented in mainstream media, it is hard for the public to understand them. As Capuzza and Spencer (2017) explain, invisibilization,

stereotyping, and assimilation of transgender individuals in the media can result in the public's lack of understanding and acceptance of those individuals. This may result in transphobia and discrimination, as the majority will not understand these individuals. By studying the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media, light and awareness can be spread on what members of the community deal with on a day-to-day basis.

When carrying out preliminary research to better understand this topic, it was noted that there are only a few studies being done on series like *Pose*. This present research aims to fill the literature gap by studying how this television series acts as a medium through which members of the LGBTQ+ community are being represented and how members of this community value and can identify with these representations. If these individuals feel empowered or not, and whether these kinds of series influence their attitudes. Exploring this topic will reveal if series like *Pose* feed into stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community and/or challenge them. The study by Al-Husseini (2022) suggests that the LGBTQ+ community is often stereotyped in the media as a means of mocking the marginalized community.

When studying the representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the media, there is a lot that can be looked at. For instance, their position in society or their lifestyles. Ballroom is an important part of the LGBTQ+ community that must be paid attention to. It can be looked at as a culture within the community. Not everyone might necessarily take part in this culture but those who are part of it take it very seriously. Since *Pose* discusses Ballroom, it is of value to specifically study this series, when looking at Ballroom representation in the media. Studying how the series portrays and represents Ballroom and its members will provide insights as to how the LGBTQ+ community is being represented in the media.

Although *Pose* is a series that was staged in the early 80s, the series was filmed in 2017 – 2018 and released in 2018. Thus, the series is relatively new. According to Rotten Tomatoes (n.d.), *Pose* has an 87% audience rating, with an average of 4.3 out of 5 stars. Considering that the rating is high, viewers tend to enjoy the show. Several factors were considered when focusing on the series *Pose*, for example, the high audience ratings, how recent the show is, and the fact that it is the only Netflix series that focuses on Ballroom.

Research Question

Since this research pays close attention to the representation of the LGBTQ+ and Ballroom community in the media, the main research question is: **“How are members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Ballroom scene being represented in the series Pose and how do members of this community value and identify with these representations?”**

Theoretical Framework

Through studying articles and studies that described the topic of LGBTQ+ and Ballroom representation in the media, the following chapter presents theories that helped formulate the research question. To begin with, the concept of the entertainment-education strategy will be described. Knowledge gained through understanding this concept will shed light on the role that the creative industry plays in educating individuals through entertainment. Then, to gain a deeper understanding of the LGBTQ+ community, Ballroom and its culture will be explored. Considering that the LGBTQ+ community has a community of their own, to understand the community, queer theory and identity will be explored. Furthermore, the research will focus on subcultures to gain an understanding on how these minority groups form their own culture and what having and being part of this culture is like.

Entertainment-education

In their study, Lutkenhaus, Jansz, and Bouman (2020) make clear that quite often we learn something new through stories that have traveled from mouth-to-mouth or through media that we are exposed to. These stories are used to make sense of the worlds we live in. Now, what if these stories were not only entertaining but also educational. Through entertainment-education, individuals can learn about the world around them. For instance, being exposed to series like Pose and online articles about the LGBTQ+ community and Ballroom scenes helps individuals

learn more about these communities. With the help of dramatic arcs, stories can gain the audience's attention for a longer period (Lutkenhaus et al., 2020).

In their study, Singhal and Rogers (2012) explain that the purpose of entertainment-education is to contribute to social change. This social change can be through influencing the audience's awareness, attitudes, and behaviors towards a socially desirable end, but it can also influence the audience's external environment to assist in creating the necessary conditions for social change in groups or systems (Singhal & Rogers, 2012). Essentially, educating and aiming to influence people while they consume media, in hopes that social change is brought about.

Elements of the Entertainment-education Strategy

Bouman (1999) explains that one of the aims of the entertainment-education strategy is to satisfy the need for information, entertainment, and (para)social interaction. Thus, when studying the entertainment-education strategy, it is important to consider the social modeling theory and the theory of parasocial interactions. In soaps and drama series, it is said that there is always some sort of moral dilemma or conflict involved. This is where the modeling theory comes into play. In the study done by Bouman (1999), the author explains Bandura's social modeling perspective and refers to Miguel Sabido's application of this theory. Sabido expresses the conflict in these series by defining them in three basic groups of protagonists (Bouman, 1999). First and foremost, those who support prosocial behaviors. In other words, those who are positive role models. Secondly, those who reject it, or negative role models. Lastly, those who move from antisocial to prosocial behavior, also known as transition models. Bouman (1999) explains that each type of modeling character starts with a specific position regarding the proposed behavior, this represents a wide range of perspectives among the target audience. Both positive and negative role models in series defend or attack the prosocial value in front of the doubting character. Essentially, the positive characters are rewarded, and the negative ones are 'punished'. The characters who are in doubt begin to change their opinions gradually. All three perspectives are valuable in educating the audiences through entertainment, as it provides multiple perspectives and not just one. Viewers can see outcomes and perspectives from a positive role model and from a negative. They are then able to compare the two perspectives to

each other. It is also likely that some audience members might be doubtful, thus they might relate more to a character who makes a transition from antisocial to prosocial behavior.

Another important aspect of entertainment-education, as mentioned earlier, is the role of parasocial interactions. Some theorists suggest that series, more specifically soaps and drama series, have an important role in providing intimacy at a distance (Bouman, 1999). The phenomenon of parasocial interactions is based on Scannell's explanation that there are similarities between broadcast and face-to-face talk. Scannell argues that both are communicative interactions that have the intention to be heard by their audiences, either live or give the feeling of being communicated live (Bouman, 1999). This interaction may even permit responses from the audience directly or indirectly. Essentially, parasocial interactions, as Horton and Wohl coined, describe the interpersonal face-to-face relationship with mass media personalities and characters (Bouman, 1999). Studying this theory is essential for this research, as the Netflix series *Pose* is considered a drama show and insights gained during this study can be compared to Horton and Wohl's argumentation of parasocial interactions. (*Pose*, n.d.). Through parasocial interactions, the audience has the experience of face-to-face communication when watching a series.

Keeping theories like the social modeling theory and parasocial interactions in mind when studying television series like *Pose* is important, as they play a role in how individuals identify themselves and understand their daily interactions.

Ballroom & Its Culture

Some of what *Pose* discusses in the series revolves around LGBTQ+ topics like their lifestyle and Ballroom, thus it is important to also understand the essence and history of Ballroom for this research.

Interestingly, Ballroom has been introduced in the media industry through entertainment series. As mentioned earlier, Ballroom is just one word for a whole community and culture behind it. Understanding the community is important for this study, as it will help make clear how mainstream media represents the community. As explained by Arnold and Bailey (2009), Ballroom culture refers to a not so known community of mostly African American and Latinx LGBTQ+ individuals. This culture started in Harlem, New York and has expanded to many

countries like Paris, Portugal, and The Netherlands. According to Bailey (2005), the introduction of this culture to mainstream media was in the 1990s through Jennie Livingston's documentary, 'Paris is Burning'. One year prior to the release of Paris is Burning, Madonna released a music video labeled 'Vogue', where the artist portrayed elements of Ballroom with little to no understanding of the history and culture of Ballroom. Many individuals appreciated that Madonna brought some attention to the LGBTQ+ community, however others felt as though the artist was stealing and appropriating the culture to simply profit from it (Tucker, 2021). Although the media has given some exposure to Ballroom, Bailey (2005) explicitly mentions that the culture and understanding has received limited scholarly attention.

To understand Ballroom, it is important to consider the components that make up the culture. Bailey (2005) explains that there are two primary features in Ballroom culture: family-like structures called 'houses' and flamboyant competitive balls produced by the community themselves. These houses function as families, led by a house mother and sometimes a house father and at these balls, individuals either compete individually or as a house to win trophies. Apart from organizing and competing in balls, these families provide support for their 'children' to survive in society, as they are marginalized members outside of the Ballroom community (Bailey, 2005).

There are several factors as to why members of the LGBTQ+ community attend these balls. In the study by Kubicek, McNeeley, Holloway, Weiss, and Kipke (2013), some factors identified were to feel included in a community and to receive social support. This shows that these individuals do not often receive this support and feel excluded in society, so they create a subculture where they can celebrate each other. While looking back at the video by Madonna, it is visible that the artist incorporated some of the dance techniques and elements, Voguing, in the music video (YouTube, 2009).

Vogue, the technique not the magazine

Interestingly the term Voguing has been derived from global popular culture, specifically the magazine 'Vogue' (Ursprung, 2012). The magazine 'Vogue' focuses on fashion journalism and follows fashion trends from all over the world. Vogue plays a vital role in the Ballroom world, as members of the community pay close attention to the details of fashion posing and

modeling and incorporate it in their performances (Ursprung, 2012). In Tucker's work (2021), the author explains that drag queens played an important role in the birth of the Ballroom scene, specifically the drag queen Crystal LaBeija. Tucker (2021) explains that LaBeija faced a lot of discrimination at queen shows, where the queen witnessed that mostly white queens would win over her. Thus, Crystal LaBeija decided to leave that beauty pageant and created a community of her own, where the Ballroom house The LaBeija was created. Part of Drag queen's culture was to throw 'shade' at each other, which means insulting another queen in a playful manner (Lawrence, 2011). A way to throw shade at each other was through copying poses they saw in the Vogue magazine and determining who embodied that pose best. By copying the poses and constantly throwing shade to each other by seeing whose pose was prettier, this technique was introduced at balls and queens started competing (Lawrence, 2011). However, Ursprung (2012) mentions that despite throwing shade at each other, members of the community understand that this is done for a performance, and they share mutual respect and compassion, regardless of the degree of shade thrown at each other. Although each house aims to win multiple titles at a ball, the community still respects and cherishes each other.

Furthermore, since members of the LGBTQ+ community, specifically Black trans women, were not shown any respect in the real world, they used balls as a way of living their fantasy of being wealthy and highly respected, just like the models that were in the magazines, as well as, like cis heterosexual individuals in the real world (Ursprung, 2012). In addition to magazines and the poses, balls can be compared to beauty pageants in the sense that it tests the creative and artistic talents of the contestants to see how capable they are in impressing the crowd and judges (Ursprung, 2012). As mentioned earlier, the contestants would imitate or take inspiration from poses they saw in the magazine Vogue and try to impress the crowd. The study by Ursprung (2012) reveals that putting the competition aside, categories at balls, such as realness, face, posing, provide a way for members of the community to escape from the pain of oppression that they face in a heteronormative world. The first elements at a ball were poses and then further developed into the categories. One of those categories was realness, where gay men would perform an act, while competing at a ball, to pass as a straight man. Another category that is present in Ballroom is 'Pop, Dip, and Spin', also often known as 'Old Way' as it was the first category introduced in the scene (Tucker, 2021). In the Old Way, one of the primary elements is competing with poses and moving from one pose to the next, almost as if the individuals

competing are at a magazine shoot and the photographer is capturing their every pose. When looking at Madonna's music video 'Vogue' the first words she says is "Strike a Pose", referring to the technique Old Way.

Studying Ballroom and understanding its culture is vital as Ursprung (2012) mentions that the birth of the culture was not only due to the need to respond to racism and heteronormativity, but also a response to heterofascism, gender normativity, conformity, and the socioeconomic oppression that the members faced due to classism. It can be understood that at balls and within the community, members feel empowered. This is something that they are not used to outside of the Ballroom. Thus, the importance of having this community can be understood. Since Ballroom is a community of its own, it is interesting to also understand how members of this community identify themselves in society, thus the following section explains queer theory and identity.

Queer Theory & Identity

According to Zosky and Alberts (2016), the language and terms that one uses for identifying oneself act as a crucial role in the development and integration of one's sense of self, especially when discussing gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The authors proceed to explain that identity rises as a discursive construct that is developed through interacting with other individuals. Paying attention to the language and words that are used to describe self is important, as it internalizes and shapes who we think we are (Zosky & Alberts, 2016).

Language has the power to both limit and expand possible identities. As Zosky and Alberts (2016) explain, when language categorizes gender solely as male or female, the experiences outside this norm are limited and silenced. On the other hand, language that allows a continuum of gender and sexuality provides the possibilities of existence beyond the binary experience of male and female or homo and heterosexual (Zosky & Alberts, 2016).

The Process of Identity Construction as a Minority

Zosky and Alberts (2016) emphasize that the process of identity construction as a person of a gender or sexual minority is essential in the process of how one comes to identify oneself.

There are two processes that describe identity construction as a gender or sexual minority (Zosky & Alberts, 2016). Firstly, it begins when one starts to come to the self-realization that one might be gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. In this process, one usually explores and questions one's identity. The following process happens when identity formation, the earlier process, confirms LGBT status. This is when identity integration, also referred to as identity affirmation, occurs. This process focuses on accepting and committing to the formed identity. Zosky and Alberts (2016) explain that this is when an individual is living as their authentic self and having a positive self-esteem as an LGBT individual. In coming to terms and understanding oneself, language plays the role of forming, consolidating, and naming this specific aspect of identity.

Being Queer

Keeping the use of language in mind and understanding how individuals of a gender or sexual minority construct their identity, it is important to understand the meaning behind the terms these individuals use to identify themselves. Looking at the abbreviation LGBTQ+, the letters L, G, B, and T are often easily recognized as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The Q in the abbreviation stands for queer. In their study, Abes and Kasch (2007) conceptualize queer theory as questioning heteronormativity and considering the 'fluidity of being' in the sense that individuals go through different phases throughout life. The author explains that identity is not necessarily fixed but instead it changes based on where individuals are in life at that moment. Essentially, this means that the way one identifies oneself can change overtime. Considering that being queer means refusing normative and fixed identity politics, Callis (2016) explains that queer identity is ambiguous and deconstructionist.

As a society, individuals tend to create labels to distinguish different things and people. Meanwhile, queer identity challenges this approach, thus it is interesting to study how queer identity challenges social constructs and the role this plays in the LGBTQ+ community and how the media portrays it. Galupo, Ramirez, and Pulice-Farrow (2017) explain that although many individuals who identify as queer choose this as their primary identity, they either often have multiple identity labels at different times or choose to not use any identity labels at all. Furthermore, the authors explain that many queer individuals prefer to use non-binary language when referring to their identity. In other words, challenging the binary of being male or female,

or being one of the two at once. Some individuals even use the pronouns ‘they/them’ instead of ‘he/him’ or ‘she/her’.

It is important to note that the term ‘queer’ has a whole history of itself. The word itself means ‘odd’ and ‘peculiar’. As a matter of fact, the term ‘queer’ was used as a homophobic and transphobic insult (Jagose & Genschel, 1996). As times passed by, the younger generation of the LGBTQ+ community and activists decided to reclaim the word and use it as a means of self-identification, rather than a homophobic term. While the younger generation uses this term, it is likely that the older generation or individuals who were present in a time where the word queer was used as an insult, tend to use it less. Zosky and Alberts (2016) explain that some members use the word ‘queer’ to identify themselves as an umbrella term for the LGBTQ+ community, instead of a specific segment like gay or trans. Considering the history of the word ‘queer’, it is important to be mindful as to how it is used, especially in this research, and to truly grasp the understanding of how the term ‘queer’ plays a role in the lives of the Ballroom members. By noticing how members of the LGBTQ+ community constantly challenge the norms and binary, it is evident that these individuals have a culture of their own, thus it is vital to study this (sub)culture for this research.

Culture within a Culture

The LGBTQ+ community shares a culture of its own, however, within the community the subculture Ballroom exists. Having a culture of its own that challenges heteronormativity, the culture that the LGBTQ+ community share can be considered as a subculture on its own. This is because it does not follow a cis heteronormative way of living. Within that subculture, some members of the LGBTQ+ community come together to celebrate each other, this is what we refer to as Ballroom. By understanding the subcultures that they create and that they are part of, this present research investigates how these subcultures are portrayed in the series Pose. To understand these subcultures, it is important to first understand why they exist.

As the study by Valentine and Skelton (2003) indicate, many young individuals are born and brought up in heterosexual families where they are expected to also be heterosexual. Due to this, these individuals tend to have minimal contact with lesbians and gay men, thus resulting in little knowledge and experience of the queer lifestyle. Furthermore, Valentine and Skelton (2003)

proceed to explain that schools lack acknowledging lesbian and gay sexual identities and lifestyles, especially in sex education. This results in individuals not being able to understand the lives and experiences of members of the LGBTQ+ community.

As time progresses and technology develops, more and more exposure is brought to the LGBTQ+ community. This being through television series, magazines, or even through Pride parades. However, although the world is slowly progressing and is becoming more understanding of the LGBTQ+ community, there are still many issues to be addressed. There are major cities around the world like San Francisco, Amsterdam, and London that are known to attract a gay clientele due to the gay bars and clubs, however there are still many cities that exist where gay bars are hidden to protect the clientele from potential violence and acts of homophobia (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). These bars are usually in small alleys or hidden streets from the city center. The authors argue that having a queer friendly scene acts as an important part in the formation and development of an individual's identity. By understanding this, it is vital to introduce how the Ballroom scene acts as a crucial part in the development, as well as sustainment of a queer individual's identity.

The study by Hesmondhalgh (2005) provides the definition of subculture as a term to refer to youth communities who embraced non-mainstream cultures through their own distinctive values, music, style, and identities. This is evident in the LGBTQ+ community, specifically the Ballroom community, as these individuals challenge the norms in everything that they do and in their existence itself, as their sexual identity is different from the identity shared in a heteronormative world. Where queer individuals are discriminated in society, Ballroom celebrates these individuals. In the work by Ricky Tucker (2021), the author carried out an interview with Ballroom member Benji Ninja. In that interview, Benji Ninja quotes Ballroom legend and trans activist Jonovia Chase:

“Ballroom is not fantasy; it’s the real world reimagined”

Benji Ninja proceeds to explain:

“As young Black, brown, trans, and queer people, just by being who we are, we’re already existing outside of the confines and the expectations of what is supposed to be possible in terms

of identity, movement, how you live, how you support yourself, how you survive - how you create family. Out of necessity, Ballroom is actively challenging how you can exist in the world. That in and of itself is a radical act that I think is often not appreciated by outsiders or by folks who aren't fighting for their survival in the same way. Folks who describe balls as these "lavish productions," where people live in this fantasy world and for one night get to be whoever they want to be - that's not wrong or inaccurate, but that's the vision of someone who doesn't see a community asserting themselves both on the Ballroom floor and off of it. It's a practice of asserting your right to exist" (Tucker, 2021, p. 24).

Through the explanation by Benji Ninja, an understanding is gained that Ballroom is more than just fancy balls and that having this culture is crucial in their survival. Understanding the subcultural way of thinking is beneficial to help comprehend the socio-cultural of marginalized individuals who create their own underground culture, such as the Ballroom scene (Hesmondhalgh, 2005).

Research Design and Methods

Considering that this research is interested in understanding how one's reality and identity is being portrayed in the series Pose, this research is qualitative in nature (Brennen, 2021). Through qualitative research, researchers can both analyze and interpret data and also gain a more in depth understanding on the topic studied (Boeije, 2012). Since this research focuses on representation of a minority group in the media, carrying out a qualitative study is the most effective way to study this topic.

When carrying out research that is qualitative in nature, there are many methods that can be used to obtain data. For instance, one can gather data through focus groups or interviews. To determine which method is most effective for this study, it was important to consider various factors. First and foremost, qualitative methods do not focus on numbers, instead it focuses on meaning making (Brennen, 2021). This research focuses on making meaning of how members of the Ballroom community value the way they are being represented in the television series Pose. Not every individual might share the same feelings towards the topic. Some may have different perceptions; thus, statistical analysis is not appropriate in this research. Another factor to

consider is that qualitative research observes phenomena in its natural context (Brennen, 2021). It also has a comprehensive view on the subject that is being studied. On the other hand, statistical analysis or quantitative methods aim to find a causal relationship that can be generalized. This study does not aim to find a causal relationship, thus a quantitative method of gathering and analyzing data would not be the best fit for this research. With these factors in mind, carrying out interviews was the best fit in gathering data and results to answer the research question.

As Johnson (2001) explains, the most appropriate and efficient way to understand one's experience and behavior is through an interview. Taking this into account, this research aims to answer the research question through semi-structured in-depth interviews. An in-depth interview can be seen as a conversation with purpose (Legard et al., 2003). Moreover, it is a fundamental process where knowledge on the social world is gained through normal human interaction. By carrying out in-depth one-on-one interviews, personal insights and experiences that are not accessible everywhere can be gained. For this study, carrying out interviews provided first-hand knowledge on how LGBTQ+ and Ballroom members feel when watching the television series *Pose* and how this series portrays them and their lives.

Carrying out interviews instead of gathering data through a focus group was the best fit for this study, as in focus groups respondents may be easily influenced or feel pressured by their peers. Additionally, the topic at hand may be sensitive for some respondents, thus it was important to create a more personal atmosphere through one-on-one interviews.

The Six Recommendations

Keeping in mind that the topic at hand might be sensitive to some individuals, it was important to consider different approaches to ensure that the setting of the interview was comfortable for the respondents. The study by Levy and Johnson (2012) reveals six recommendations on carrying out research with individuals who identify as queer. Although, not all respondents might identify as queer in this study, the recommendations are still valuable for this research.

First and foremost, it is important for the researcher to be comfortable with fluidity. Levy and Johnson (2012) explain that fluidity is ingrained in queer research, thus it is important for

researchers to be comfortable with and attentive to conceptualizations of identity that are fluid. There is not necessarily one truth in this kind of research, everyone's experiences and way of identifying themselves within society may be very different.

With that said, the second recommendation by Levy and Johnson (2012) is that one must be attentive to identity. The authors explain that to carry out research about queer individuals, one must pay attention to identity politics. In this kind of study, one must remember that identity is not fixed or stable. Researchers must understand that individuals do not randomly find themselves and stick to a single identity.

Thirdly, researchers must be prepared for the unknown. Levy and Johnson (2012) suggests that one of the challenges in carrying out research with queer individuals is the unpredictability of the research process. As Jagose and Genschel (1996) explained, the future of queer theory on its own is still unknown. Since it might be difficult for researchers to be prepared for the unknown, Levy and Johnson (2012) suggest that a way to overcome this challenge is to think through likely scenarios. Furthermore, researchers must let go of resistance and allow the research process to take its course and allow uncertain areas of inquiry.

The fourth recommendation is to be ready for questions. The term 'queer' is not necessarily an easy term to understand, to some it might be a positive term while others might look at it differently (Levy & Johnson, 2012). Since the term challenges the ideas of how individuals identify themselves, it is important for researchers to be open and ready for questions. These questions, as Levy and Johnson (2012) suggest, provide opportunities for education and advocacy.

The fifth recommendation to consider when interviewing individuals for this study is to be sensitive. The study by Levy and Johnson (2012) explains that the researcher must be mindful that they are studying a topic about a vulnerable group, thus these individuals might be exposed to an audience who might not necessarily understand them or be sympathetic with them.

The final recommendation by Levy and Johnson (2012) entails to be an advocate. The authors explain that society continues to be homophobic and heterosexist, thus researchers can play an important role in advocacy and education. Through studying a marginalized group, like the Ballroom community, researchers can challenge society's binary views and bring queer voices to light. Levy and Johnson (2012) emphasize that carrying out research about a marginalized group is a form of advocacy, however, this advocacy must not stop there.

Semi-structured Interviews

The six recommendations presented by Levy and Johnson (2012) were considered throughout the research process, from planning the interview to carrying them out. Since the interview was a semi-structured style of interview, the researcher was able to prepare beforehand by selecting sensitizing topics that helped guide the interview. During the interview the researcher still had the freedom to ask follow-up questions and alter the questions based on the respondents' answers (Brennen, 2017). However, to avoid going off track or off topic, the researcher was able to refer to the interview guide (See Appendix A). Along with the interview guide, visual probes were used during the interview. The visual probes consisted of scenes from the series *Pose*, which will be described later. Furthermore, the main respondents being interviewed for this study are members of the Ballroom community who are also part of the LGBTQ+ community. A total of 10 interviews took place.

Sampling

Since this research focuses on how members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Ballroom scene are being represented in the series *Pose* and how the members of this community value and identify with these representations, it was important to personally gain insights from these individuals. Thus, the individuals that were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: gay, trans, and/or non-binary individuals between the ages 20 to 40 years old, specifically members of the Dutch Ballroom scene. It was important for respondents to be at least of the legal age and old enough to understand the matter being addressed. As mentioned earlier, the topic at hand can be sensitive to many and much of the research focuses on sexual health, transphobia, and discrimination. Thus, it was important to reach out to individuals who were of a legal age and mature enough to handle discussing the topic.

To gather respondents, two different sampling techniques were used in this research. The first one was the purposive sampling technique. This technique is considered a non-probability sampling technique that is effective when a researcher studies a specific cultural domain with knowledgeable experts within (Tongco, 2007). Furthermore, Tongco (2007) explains that the purposive sampling technique is also known as the judgment sampling, this is when the

researcher deliberately chooses an informant based on the qualities that the informant possesses. In this case, the inclusion criteria were that the respondents are from the Dutch Ballroom community and are between the ages 20 to 40 years old. To recruit the participants, an Instagram story was created and posted asking for individuals to contact the researcher if they are interested in this study (See Appendix B). In addition, the researcher's network was used to get into contact with individuals who fit the inclusion criteria. However, it was important to avoid recruiting respondents from the same network or friend group, as this may lead to biased results, since these individuals might share very similar perspectives or experiences. Once some respondents were recruited, the snowball sampling technique was used. As Flick (2007) explains, snowball sampling is when research goes from one respondent to another based on the first respondent's suggestions. For this study, respondents were asked to recommend other individuals who fit the inclusion criteria.

A total of 10 respondents were interviewed between April and May 2022. Most of the interviews preferred to have their name revealed in the research, however some preferred to stay anonymous. To respect the anonymity of the participants who did not want their names revealed, their names are abbreviated when referring to them in this study. Appendix C provides an overview of the respondents, including the abbreviations that will be used for some of the interviewees.

Operationalization

The interview guide was created with the help of the theories explained in the theoretical framework. Considering theories from the theoretical framework throughout the study helps ensure a level of face and construct validity (Silverman, 2013). In addition, while creating the interview guide, the series *Pose* was studied. During this phase, the researcher watched the entire series and noted down relevant scenes that contributed to the research, specifically scenes that focused on the topics that helped create the interview guide. The initial plan was to watch all the episodes on Netflix and manually video record relevant scenes using a phone. However, in the process of watching the show on Netflix, the series was removed from the platform. This served as a minor setback in the research phase, however, alternative websites and streaming platforms were used to watch the series. The downfall of these streaming services was that the quality was

not that great. Thus, the specific scenes were noted and then searched for in hopes that a better quality of just those scenes could be found. Most of the scenes were then found on YouTube and then downloaded using an online YouTube to MP4 converter. These specific scenes were used as visual probes that helped guide the interview. The videos were uploaded to Google Drive and an access link was created and shared with the respondents. Also, using Google Drive was the most efficient method, as it did not require the respondents to download any specific applications nor require them to download the videos. It was important to make this process as easy as possible for the interviewees to maintain engagement and interest in this study. The access link was emailed to the respondents prior to carrying out the interview. This allowed them to familiarize themselves with the clips and the series beforehand. To avoid giving the interviewees too much information, each video clip was given a generic name, such as ‘VP_1,’ ‘VP_2,’ etc. This was done instead of providing more details about what each clip was about, which allowed the interviewees to come to the interview without a preconceived idea about the topics that were discussed. Also, having the visual probes downloaded beforehand avoided any potential technical disruptions during the interview, allowing the interview to flow smoothly. A total of 6 visual probes were used for the interviews.

The Six Visual Probes

As mentioned earlier the visual probes, each between 2 to 3 minutes, were labeled ‘VP_1’, ‘VP_2’, etc. however, each visual probe was selected for a specific reason and to prompt a discussion between the interviewer and respondent. Appendix D contains screenshots from each visual probe to provide a visual representation of what the probes looked like. To further explain the probes, the first visual probe is an example of a deeming ceremony at a ball. The main characters in the series *Pose* are dressed elegantly in fancy dresses and shirts, wearing shiny jewelry, and with their hair styled. In the clip one of the main characters, Elektra, mentions that she is an icon and a legend. Elektra proceeds to explain that being a legend is not only about competing and collecting trophies but also about how one represents the community. In the scene, Elektra calls the one being deemed, Blanca, her ‘daughter’ and then deems her legendary.

The second visual probe is a scene from the first season of *Pose*. In the visual, Blanca is in the waiting room of a clinic and in that waiting room are a few men crying, some are couples,

some are waiting alone. Blanca is seen waiting alone. A few seconds after waiting in the room, Blanca gets called in to the office by a nurse. It is important to mention that Blanca is a Black transgender woman and that the nurse is a cis gendered white woman. The nurse tells Blanca that her tests confirms that she has HIV. Blanca sits silent for a few seconds and then gets up saying thank you and rushes to the door. The nurse stops her and informs her of services and hospitals available for Blanca, she also mentions drugs that Blanca can use. Additionally, the nurse informs Blanca that she should let her partners know that she tested positive for HIV and makes it clear that it should not be a death sentence. Blanca proceeds to thank the nurse, saying that it must be hard having to tell people that they will die soon.

In the third visual probe, Blanca herself is now a nurse at a hospital and deals with informing patients about HIV and letting them know about their results. The scene is from a more recent season of Pose. We see that Blanca went from being one of the patients to a nurse now. In the clip, we see a Black trans woman sitting in the waiting room along with other men. Blanca calls on the transgender patient and lets her know that she tested positive for HIV. The third visual probe is a bit similar to the second visual probe, except in the third visual probe Blanca is now the nurse and gets to relate to the patients. Blanca comforts the patient and questions if she has any friends or family she can call. The patient informs Blanca that she just moved here and that her parents do not speak to her anymore. Blanca questions if the patient has been working at the piers, as a sex worker, and lets her know that she knows the piers well and that she also worked there. Blanca proceeds to share that there were once 6 piers but there are now only 1. Blanca then shares that one time when she found out that she was HIV+ there were no drugs available and that it was seen as a death sentence. She then proceeds to inform the patient that by taking the medications and listening to the doctors, HIV+ individuals can live a long and healthy life. The patient is surprised that Blanca is HIV+. The patient then proceeds to explain to Blanca that she cannot afford the assistance, to which Blanca says that she will sign the patient up to a program that covers those healthcare costs. Blanca continues to comfort the patient and then invites her to an event; the specific event is not made clear but Blanca proceeds to explain that at a function like that she found her community and home. It can be assumed that the function that Blanca speaks of is a ball.

Moving on to the fourth visual probe, Elektra and two other colored transgender women are having dinner at what seems to be a rich country club diner. They are the only colored

women there, and only transgendered individuals. While having dinner, a cis gendered white woman approaches Elektra and her friends saying that they are laughing too loud and disturbing everyone who is trying to enjoy their night. To this, Elektra says that they are not the only ones making noise at the restaurant and questions the woman on what exactly her issue is. The woman proceeds to say that she is not dumb and knows when a man pretends to be a woman and makes it clear that she notices that Elektra and her friends are men pretending to be women according to her. The woman proceeds to explain that this is not the right establishment for that, suggesting that they do not belong in the restaurant because they are transwomen. Elektra proceeds to stand up for herself. This was a scene from the earlier seasons.

Similar to the fourth visual probe, the fifth visual probe used in this study is of Elektra, Blanca, and their friends who are also colored transgender women. The scene is from the latest season of Pose, where the ladies go to a boutique to buy a wedding dress. The gentleman working at the boutique questions the ladies on what is going on, he proceeds to mention that they are in a bridal shop for women. Blanca excuses the gentleman saying that they are women, the man replies that it is a store for real women. This shows that he does not consider Blanca and her friends real women. Elektra tells the gentleman that he does not need to accept them and that he just needs to take their money. To this, the gentleman replies that he would not take their money even if they gave him a million dollars in gold. The gentleman mentions that the outfits are made by reputable artists and by selling it to them it will turn into a freakshow. Elektra proceeds to stand up for herself by insulting the man and belittling him.

The final probe, VP_6, is from the first season of Pose. Blanca approaches a boy on the street and welcomes him to her home. Blanca shares a bit of information on what a ball is, mentions that if he joins her house then he must be responsible by finding a job and going to school, and even takes him to a dance school to apply. Blanca gives the boy her address and says that he can come but if he is not interested, he at least learnt something new.

Test Interview

Prior to carrying out the interviews, a test interview was carried out. The visual probes were then shown during the interview, as planned. All prior preparations were done before the test interview, for example preparing the interview guide, the consent forms, and having the

visual probes ready. After carrying out the test interview notes were taken and then changes were implemented for the final interviews.

Elements of the Interview

The first step of the interview process focused on welcoming the interviewee and ensuring a comfortable situation. A brief background about the interview was provided along with a reminder that the interview will be audio recorded. Referring to the theoretical framework, some members of the LGBTQ+ community have multiple identity labels, while others choose not to use any labels at all (Galupo et al., 2017). Some challenge the binary of being male or female, using the pronouns they/them instead of pronouns like he/him or she/her. To respect the interviewees and to be aware of the pronouns that they use to identify themselves, the researcher also asked for their pronouns in the first part of the interview. The pronouns that the respondents identified themselves with is what will be used throughout this research to address them by. This means for example that an interviewee in the following part of this present research will be addressed with 'they/them', when the interviewee indicates to have multiple gender identities or identify as non-binary.

Once the respondents were welcomed and given some background information about the interview, a conversation about Ballroom and its culture was carried out. With knowledge about Ballroom gained from Arnold and Bailey (2009), Bailey (2005), Kubicek and colleagues (2013), and Tucker's (2021) studies, the interviewer and respondent were able to converse about what Ballroom is and the respondents shared their experiences on how they learned about Ballroom. Discussing this at the beginning of the interview was important to understand where the interviewee stood in the Ballroom community, specifically their role in the community. Furthermore, the first visual probe was shown to the respondents during this part of the interview. The respondents then shared their knowledge on the first visual probe and compared the scene to a real ball that they have attended. During this part of the interview, all 10 respondents made it clear that they have attended balls before.

The conversation then led to the topic of sexual health. With the help of the visual probes, questions about whether the respondent received sexual education in school and how familiar they are with HIV and its treatments were asked. Based on their knowledge, the respondents

shared whether the series *Pose* helped in developing and strengthening their understanding on sexual health, specifically in terms of HIV and the stigmas behind it, or if the portrayal of these topics were simply romanticized for the purpose of making the series entertaining.

While discussing sexual health, the conversation moved towards the topic of queer identity and the experiences of the members of the LGBTQ+ community in the real world. This was related to clips from *Pose* that showed examples of how members of the LGBTQ+ community, specifically Black and Brown Trans women, were being treated, specifically visual probes 4 and 5. Furthermore, keeping in mind Jagose and Genschel (1996) and Zosky and Alberts's (2016) explanation of queer theory, it was important to understand how the respondents understood the term 'queer' and whether they identify with it or not.

After listening to what the respondents had to share about queer identity, the interview focused on the overall culture of Ballroom and support systems. This is when the final visual probe was shown to the respondents. The respondents related their experiences to the visual probe. During the conversation, insights were gained on how the culture that Ballroom members share challenges those of the heteronormative world as Tucker (2021) described.

Throughout the interview, the strategy of entertainment-education was also focused on. In the second part of the interview, an understanding is gained on how the respondents learnt about Ballroom and the role the media played in this. The individuals' experiences were compared to the way *Pose* described certain scenarios to identify if the series overly romanticizes these individuals' experiences, resulting in a not so accurate representation of their lives, or if the series accurately describes those scenarios providing a clear understanding of the Ballroom culture and lifestyle. Furthermore, the third section focused on sexual health. Thus, it was interesting to understand if the series had an impact on the way the audience learnt about HIV and the developments in the medicines and treatments for HIV, and what this impact was like.

Data Analysis

Each of the 10 interviews that had been carried out between April and May 2022 were transcribed verbatim. Upon transcribing them, the transcripts were used for the data analysis process. Considering that the interviews were carried out specifically for this research and used as data entries, it is primary data. This further shows the inductive and exploratory nature of this

study as Brennen (2021) describes in their research. To analyze the data, the thematic data analysis method was chosen for this research. The reason for carrying out this type of analysis was because it helped in identifying and describing themes and patterns in the respondents' answers in an inductive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Furthermore, through thematic analysis, the researcher can investigate feelings and motivations by looking at the key patterns in data (Dumitrica & Pridmore, 2019). Since this study aims to understand how LGBTQ+ and Ballroom scene members perceive and experience the way the series *Pose* portrays their life, this kind of analysis best fits this research.

When performing the thematic analysis, Boeije's (2012) three step coding model was used (See Appendix E). The first step is the open coding process. During this process, each transcript was segmented into smaller fragments and codes were assigned to each. Then, these open codes were compared to and merged with each other, resulting in axial codes. The final step in Boeije's (2012) three step coding model was to merge the axial codes together to form selective codes. These selective codes were used as themes, which helped lead to the results. Carrying out a thematic analysis was beneficial for this study, as it provided new emerging themes and patterns from the data, which helped in answering the research question (Boeije, 2012).

Ethics & Reliability

Considering that qualitative research is often considered to be subjective, it was important to implement methodological tools that ensured a high level of objectivity, credibility, and reliability of the results (Brennen, 2021). As explained in the study by Silverman (2013), objectivity and credibility of a study refers to the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the data and how persuasive, reasonable, and convincing it is. To maintain this, the theoretical framework was referred to throughout this study to compare past studies with the findings of this study. Doing so ensured that the process of gathering data and the data itself had some theoretical background to be supported by. Furthermore, to ensure reliability, it was important for this research to be free of external factors or circumstances that might have hindered the data collection process (Silverman, 2013). When approached to be interviewed for this study, respondents were given the option to come to the researcher's house or for the researcher to

come to them. Alternative options of meeting at a common place like a café or office were also given. Out of the 10 interviews, 3 were carried out at the interviewer's house, 5 at a café, and 2 at the dance school of the Ballroom members.

Moreover, to ensure that each participant was well informed, an email with some background information (See Appendix F) was sent prior to the interview, along with a consent form with further details (See Appendix G). In the consent form, participants had the option to choose if they wanted to remain anonymous during this study or if they preferred their name to be revealed. Also, respondents were made aware that the interview would be audio recorded for the purpose of gathering data for this research and were assured that the audio recording would be used solely for this study and not made public. Providing information prior to carrying out the interview was important to ensure transparency between the researcher and respondent. Although respondents received this information prior to the interview, each respondent was reminded of the formalities and were given some background information as the interview started. Throughout the interview, the act of passive listening was considered, this allowed interviewees to control the pace of the interview. Doing so provided the respondents some safety and comfort (Kvale, 1987).

Results

This research aims to understand and explore how members of the LGBTQ+ community and Ballroom scene are being represented in the media, specifically in series like Pose. The main research question is: **“How are members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Ballroom scene being represented in the series Pose and how do members of this community value and identify with these representations?”**

To describe the findings of this research, the following section will be divided into 4 parts, where the respondents' perspectives and experiences of the six visual probes will be described. The first part, an introduction to Ballroom, describes the respondents' experiences with the first visual probe which is an example of the deeming ceremony at a ball. Then, support within the queer community will be described in relation to visual probe 6. Following the topic of support, findings on sexual health and sex work will be described based on the respondents' experiences with visual probes 2 and 3. The two probes will be discussed together as they both relate to the topic of HIV and sexual health. The fourth and final part describes queer identity, as

the respondents shared what it meant to be queer in a heteronormative world. This part describes the respondents' experiences based on visual probes 4 and 5.

An Introduction to Ballroom

The first visual probe is a short clip of a deeming ceremony at a ball. Members of the Ballroom scene came together to witness one of the main characters, Blanca, be deemed by another main character, Elektra. Blanca was deemed mother of the year. All 10 respondents were shown this visual probe (for more information, see method section on page 22).

One of the initial findings was that all 10 respondents had been to at least one ball before, some respondents even mentioned that they had also walked balls before. Based on the interviews, it is clear members of the Ballroom scene are aware of what the deeming ceremony is, as they have personally witnessed it happen before or have heard stories about it happening. One of the respondents (Mystique Garçon) clearly explains that this ceremony does not happen so much in The Netherlands, or in Europe in general. The respondent explains that this is something that happened much more in the earlier years of Ballroom and mostly in the USA, where Ballroom originated from. The respondent, who has also been part of the Ballroom scene in The Netherlands since the early days of its existence, shared:

“That doesn't happen that often now, maybe it was something that happened and keeps happening more in the US... happens a bit more in I would say Paris than it does in Holland.. I feel like we are a bit more lowkey about it because some of the deeming happens more in house...about being a princess...for example during LSS they're coming out as a house princess of the Dutch chapter of Garçon...” (Mystique Garçon).

Similar to the visual probe where Blanca is deemed Mother of the Year, all 10 respondents made it clear that in Ballroom, members are able to gain different titles like 'pioneers', 'princess', 'legends', 'stars', and 'statements'. One of the respondents (Mystique Garçon) further explains that before each ball begins, there is a role call called 'LSS' where Legends, Statements, and Stars are being called out. This is done to show recognition and importance to members of the scene. Respondent, Mystique Garçon, further explains that one

receives the title of LSS if they have made a sensation, accomplished something big, contributed to the scene, or have been winning trophies. Although an extravagant deeming ceremony, like the one seen in the visual probe, does not occur so often anymore, the Ballroom community continues to give honorable titles to its members and give them their recognition, like how Elektra did for Blanca.

When discussing titles, 2 of the 10 respondents mentioned a Kiki scene and a Major scene. To understand this, both respondents made it clear that within Ballroom there are two different scenes. The two different scenes within Ballroom are not explained in the visual probes or in the show in general. It is unclear if this is a new element within Ballroom or if it existed when in the 80s, when Pose was staged. However, both respondents (Yamuna Forzani and Mystique Garçon) explained that the Kiki scene is for a more local and younger crowd. Respondent, Yamuna Forzani, specified that in the main or major scene, balls are taken more seriously and that the stakes are higher. The respondent proceeds to explain that at this kind of ball individuals battle others who are specialized in that specific category, whereas at a Kiki function, one has more fun. The respondent proceeds to explain:

“...the kiki scene is also people who are under 21 because some balls in the States you have to be over 21 to get in actually, because they are hosted in clubs and things like that. And in America the drinking age is over 21, so the kiki scene is really for the youth. 16+, sometimes 15, queer young kids who are sometimes homeless, getting kicked out...”
(Yamuna Forzani)

During the deeming ceremony in the first visual probe, the individuals attending the ball are dressed elegantly wearing shiny jewelry, dresses, and fancy shirts. The event almost looks formal, considering that a speech is given while deeming the individual as mother of the year and since everyone made the effort to dress elegantly. One of the 10 respondents (A.D.) confirmed that at balls people normally dress extravagantly, more than they would in their normal day-to-day life. Based on what the respondents shared, it is clear that the visual probe shown during this part of the interview is a clear representation of what happens at a ball or how a ball looks like. Individuals who would watch the series and who have never been to a ball may get an idea on how to dress and also understand the different titles that are given within Ballroom.

Support

As one of the respondents (Yamuna Forzani) mentioned, many young queer kids are sometimes homeless and get kicked out of their house due to their sexuality. Throughout Pose, an emphasis on housing and the house culture within Ballroom is shown. Visual probe 6 shows Blanca approaching a young boy on the street, who is seen to be dancing, and asks him if he wants to join her house. Blanca mentions that in her house she provides support for her kids and that the kids are responsible to get an education. After watching the visual probe, all respondents shared that when Ballroom first started, a lot of trans individuals and gay boys were being kicked out of their house by their blood families. These individuals then came together and created a house for themselves. In the first visual probe, we hear Elektra (the one giving the speech) address Blanca as her daughter. Among the participants, one (Father Elly Vineyard) explains that the houses are not blood family and although Elektra addresses Blanca as her daughter, she is not her blood daughter. To better explain the relationship that the individuals have with each other, the respondent shares:

“It is not her actual daughter...houses are the teams in which we compete in, but houses also create safe spaces for younger queer kids that have been put out, that have been abused, that are on the streets, for whatever reason that they may need a safe space.”
(Father Elly Vineyard)

In the visual probe, similar to what the respondent shares, , Blanca approaches a young boy who is dancing on the street. Blanca assumes that he needs a house and opens her doors to him. Since the show is staged in the 1980s, through the clips it is unclear if the housing system exists today. All 10 respondents shared that the way Pose shows the housing system is true to its time, meaning that this is how houses were formed in the 1980s. However, all respondents shared that this is not how it usually happens today. Father Elly Vineyard, who is the father of the first Dutch Ballroom House in The Netherlands explains:

“...Ballroom keeps evolving and the world keeps evolving, we are way more privileged now than we were then. Yes there are situations where they are put out and all of that,

that's another experience, but I like to think that we are more privileged now so that does not happen as often as before and now these houses are more constructed out of great contingents, friend bonds, so it's still family but it's not as, how can I say, as deep as it was back then, but family is the base of a house..." (Father Elly Vineyard)

The respondent makes it clear that there have been advancements in the way that gay men and trans people are being treated, accepted, and respected by their own families. In Pose, it can be seen that many members of a house were once homeless, resulting in an urgency for shelter and community. Although this is still the case for some individuals, the respondent makes it clear that houses these days mostly focus on talent and friendships. Family bond is still an important element within the houses but needing to live together under one roof is not as much of an issue in today's times. In fact, one of the 10 respondents (Mystique Garçon) shares that, members of a house do not live together anymore, it is sometimes the case that some of them are roommates by chance, but members of a house do not purposively look to live together. However, the respondent shares that in the visual probe it is obvious that members of the LGBTQ+ community had no choice in the 1980s but to find a way to live together. Upon watching visual probe 6, it was made clear that all respondents understood the history and importance of the housing system. The respondents shared that the way that Pose shows how houses were formed was accurate.

Out of the 10 respondents, 5 are part of a house and the other 5 are not. One of the respondents (A.D.), who is not part of a house, shared that when one is not part of the house, they are considered to be a double o seven '007', meaning that they stand alone. Considering that the housing system in the 1980s was based on an urgency for shelter and community, all the main characters were part of a house. Thus, the introduction of a 007 was not made in the series.

All respondents shared that there are different ways to join a house in today's times but one of the ways is how the visual probe shows, where a house mother or father personally approaches someone who they believe would be a good match to their house.

Considering that one of the respondents was a house father, it was interesting to understand the basis as to how they recruit individuals to join a house. The respondent shares:

“...We take our position in the scene very seriously and that is number 1 because we are the first house, we have a lot to live up to, so it ain’t for everybody, you know what I mean? We are actually one of the smallest houses but you know a Vineyard when you see one.”
(Father Elly Vineyard)

By knowing a Vineyard, the respondent implies that the members of the house, in this case the House of Vineyard, knows a potential member when they see one. Through this, it is evident that there is a selection process when recruiting individuals to join the house. It can be said that the house leaders carefully consider who joins and who does not.

One respondent (A.D.) shares that there is no set rule as to how one joins a house, the respondent shares that the house parent usually just approaches someone. While another respondent (T.V.) shares a different perspective. The respondent mentions that although sometimes it happens naturally due to a bond, often individuals are upfront and just ask to join a house. Furthermore, the respondent shares that in the USA it is often negotiated. As Father Elly Vineyard explained that houses look for talent, respondent T.V. shared that the negotiation made in the USA is that individuals ask houses how the house sees them in their house and what the house can provide for that individual. Also, houses may ask those same individuals how they can provide for or benefit the house. It is clear that the housing system is very different now than what is shown in the visual probe. Houses in Pose and in the 1980s focused strongly on providing shelter and support for each other, while also competing in balls together. Whereas in today’s time, the houses focus mostly on talent and competing at balls. The respondents do make it clear that although the houses focus on talent, it is vital for these houses to still have a family bond. When talking about family bond, support plays an important role in a house.

In the visual probe, Blanca emphasizes on providing the house members with support. One of the respondents (Mystique Garçon) explains that this support is still an important part of houses. The respondent proceeds to explain that this support comes in the forms of presence, in other words, being there for each other physically. Another respondent (S.A.) shares that an important part of support that he gets from his house is when he goes to get tested for STDs or HIV.

Sexual Health & Sex Work

Sexual health, specifically a focus on HIV, is very prominent in the Netflix series Pose. One of the 10 respondents explained the history and importance of HIV within the Ballroom community. The respondent (Father Elly Vineyard) explains that Pose was staged in the 80s and early 90s and this is when the AIDs epidemic was on the rise in the Black and Brown queer community in New York. The respondent shared that it was very stigmatized that AIDs was something coming from that community. Since the Ballroom community is made up of members of the LGBTQ+ community, the respondent shared that it was a big thing within Ballroom itself.

Two of the 6 visual probes (visual probes 2 and 3) show an example of a Black trans woman going to a clinic to get tested for HIV. In both probes both patients have tested positive for HIV. (for more information, check method section page 22). Visual probe 2 is of a scene from season 1 and visual probe 3 is a scene from season 3. One major difference that the respondents have mentioned between both scenes is that Blanca, who was the patient in visual probe 2, is now the nurse in visual probe 3. The respondents make it clear that Blanca being the nurse is very important. To understand this importance, Father Elly Vineyard shares:

“It obviously makes a difference when you see someone else like you that’s in a position to help you actually and it creates some sort of comfort, that’s where representation is super important, once you- it feels better when you see someone like you and they understand you, so it doesn’t feel strange, it doesn’t feel unknown. This isn’t just for this situation, it is for in general you know cause you’re like okay I am not the only one and someone like me, that understands me, gets it.” (Father Elly Vineyard)

Based on the respondent’s experiences, it is clear that for members of the Ballroom and LGBTQ+ community, receiving help from someone from their community who relates to their issues is more effective than receiving help from someone who does not relate to them. The nurse in visual probe 2 is a cis gendered straight white woman who does not relate to Blanca, the patient at the time. Whereas in visual probe 3, Blanca is a transgender Black woman who is HIV+, thus through her personal experiences, she is able to help other members of the LGBTQ+ community who have tested positive for HIV.

While 3 out of the 10 respondents explicitly mention that they had sexual education in high school, 2 of the 3 make it clear that the sexual education from school did not help in understanding their personal or queer sexual health. One of the respondents (Yamuna Forzani) mentioned that she learned about queer sexual health through porn and through sexually engaging with other queer individuals. Interestingly, another respondent (A.D.) mentioned that he learned a lot about gay sexual health through a gay dating app ‘Grindr’. The respondent shared that he had seen the words “Positive Undetectable” in a user’s bio on the application and then decided to research what it meant. From his research, he learned that being Positive Undetectable meant being HIV+ with a very low viral load, the load is so low that HIV is not transmittable from these individuals. The respondent proceeded to share that to protect himself from HIV he used to take Prep, a medication used to prevent contracting HIV. The respondent shared that he learned about this medication through the local health clinic, GGD.

In visual probe 3, Blanca informs her patient that she can take medications to reduce her viral load. This is the same process described by the respondent, where an individual who has HIV can be undetectable. Thus, through watching Pose, individuals are able to learn about the history of HIV and also ways to prevent and live with it. To support this, another respondent (N.R) shares that Pose helped provide a historic point of view of HIV in the LGBTQ+ community. The respondent shares that it was important that Pose did this, as other shows ignorantly discuss HIV or do not pay enough attention to it. N.R shared that in the media HIV is most often stigmatized as a gay disease, thus openly sharing the history of HIV and how it affected the community helps in understanding the virus better.

In addition to sexual health, sex work is something often seen in the series. In visual probe 3, Blanca asks her patient if she works at the piers. Five out of the 10 respondents share that working the piers refers to sex work. One of the five respondents (Mystique Garçon) further explains that Black and Brown trans women faced difficulties finding a job back when Pose was staged. The respondent mentioned that many sex workers back then did not even have a home. The respondent further shares:

“...when you don’t have access to homes sometimes you have to live in a hotel or find any landlord that would rent you a place and that would mostly be perhaps more expensive than for you know those general part of the population like white cis people

would not face the same hardships to finding normal priced and safe housing.” (Mystique Garçon)

By working at the piers, as mentioned in the visual probe, sex workers would wait to get picked up by men. This was a common place for sex workers to be at and for men to meet them. Apart from doing sex work as a means to afford basic needs, the respondent (Mystique Garçon) shared that a lot of people turned to sex work as they would face less violence doing that kind of work. The respondent further explained that doing jobs other than sex work was dangerous for trans women, as they would be threatened by cis gendered individuals. So not only was working at the pier a way for trans women in the 1980s to make money, but also a way to ensure their safety from cis gendered working professionals.

In the visual probe, Blanca mentions that there were once 6 piers but there are now only 1. Considering that the series was staged in the 1980s, the respondents shared that working at a pier was not something common now, at least to their knowledge. Two of the 5 respondents, (S.A. & Mystique Garçon) shared that sex work is still common in today’s time but through different mediums and with different intentions. For example, a respondent (S.A.) shared that there are social media platforms like ‘OnlyFans’ where sex workers are able to upload their personal content for a fee instead of waiting for a man at the piers. When it comes to intention, another respondent (Mystique Garçon) shared that not all sex workers do this job solely to provide shelter for themselves, as they did in Pose. The respondent shares that in today’s times, sex work is more accepted, and some individuals do sex work because they like to.

By openly talking about HIV and sharing its history, Pose helps the audience learn the impact that HIV has had on the Ballroom community. In both visual probes (2 and 3), it can be seen that individuals are often nervous when going to find out their HIV test results. Two of the 10 respondents openly shared their experiences with both going to get tested for STDs and HIV and being there for others when they are getting tested. One of those two respondents (Mystique Garçon) shares that as a house members have a WhatsApp group chat to stay connected. The respondent further shares how the house she is part of supports their members when getting tested:

“...we discuss all those topics within the family, in group chats. It is very common that people ask questions about prep and other things and now we are lucky that there are

cures that are very efficient so it is still possible to live even when contracting and being positive, back then, it was less of a guarantee at all because a lot of people were dying. For me it feels like external violence has become our HIV, like the social threat and dangers that we meet outside, especially when presenting very differently than cisgendered people. So it is still a question that is present but I am grateful that we are informed and get to inform people, different resources and places to go to, we also casually talk about moments where we go and get tested. When we go get tested we are like hey I went to the GGD, or I am getting my results tomorrow and people are like yes you will be alright so there is also mental support when you think hey maybe I fucked up and have a doubt. So, I know my family has my back and I will be fine.” (Mystique Garçon)

Similarly, the other respondent from the two (S.A) shares that he learned about STDs and the procedure to test through his house. Based on these findings, it is clear that HIV is not stigmatized within the community and members part of the community openly and actively discuss sexual health topics.

Queer Identity

The following part of the research focuses on the respondent’s experiences with visual probes 4 and 5. Visual probe 4 was a scene from season 2 of Pose where Elektra and her friends face transphobia at a diner. Similarly, visual probe 5 is from the most recent season of Pose, season 3, and is a scene where Elektra, Blanca, and their friends face transphobia at a boutique (for more information, see method paragraph page 24).

One of the respondents (A.D.) even mentioned that visual probe 4 was a famous scene and was being circulated all over social media. The reason for this was because of how strongly Elektra stood up for herself and her friends against a transphobic woman. A clip like this may be inspiring to those who may still face transphobia. Considering that these two visual probes were based on situations from the 1980s, it was interesting to understand if members of the LGBTQ+ community still face discrimination, specifically transgender women.

Out of the 10 respondents, one identified as trans, specifically a transman. Thus, it was difficult to get the perspective from a transwoman and their experiences with transphobia. However, one of the respondents (Yuri Bhageloe) shared an experience of one of his friends. The respondent mentioned that a few weeks before the interview (around mid-April), one of his friends who identifies as a transwoman, was beaten outside of a club by a cisgendered man. This was because the man found out that she was trans. This incident happened in The Netherlands, specifically Rotterdam. The incident proves that transphobia still exists in today's time and is not just something that happened on Pose.

Transphobia is not only done by physically abusing a transgender individual. One of the respondents (Yamuna Forzani) shared that quite often she notices that her trans friends are treated differently and not given the same respect as cis gendered women. The respondent mentions:

“trans women, are extremely fetishized and you have “chasers” who are cis men who are you know who would be like sometimes harassing fem queens or trans women to sleep with them but they don’t want to take them out on dates or be seen with them or actually you know date them like they would date a “cis woman” which I think is dehumanizing and we need yeah we need to see more positive representation of love between, in the queer community in itself.” (Yamuna Forzani)

Some of the respondents, including Yamuna, refer to trans women as fem queens. Another respondent (A.D.) shares that fem queen is Ballroom terminology for a transgender woman. To further elaborate on this, a respondent (Father Elly Vineyard) shares that Ballroom celebrates everyone with a focus on celebrating transwomen as queens, as they are the ones who started the Ballroom scene. The respondent makes it clear that:

“...whatever or whenever the world says no, ballroom says yes ... ballroom is a place where there is no exclusion, everyone is invited, everyone is included, everyone is celebrated, the least celebrated, which is the black trans women, are the queens of ballroom...” (Father Elly Vineyard)

In visual probe 5, Blanca, Elektra, and her friends go to a boutique to buy a wedding dress. Blanca, Elektra, and their friends are all transgender women and are buying a wedding dress because one of them is getting married to a cis gendered man. Towards the end of the season, the bride, Angel, marries Papi, the cis gendered man. As one of the respondents (Yamuna Forzani) mentioned earlier, more positive representation of love in the queer community is needed. The respondent shares her appreciation for the representation of Angel and Papi's wedding. The respondent further shares:

"I think a beautiful story line is Angel and Papi to show the love between a cis man and a trans woman, and that it really is not fetishized because that is also touched upon in season 1, where Angel falls in love with a guy in the city and he kinda wants to keep her a secret and sort of like fetishizing her." (Yamuna Forzani)

Based on the findings from the respondent's view on the probes and the series, it is clear that Pose shows the difference between a transgender woman being fetishized, as well as a transgender woman finding love without being fetishized. As the respondent mentioned earlier, she has witnessed her friends being fetishized before, thus relating to Pose. However, being exposed to the idea that transgender women can find love gives members of the community some hope and motivation.

Although these two probes show experiences of transgender individuals, it only focuses on transgender women. The one respondent who identifies as a transgender man, James, shares that it would be valuable to show that trans men were very present in the Ballroom community in the 1980s and an understanding of their experiences on how they started to get hormones for example would have been greatly appreciated. This shows how valuable representation is to each member of the LGBTQ+ and Ballroom community.

Discussion & Conclusion

The aim of this research was to understand and explore how members of the LGBTQ+ and Ballroom community are being represented in the Netflix series Pose and how these individuals value and identify with these representations. Based on the findings, it is clear that the series Pose describes the history of Ballroom and showcases struggles, stigmas, and the

culture of the community, especially in the 1980s. However, what the show misses is the specifics as to the elements of a ball and what Ballroom means to people today. It must be noted that Pose is staged in the 1980s, and although the culture is respected and many traditions are still being followed within the community, there have been some changes and developments. A prime example of this is the housing system as described by the respondents. Members part of one house do not necessarily live together anymore and the way houses are formed now is not the same as Pose describes. Considering that there have been some changes and developments within the community, members still appreciate the series and the history that the series focuses on. Not only does Pose focus on the housing system but also on sexual health, the stigmatization of HIV, sex work, and transphobia and discrimination. These are all topics that the respondents value.

All respondents in this research made it clear that they were familiar with the series, some finished watching the entire series, while others watched parts of it. This shows that the individuals are curious about the series and appreciate the fact that there are series about their culture on television and in the media in general. The respondents make it clear that Pose is definitely helpful in learning a bit about Ballroom, especially on the history. As Singhal and Rogers (2012) explain, the purpose of entertainment-education is to bring social change. Through being exposed to series like Pose, the audience may gain a deeper understanding of trans lives and by being more exposed to how these individuals survived in society, individuals may be more sympathetic, bringing social change and awareness.

Furthermore, the respondents' experiences relate to Bouman's (1999) explanation of parasocial interactions, where distant intimacy is brought through soaps and drama series. To explain this better, parasocial interactions refer to the similarities between broadcast and face-to-face talk. Topics concerning sexual health in the series Pose were sensitive to some respondents, leading them to have conversations with their peers. For example, one of the 10 respondents made it clear that after being exposed to the series, they spoke more openly about testing for STDs and HIV with their peers.

To understand if watching the series Pose was sufficient to understanding Ballroom and the experiences of members part of Ballroom, the respondents were questioned on what individuals could do to learn about the culture. Almost all respondents made it clear that watching Pose is not enough. Instead, these individuals suggested also watching other

documentaries like “Paris is Burning”. One respondent (Father Elly Vineyard) made it very clear that to understand Ballroom, it is important to immerse yourself into the culture, read different articles, and watch multiple documentaries. Also, another way about learning more about the culture, as described by the respondent, is to personally contact individuals who are part of the scene itself to learn more about the culture and history. Similar to the respondent’s suggestion, in the book by Tucker (2021), the author interviewed several members of the Ballroom scene and shared their experiences. Considering that Black and Brown Trans women started the Ballroom scene, Tucker (2021) suggests that if these women reported on the culture, more personal knowledge would be shared. This would result in a better understanding of the culture and the history. Thus, as much as the community values the series Pose, it is clear that the series is not the only medium for understanding these individuals.

Theoretical & Social Implications

This present research presents the entertainment-education strategy in television series, specifically Pose. Through interviews with members of the Dutch Ballroom Scene, an understanding is gained of how members who are part of the community are being represented in the series and how they value and identify with these representations. Previous studies have explored; homosexuality in Netflix series (Al-Husseini, 2022), Queer theory (Abes & Kasch, 2007), how members of the Ballroom community supported members on the topic of HIV/AIDs (Arnold & Bailey, 2009), and the history of the Ballroom scene (Lawrence, 2011). However, little attention has been given to how members of the Ballroom and LGBTQ+ community are being represented in series and how they identify with these representations. Thus, this current research provides data and insights to understand these representations. Overall, this research may help in understanding queer representation in the media. Since this study focuses explicitly on the Dutch Ballroom Scene, the method to gaining the data in this research can be used to understand how different Ballroom communities around the world identify with how the media represents them.

Limitations and Suggestions for further research

While answering the research question, some limitations were faced. First and foremost, one of the inclusion criteria for the respondents in this study was that the respondents were from the Dutch Ballroom Scene. During the interview phase, members of the scene were busy organizing balls, traveling, and taking part in balls. Thus, it was a bit challenging to recruit individuals to be part of this research and carry out the interviews in the aimed time frame. Furthermore, a majority of the interviewees were of a Dutch background, and because the interviews were carried out in English and the visual probes were also in English, some nuances could have been missed. Since only members of the Dutch Ballroom community were interviewed, the results cannot be generalized to the communities all over the world. There may be some similarities between the Dutch Ballroom community and other communities, but the results might not be entirely the same. Additionally, while gathering the visual probes from Netflix, the streaming service removed the show from its platform. The process of gathering probes was then delayed, as third-party sites were being searched for.

With the limitations mentioned above, suggestions for further research are presented in the following section. First and foremost, it has repeatedly been mentioned that the Ballroom community was started by Black and Brown transwomen in New York, thus an interesting perspective would be to interview individuals part of the Ballroom Community in New York. Doing so might reveal new perspectives for this research. Another suggestion is to interview experts in the field themselves, for example movie and series producers, directors, or the cast of Pose. Also, because Pose is about LGBTQ+ individuals and an emphasis is made on the fact that these individuals are part of a minority group, it would be interesting to understand how majority groups, like cis gendered straight white people, understand the series. Through interviewing the different sample groups mentioned, new perspectives on the topic may be gained.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Guide

“How are members of the LGBTQ+ community and the Ballroom scene being represented in the series Pose and how do members of this community value and identify with these representations?”

1. Ballroom and its culture

- a. Explanation of Ballroom
- b. Integration into Ballroom
- c. VP 1 (awards, outfits, what does she mean by her daughter)

2. Entertainment-education strategy (sexual Health)

- a. Pose & education about HIV
 - i. VP 2 (the process of finding out you have HIV, one of the first episodes)
 - ii. VP 3 (in the last season they talk about developments and ways to live with HIV, how true is this, how are those developments in today's time)

3. Queer theory and identity

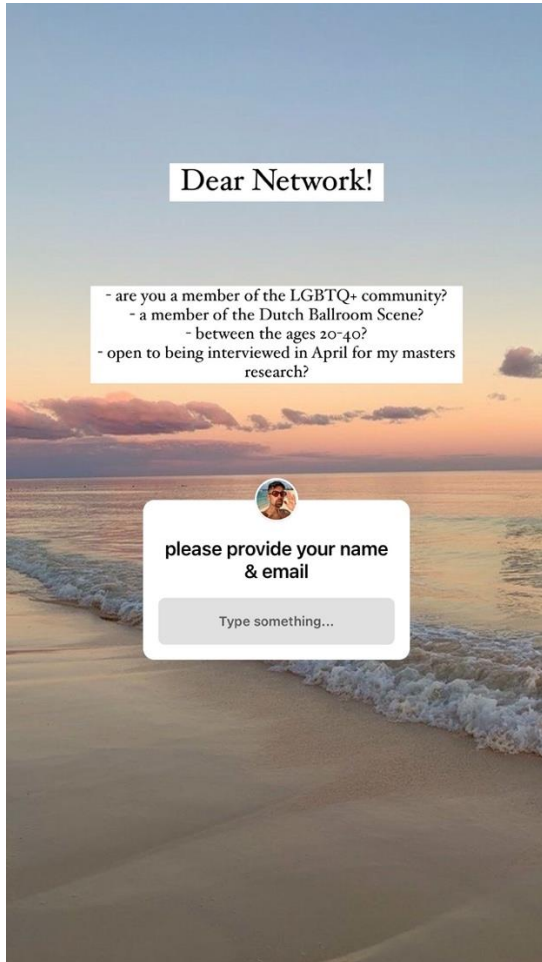
- a. What does it mean to be queer in today's time?
- b. VP 4 (all BIPOC, white, superiority is this common, does stuff like this still happen in today's time)
- c. VP 5 (different treatment in boutique)

4. Subcultures

- a. What is culture like?
- b. VP 6 (creating a support system, what's this support like and what is the support needed for, “i cant go in there im not like them, what does that mean, what's some differences from the subculture to the normal world, why is this subculture needed)

Appendix B

Instagram Story



Appendix C

Overview of respondents

Respondent #	Name/Abbreviation	Pronouns
1	T.V.	He/him/they/she
2	S.A.	He/she/they
3	Yuri Bhageloe	He/him
4	Father Elly Vineyard	He/him
5	A.B.	She/her
6	James Parnell	He/him
7	N.R.	He/she/they
8	A.D.	He/him
9	Yamuna Forzani	She/her
10	Mystique Garçon	She/her

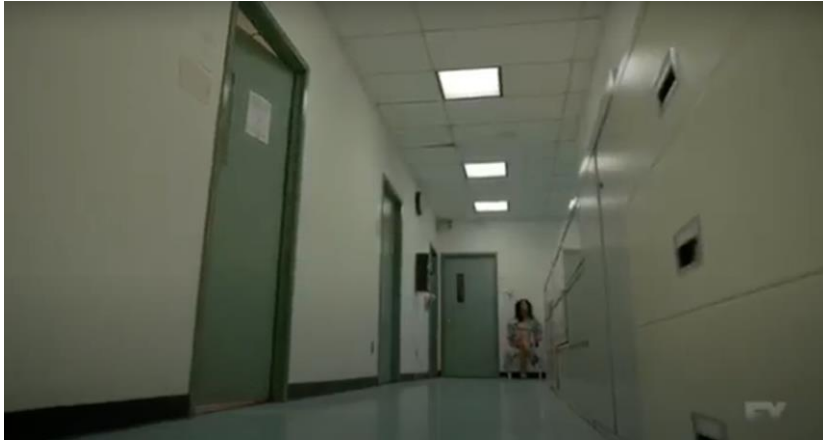
Appendix D

Screenshots of Visual Probes

VP_1:



VP_2:



VP_3:



VP_4:



VP_5:



VP_6:



Appendix E
Coding Tree

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes / Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deeming • Legends, Icons • Racism, Transphobia • Unacceptance by family • Categories • Kiki and Major scenes • Attending balls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of a ball • Family like/house structures 	<p>An introduction to Ballroom</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing back then vs. now • Forms of support • Housing • Education • Discovering Ballroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding out about Ballroom • How houses provide support for each other • How one joins a house 	<p>Support</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working at piers • Sex work • HIV testing • Nurse vs. patient relation • Stigmatization “A Gay Disease” • Personal experiences, role of Porn and Grindr 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Sex Work • How to get tested for HIV • Why getting tested is important • Discussing the process of testing within houses • Importance of having people who relate to you (nurse) 	<p>Sexual Health and Sex Work</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position in the community; white people in Black and Brown spaces • Witnessing vs. experiencing transphobia • Terminology, Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being queer in a heteronormative world • Transphobia in Pose vs. personal experiences • Fem Queens 	<p>Queer Identity</p>

Appendix F

Example Email

Dear _____,

I hope that this email finds you well!

Thank you for your interest in participating in my Master's Research. I am a Media Studies Master student at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and I am currently completing my thesis on LGBTQ+ and Ballroom representation in the media, specifically in TV series like Pose.

I am reaching out to you as I would like to interview you to gather data to help complete my research. The interview will focus on your experiences on being part of the LGBTQ+/Ballroom Community, as well as, on Ballroom representation in the media.

The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. With your permission, the interview will be voice recorded for the purpose of accurately describing the results, however, will not be made public. For more details, please find attached the consent form.

Please find below a link to some visual probes that will be used during the interview, it would be appreciated if you are able to watch them before the interview. They will be played during the interview as well. Also, please kindly sign the consent form before the interview. You can do this digitally and email it back.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1m9yGnjg1sOi48UFIAScX4yC3GbWdJKeT?usp=sharing>

As discussed, I will be meeting you on ___ at ___ at _____. I look forward to our meeting.

If you have any questions, feel free to message me!

Kind regards,
Rahul Sharma
Student number: 495297

Appendix G

Consent Form

Consent request for participating in Master's Thesis Research

Principal investigator qualitative research, Rahul Sharma.
Erasmus University Rotterdam, Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, 3062 PA Rotterdam.
495297rs@eur.nl

Description:

You are invited to participate in a research about Entertainment Education. The purpose of this study is to understand Ballroom and LGBTQIA+ representation in the media, specifically in TV series like POSE. This research will collect the experiences of Ballroom members part of the Dutch Ballroom Community in their daily lives and within the community itself.

By accepting to participate in this study, you accept to be interviewed. The interview questions will be related to the Ballroom scene. During the interview, an audio recording will be made but will be kept private and used solely for the sake of this research. You are always welcome to not answer any question, and/or stop participating in the interview at any point.

Risk & Benefits:

To my knowledge, there are no risks involved in participating in this research. You have the liberty to decide if I should use your name in this study. If not, I will take the responsibility to ensure that you cannot be identified by using pseudonyms.

Time Involvement:

Your interview participation in this study will take 45-60 minutes. You may interrupt your participation at any time.

Payments:

There will be no monetary compensation for your participation.

Participants' Right:

If you have decided to accept to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. You have the right to refuse to answer specific questions. If you prefer, your identity will be made known in all written data resulting from the study. Otherwise, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

Contacts & Questions:

