A Queer Resource for Inclusive Interaction Design

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Contents

1. Introduction

LGBTQIA+ people are a highly marginalized population in the current political climate and often experience discrimination under digital systems that erase them, infringe on their safety and facilitate harassment without consequences. Such violent tendencies are also prevalent in many online applications, such as websites and mobile applications. This resource was created as a way to start conversations about how designers can move forward in creating applications that are inclusive, supportive, and relevant to LGBTQIA+ people.

How Was This Resource Developed?

This resource was created as part of a master's thesis[1] that explored which criteria need to be addressed for LGBTQIA+ people to feel included and able to use online applications. The content of this resource is based on interviews with a sample of community members and literature on the subject. The content of the resource has also been evaluated by three experts within queer Human-computer interaction and queer theory. More information on the Resource's foundation can be found within the aforementioned thesis.

Who Is This Resource For?

This resource is primarily developed for interaction designers involved in developing online applications, including web and mobile applications. It provides insights into features and considerations across various phases of the development lifecycle, as well as post-deployment. However, the resource is also valuable for other team members, such as developers and leadership, as many issues outlined are not solely the responsibility of the design team. The principles presented are intended to be applicable to all Internet applications targeting general audiences, not just those specifically aimed at LGBTQIA+ users.

How to Use This Resource

The resource is structured into two parts. Part 1 outlines the conceptual foundation and essential terminology, which is needed to engage with Part 2, where rules of thumb, guidelines and concerns are presented that can help in developing inclusive apps and websites. For a first-time reader, it is advised to read the resource from beginning to end. This will result in the most informed outlook. Readers who are revisiting the resource may use the tables of content found in Part 1 and 2 to reread specific sections.

Disclaimer and Limitations

By the nature of the subject matter the resource will always be incomplete. It is encouraged for readers to use their own knowledge to build on what is discussed within it, by either adding their own guidelines or adjusting the guidelines in light of new research or findings. As stated, the resource is meant to facilitate conversations and was not created to serve as a blueprint for all future Internet applications. It should also not be viewed as a substitute for queer expertize or diversity within the design team. See the end of the booklet for info on other resources that go into how a company can update their practices to be more inclusive.

These guidelines have predominantly been developed from a western perspective, with the study conducted in Norway and relying largely on literature from Europe and the US. As a result, it is advisable to exercise caution when applying this resource in contexts related to non-Western countries. The perspectives contained in this resource are not universally applicable to all cultures or even to all individuals within Western cultures.

Finally, LGBTQIA+ people represent a diverse array of experiences and perspectives, and there are varying opinions within the community regarding the representation and exploration of queerness. This resource adopts a categorical approach in how it differentiates between different gender identities and orientations, reflecting the preference of many to use labels to describe their identities. The labels queer people adopt and use are a product of their times, resulting in labels often falling out of style and taking on derogatory meanings for some. Likewise, some labels that gain popularity originated as slurs, becoming reclaimed slurs of younger generations. It is a known tension that older community members often prefer other labels to younger members, and both perspectives should be respected. This booklet has striven to represent queerness by adopting current terms and attitudes. These will eventually also become outdated and ineffective in representing the future of queer inclusion. It is therefore crucial that the contents of this booklet is seen as a product that reflects the experiences of queer people in 2025 and that revisions must be made to it for it to continue to stay relevant.

Part One: Laying the Groundwork

2. Terminology

This chapter introduces key terms commonly used by LGBTQIA+ individuals to articulate their identities and experiences, as well as essential terminology related to discrimination. Although not comprehensive, it is designed to serve as a starting point for engaging with this resource. The main sources used are this section were the glossary lists hosted by Stonewall[2], The Safe Zone Project[3] and the LGBTQIA+ Resource Center[4]. The community driven LGBTQIA+ Wiki[5] hosted by Fandom was also used for additional examples and cross-references.

2.1 Asexuality and Compulsory Sexuality

An asexual person is someone who experience none or little sexual attraction, or have none or little interest in pursuing sexual relationships. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexual people who experience romantic attraction might also use other labels in conjunction with "asexual" to describe the direction of their romantic attraction. People who do not experience romantic attraction are defined as aromantic. Both asexuality or aromanticism exist on a continuum with some experiencing it more persistently while others experience sexual or romantic attraction in certain circumstances.

Asexual people are often faced with discrimination due to the norm of "compulsory sexuality" which can be described as the attitude that not experiencing sexual attraction is abnormal or by expecting that everyone are sexual beings by default [6].

2.2 Binary and non-binary People

A binary person is a person who identifies as either a male or female. Both cis- and transpeople can be binary people. non-binary people are people who identify as neither male nor female. They may identify with a third gender, several genders or with no gender at all. The word "non-binary" is often used as an umbrella term to encompass all gender identities that are not male or female. Some examples of non-binary gender identities are agender, genderfluid and two-gender. non-binary people often discuss their identities in relation to male and female, but will make use of the analogy of the spectrum to illustrate how their gender falls outside of the binary. Some non-binary people also identify as transgender, while others do not. Similarly, some non-binary people seek gender affirming treatments or surgeries while others do not. non-binary people are nevertheless widely accepted to belong under the same umbrella as transpeople.

2.3 Bisexual and Pansexual

Bisexuality can be defined as attraction to some men and women or as attraction to people of one's own gender and other genders/an other gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split, or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to. Pansexuality is commonly conflated with bisexuality. It is sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. It can also refers to a person whose attraction towards others doesn't regard sex or gender.

2.4 cisgender and Transgender

Cisgender individuals are those who identify with the gender assigned to them at birth. In contrast, transgender people do not identify with their birth-assigned gender, and the process of realizing this varies widely among individuals. Some become aware of their gender identity early in life, while others may recognize it in adulthood. Transgender individuals may pursue gender-affirming treatments, such as hormone replacement therapy and surgeries, although not everyone chooses this path due to factors like discrimination in healthcare, financial constraints, safety concerns, or because they simply do not experience body-related gender dysphoria. Many transgender people opt to change their name, either legally or informally, and will often alter their legal gender marker.

2.5 Deadname

A deadname is the name that a transperson or non-binary person was given at birth which they since have abandoned in favor of a new name that aligns with their gender identity. The term deadname comes from the need many transpeople have of leaving their past identity behind in favor of a new one. Deadnames are often a source of stress for transpeople and are often used to shame, harass and to out them. When a person uses someone's deadname to refer to them, whether it is accidental or deliberate, it is called "deadnaming". Not all transpeople have deadnames and cisgender people who go through name changes are generally not seen as having deadnames.

2.6 Direct- and Indirect Discrimination

Direct discrimination is the explicit exclusion or harassment of people based on their innate attributes or factors they cannot control, such as race, gender, sexuality, religion or ability. This is what most people think of when they think about discrimination.
Indirect discrimination is a type of exclusion that does not explicitly target the people who are affected by it, but nevertheless results in them being excluded or victimized. This is often unintended and a result of oversight or a result of people being willfully ignorant.

2.7 Dysphoria

"Dysphoria" is a typical term to describe "gender dysphoria", which is a phenomenon often categorized as when a person feels a visceral wrongness associated with their own body in relation to their gender. To many gender dysphoria manifests as them feeling deep disgust, anxiety, shame or detachment from the parts of their body which are misaligned with their gender identity. It can also stem from restrictive gender norms and how they are treated by their communities. While the term is commonly associated with transpeople, it is not exclusive to this demographic and not all transpeople experience dysphoria. Some people treat their dysphoria by seeking gender-affirming treatments and/or surgeries. Some believe that dysphoria should be a criteria for being trans, but this view is generally seen as exclusionary to transpeople who do not experience it, as well as pathologizing transpeople as a group.

2.8 Epistemic Injustice

The term refers to how certain groups are often silences or misrepresented in knowledge. Marginilized groups are often not treated as credible sources for their own experiences, leading to their experience not being validated or treated as real issues. Epistemic injustice also lead to certain topics not being circulated, which in turn lead to people not having the references needed to make sense of their feelings or to recognize when they are affected by injustices. An example of epistemic injustice is how homosexuality has historically been categorized as perversion or a mental illness, resulting in people having a warped understanding of this orientation [7]. Epistemic injustice is a prevailing issue that is apparent in how queer identities are discussed and how queer people and other minorities are treated by individuals and institutions.

2.9 Heteronormative and Comphet

Heteronormative refers to the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual or that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Examples include assuming that a married woman has a husband or when queer displays of affection are labeled as less appropriate than similar heterosexual behaviors. Heteronormativity also leads to assumptions that only masculine men and feminine women are straight. "Comphet" is a shorthand used to describe "compulsory heterosexuality," which is closely related to heteronormativity. It is an attitude that can be held by both non-queer and queer people, which places heterosexuality as an encouraged and desired orientation or disproportionally treats other orientations as abnormal or undesirable [8].

2.10 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a theory of how multiple systems of oppression interact in the lives of those with multiple marginalized identities. Intersectionality is a useful concept to see how intersections of marginalized identities result in unique forms of discrimination. For instance, A person of color who is queer will experience discrimination that people who are white and queer or people of color who are straight do not experience[9].

2.11 Intersex

The term "intersex" refers to people who possess biological attributes of both male and female sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit societal or medical assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Intersex people may identify as male, female, non-binary or otherwise. Transpeople and intersex people are sometimes confused and while intersex people can identify as trans (just like people who are not intersex) the two identities are not the same.

2.12 Labels

Labels serve as identifiers that describe individuals' identities concerning their sexuality and gender identity. Examples of common labels include heterosexual, cisgender, homosexual, and transgender. Labels can be broad or highly specific. Specific labels are sometimes called "microlabels" as they go into detail about a person's identity beyond the broader categories.
It is important to not confuse labels with pronouns. Pronouns refer to how a person wishes to be addressed, whereas labels categorically describe aspects of their gender or sexuality.

2.13 Lesbian/sapphic and Gay

People who identify as lesbian or gay experience solely, or primarily attraction to people of their own gender. "Lesbian" is a term exclusionary to women who love women, while "gay" is commonly used by people of all genders.

Some prefer the term "sapphic" over "lesbian". This term is in most ways similar to "lesbian" in its meaning, but includes people who are not women but possess feminine or woman-aligned identities.

2.14 LGBTQIA+

The acronym stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual. The plus signals the inclusion of other identities that are not specifically mentioned. Other common versions include LBGTQ, LGBTI and LGBT, although these are by some viewed as less inclusive.

2.15 Male/Female and Man/Woman

Cisgender and heterosexual people often associate the terms "Male/Female" with either the gender assigned at birth or the current physiological characteristics. For transgender people, defining sex based on birth sex or physiology can lead to discrimination and structural violence, as these criteria often disregard lived experience and changes from hormone replacement therapy or surgeries, instead favoring immutable factors like assumptions about sex chromosomes. Generally, most trans women identify as female, most trans men identify as male, and most non-binary individuals prefer not to be labeled as male or female.

The terms "men" and "women" are applicable to both cisgender and transgender individuals, as many transgender people identify with these labels just as cisgender people do. It is discriminatory to expect transgender individuals to consistently use the prefix "trans" when describing their gender identity. In this resource, as in other contexts, the terms "men" and "women" encompass cisgender and transgender individuals, unless a specific prefix is used to indicate otherwise.

2.16 Microaggression

Microaggressions are subtle forms of discrimination, whether intentional or not, that are not overtly aggressive or threatening but are offensive and discriminatory to individuals from marginalized communities. Microaggressions are often comments, questions, or actions that come across as dehumanizing or othering. It can also be ignoring, dismissing, or scrutinizing someone due to their minority status. Perceptions of what constitutes a microaggression can vary significantly from person to person. Microaggressions are an issue because the offending party often view them as trivial and do not realize that people from marginalized communities endure such treatment on a highly frequent basis.

2.17 Misgendering

Misgendering refers to the act of addressing someone using incorrect gender identifiers, such as the wrong pronoun, title, or other descriptors that inaccurately reflect their gender identity. While misgendering can occur with both cisgender and transgender individuals, transgender people often experience it more viscerally. The appropriate response after misgendering someone is to apologize, correct the mistake, and continue the conversation respectfully by using the correct identifier going forward.

2.18 Outing

"Outing," or "to out someone," refers to the act of revealing an individual's LGBTQIA+ identity without their consent. Many LGBTQIA+ individuals choose to keep their identities private, either as a precaution for their safety, due to feelings of shame, or simply because they prefer not to draw attention to this part of their life. Examples include young people in non-accepting families, individuals in unwelcoming workplaces, or those residing in countries where queer identities are subject to systemic persecution. Outing can be a violent and disrespectful act, potentially placing the person in precarious or dangerous situations.

2.19 Pansexual

Pansexual individuals experience attraction to people of all genders. While some pansexual people describe their attraction as independent of gender, others may find themselves more drawn to certain genders than others.

2.20 Polyamory

A polyamorous relationship is a sexual or romantic relationship involving more than two people. Some individuals identify as polyamorous, meaning they are open to, prefer, or require the ability to engage in relationships with multiple partners simultaneously. Polyamory is frequently viewed as the opposite of monogamy. Within polyamorous relationships, some people treat all partners equally, while others may have a primary partner or choose to cohabit with one or select partners. In casual conversation, "polyamorous" is often abbreviated to "poly." It's important to note that polyamory is sometimes mistakenly conflated with the term "polysexual."

2.21 Polysexual

"Polysexuality" encompasses orientations where individuals experience attraction to more than one gender. Bisexuality and pansexuality are examples of polysexual orientations. "Polysexual" is used in this resource to be inclusive of people with less common orientations who are not monosexual (I.e. attracted to one gender), but who do not identify as bisexual or pansexual.

2.22 Pronouns

According to Merriam-Webster, a pronoun is defined as "any of a small set of words (such as I, she, he, you, it, we, or they) in a language that are used as substitutes for nouns or noun phrases and whose referents are named or understood in the context." Personal pronouns, such as he/him, she/her, and they/them, are often assumed based on a person's gender presentation. However, determining the correct pronouns solely by appearance is not a good idea. This is especially true online, where it might be difficult to ascertain someone's gender or preferred pronouns. Using incorrect pronouns is a form of misgendering.

2.23 Queer

Queer is a versatile term often used to signify "not straight" or "not cis-gender." It commonly serves as an umbrella term for all LGBTQIA+ individuals and is frequently used as an alternative to the full acronym. While originating as a derogatory term, it has been reclaimed and different people attach various meanings to it. For example, some individuals who identify sexually as heterosexual may not feel comfortable being labeled as queer, while others may have residual trauma from its historical use as a slur. Nonetheless, the prevailing consensus is that "queer" is an acceptable shorthand for both LGBTQIA+ individuals and their allies.

2.24 Straight and Cishet

"Straight" is sometimes used to describe heterosexual people and sometimes to refer to non-queer people. The former can be defined as a person who experiences attraction to people of a different gender than they are, which is typically binary. Some people are queer and straight, identifying with one or more queer identities while being heterosexual. "Cishet" is a term used to describe people who are cisgender and heterosexual.

2.25 Transfeminine and Transmasculine

The term "transfeminine" typically refers to trans women or non-binary individuals who were assigned male at birth. However, not all trans women or non-binary individuals with this background identify as transfeminine. It is not a synonym for trans women as not all transfeminine people identify as women. Generally, the term is applied to those who have taken steps to present themselves in a way that aligns more closely with femininity than their birth-assigned gender. It is often shortened to "transfem."

The term "transmasculine" typically refers to trans men or non-binary individuals who were assigned female at birth. However, not all trans men or non-binary individuals with this background identify as transmasculine. As with "transfeminine" and "trans women", transmasculine is not a synonym for trans men as not all transmasculine people identify as men. It is often shortened to "transmasc."

Part Two: Designing for Queer Inclusion

3. Rules of Thumb

Certain design philosophies resonate more closely with the principles of inclusive design than others. The following graphic illustrates five key rules of thumb that should be considered. Each rule serves as a general mindset to adopt during the design process rather than addressing specific issues, such as the design practices and concerns addressed in Chapter 4.

"Embrace fluidity over rigid categories and immutability"

This rule challenges designers to think in terms that challenges compartmentalizing. Interaction designers should challenge themselves to think beyond tidy object-oriented categorizations of people and experiences, instead allowing users to define their digital identities freely and how they wish to use the systems.

"Opt for controllable features over automation"

This rule encourages designers to critically evaluate experiences that rely heavily on automation. Features driven by AI and algorithms often exhibit biases that that places minority groups at a disadvantage relative to the majority. Relying on automation can disempower both users and developers, creating cultures that foster passivity and a lack of responsibility.

"Facilitate selective visibility"

This rule is a reference to user's privacy that span across all public and private use of online applications. It urges designers to always consider that people may not wish to be visible or traceable. This can mean engaging with services without being a registered user, managing one's visibility or anonymity within a service or controlling the use and storage of one's own data, among other aspects.

"Promote user self-protection and actively combat hate"

This rule urges designers to develop plans for how the system can best combat hateful misuse of their services. While the main responsibility lies with the service provider, it should also be made possible for users to manage their own exposure to hate and take steps to protect themselves within the service.

"Anticipate how features can be misused for hate"

Any feature that can be used as a channel for communications can be used as a way to channel hate or as a way to compromise the safety of others. Designers should always be aware of this.

Embrace fluidity over rigid categories and immutability

Facilitate selective visibility

Anticipate how features can be misused for hate

Opt for controllable features over automation

Promote user self-protection and actively combat hate
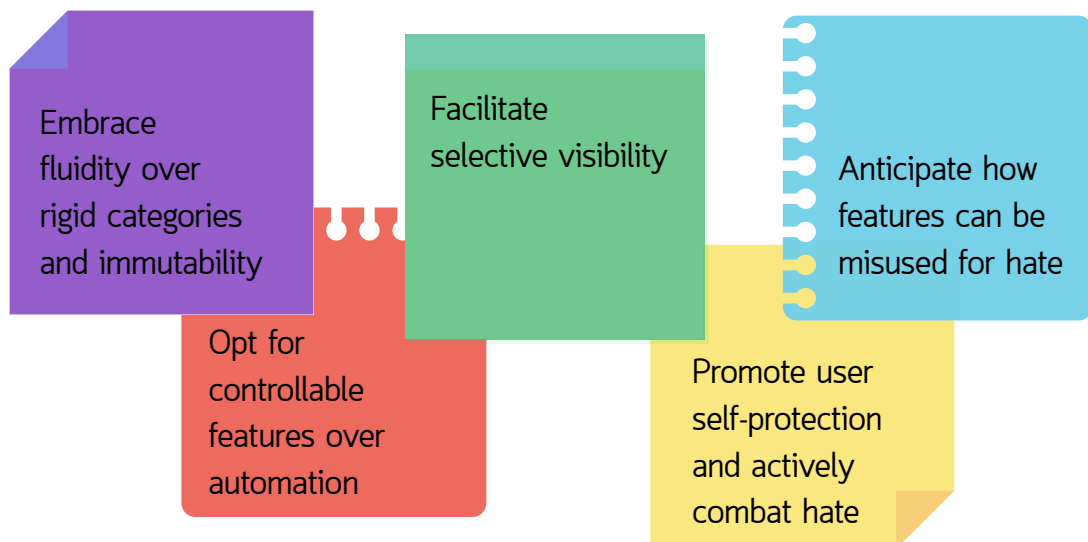
4. Design Practices and Concerns

This chapter will explore recommended practices and concerns regarding issues queer people face when navigating online spaces. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section, named "Essential guidelines," goes into critical features that are needed to reach a baseline of inclusion. The second section, named "Contextual Considerations," covers more specific concerns that are not always critical to include, but nonetheless useful to consider. It will also explore important issues that currently stand without a solution or recommended practices.

Each section is divided into three parts which covers these topics:

User Profiles and Self Presentation

This category explores how apps support users in presenting themselves. This is typically achieved through customizable profiles where users can tailor various attributes, including usernames, profile pictures, personal descriptions, gender identity, and relationship status, to reflect their individuality.

Safety Issues and Privacy

This category addresses the critical issues of privacy and safety for users both online and offline. LGBTQIA+ individuals often navigate living situations where they need to manage where and how their queer lives are visible. Thus, maintaining control over the visibility of their online activities and preventing unintended outing is essential for many users. Additionally, online environments can attract individuals who propagate hate or target users with malicious actions. LGBTQIA+ individuals are particularly susceptible to experiencing hate when expressing their identities online. This section also explores strategies to combat hate in digital spaces. Furthermore, certain apps are designed to facilitate real-life meetings, which presents additional safety concerns for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Content Preferences and Inclusive Culture

People frequently turn to apps and websites to discover meaningful experiences, it be for entertainment, social interactions, shopping, or accessing valuable services. This section explores how digital platforms can tailor and organize their content to ensure that everyone, including LGBTQIA+ individuals, can find experiences that resonate with them. In addition, it explores important considerations for creating inclusive communities and services in online spaces.

4.1   Essential Guidelines

The following points are strongly recommended to achieve a baseline of inclusion.

4.1.1   Profiles and Self-Presentation

1.1 — It is best to not force the user to input their gender unless this is strictly necessary.

Gender identity is a deeply personal and complex matter and many gender-diverse individuals go through phases of self-discovery in order to understand their gender identity. Requiring individuals to disclose their gender identity unnecessarily can lead to stress and wasted time, especially for those who later need to update their profiles after changing the gender they present as.

1.2 — In cases where it is necessary to ask for gender identity, non-binary identities should be included.

It is advised to include the following categories: Female, male, Non-binary, Something else. Avoid using the word "other", as it is othering. Allowing people to choose several categories is better than expecting gender diverse people to choose a category that others them. Including a field for people to input their own label(s) is also a useful feature, as it allows people to be as specific as they want.

In cases where prefixes such as "mr", "ms" and "mx" are used, users should have the option to choose which prefix they prefer to be addressed with.

1.3 — Gender should not be coded as a boolean or be immutable[10] .

Including non-binary identities without coding them as a separate category is seen as defeating the point of having a separate category. Allowing users to choose a different option from male and female only to demand that they choose between the two in addition is not a satisfactory compromise, as it still erases non-binary genders by portraying them as sub-categories under binary genders.

1.4 — Allowing users to include their pronouns can in some cases be more useful than displaying a label for gender identity.

Pronouns make it easy to know how to address people and lead to less accidental misgendering. It is a feature many find essential in social media and miss when it is not implemented, resulting in some people being willing to install third-party plug-ins to achieve this feature.

1.5 — Systems that collect people's legal gender through government digital services should not use pronouns solely based on the client's legal gender in their documents.

If a system does not allow users to input their own pronouns, using the pronouns most often associated with their legal gender will alienate many trans- and gender-queer people. In general, assuming users' pronouns based on their legal gender marker should be avoided. Cases where it is not possible to request the user's preference should instead opt to using the person's name. A possible pitfall of using people's legal names is accidental misgendering.

1.6 — It is preferred that pseudonyms are allowed as usernames..

Allowing users to be anonymous by using pseudonyms as screen names means that more people feel comfortable with registering user accounts. This relieves the fear many have of their user activity being traced back to their real-life identity.

1.7 — Forcing users to use or display their legal names is oppressive to transpeople who use a chosen name in place of their legal name.

Some transpeople are driven away from using certain apps because of this factor, even when the app in question is widely used, like payment apps.

1.8 — Usernames should not be the primary key to user accounts as this makes changing one's username difficult.

Usernames should always be possible to change. If not, people who change their name will be forced to make a new user account following their name-change.

1.9 — Profile relationship statuses should be inclusive of polysexual- and non-monogamous relationships..

Polyamorous people and people living in non-monogamous relationship structures exist. By only allowing users to add one spouse these groups are not included. People in non-monogamous relationships sometimes have different relationships to each of their partners which can also be useful to portray, such as some being intimate partners while others are romantic partners or cohabitants.

4.1.2   Safety Issues and Privacy

1.10 — Terms of service (ToS) should explicitly state that hateful actions and rhetoric are not tolerated, and this should be upheld.

ToS are useful as a reference for when to report content, and it sends a clear message that the service providers in question does not tolerate intolerance.

1.11 — Reporting hateful content that violate ToS should at the very least lead to that content being removed.

Users who report online hate often experience that this does not lead to any consequences for the user who posted the offensive content, even when it goes against ToS.
False reports and "dog piling" (i.e. when a large number of users band together in malicious activities) should also be considered.

1.12 — Automatised moderation runs the risk of flagging content that critiques hate as hateful in itself.

Automatic moderation sometimes works to silence LGBTQIA+ people and allies for commenting on hateful opinions or sharing their own experiences with hate. It is assumed that automatic moderation tools are not advanced enough to pick up on the nuances of commentary. If automatic moderation is used, steps should be made to ensure that minority voices are not silenced along with offenders.

1.13 — It is advised to not rely solely on algorithmic moderation, but to incorporate human-in-the-loop moderators where this is used[11].

This is to reduce the amount of false positives and negatives in the moderation process.
The ways that people express themselves online are ever-changing and so are the ways that people go about inflicting hate. Therefore, human judgment should always have a role in online moderation.

1.14 — Flagging queer content indiscriminately as adult content or as less advertiser friendly is discriminatory[12].

This stereotypes queerness as adult-oriented instead of attributes that people of all ages possess. It also communicates that the app is willing to erase queer users if it results in a higher profit and

can in some cases lead to monetary loss for queer users. This is also a serious issue for queer minors who often are in great need of queer communities and resources.

1.15 — It should be possible to turn down message requests or friend requests without having to view a message from the sender.

This is because some people misuse message requests as a way to send hateful messages, by knowing that the receiver will have to view their message before deleting it or blocking them.

1.16 — Users should have the ability to block others in such a way that the user is completely shielded from blocked users content and presence. Additionally, the blocked user should not be able to view the blocker's content or interact with their profile or messages.

LGBTQIA+ users are often exposed to harassment, prompting them to use blocking features proactively and strategically. This allows them to not only restrict users who are already harassing them but also to preemptively block specific individuals or groups that may pose a threat. A blocked user should not be able to tag the user who blocked them.

1.17 — The ability to lock one's social media profile or set it to private, preventing strangers from interacting with it, is a valuable feature that enhances user safety and privacy.

Not everyone desires to be visible to the public and many find comfort in knowing that only those they have permitted can access their posts. This sense of privacy alleviates concerns about their activities reaching unintended audiences or provoking unwelcome reactions. Locking one's profile is also a strategy some use if they suddenly find that they have become a target for hate.

1.18 — Implementing probation periods for new members in closed servers and groups can help foster safer communities[13].

Quarantining new members allows communities to ensure that they are welcoming only safe individuals, thereby reducing the prevalence of hate and minimizing the risk of dangerous people infiltrating these safe spaces. However, it is crucial to recognize that some individuals may feel uneasy placing their trust in administrators to make sound judgments. Additionally, the prospect of having one's queer identity or intentions scrutinized to gain entry to an online space may make some potential members uncomfortable. Probation periods also reduce the accessibility of these spaces as they put participation on hold. This can be an issue in time-critical situations where the user in question is in need of the contents within the group.

1.19 — End-to-end encryption is a highly valued feature..

Many people use separate messaging apps for this feature alone, as it ensures complete privacy.

1.20 — Being able to use an app without needing to register a user account can be important for privacy..

Not everyone wishes to link their online activities to their email addresses or create profiles that can be traced back to their real-life identities. Therefore, unless the app's content pertains to its users' private lives, it should be accessible to unregistered visitors.

1.21 — Apps that enable users to search for others' profiles using their phone numbers can pose significant privacy concerns.

Many individuals use pseudonyms or screen names across various online platforms, believing themselves to be anonymous. However, this sense of anonymity is compromised if others can discover these profiles through the user's phone number. To protect users' privacy, requests for phone numbers should be minimized unless absolutely necessary. Additionally, during the

registration process, it should be explicitly communicated whether other users can locate a profile by searching for their phone number.

1.22 — Apps that enable users to find other users' full legal names or home addresses can be a safety issue.

App owners should carefully consider the potential for their applications to be misused alongside other platforms for stalking purposes. For example, a cyberstalker with access to a person's phone number could obtain their full name through a payment service and subsequently find their home address using various platforms like online registers. This poses a significant concern for LGBTQIA+ individuals, who may already face threats to their safety simply for existing. Moreover, access to legal names can enable harassment, particularly toward transgender individuals who may be targeted through their deadnames.

1.23 — It is important to note that publicly engaging with content online can lead to accidental outing[14].

Some people refrain from engaging with queer content as doing so can lead to them being outed.

Allowing people to engage with content privately, or selecting who their engagement is visible to can make for a safer user experience where LGBTQIA+ users don't have to choose between putting themselves at risk or not engaging.

An example of this is people not sharing their interest in queer events openly out of fear that their family would see it if they did.

1.24 — Users should be able to control whether their profiles or content is discoverable though search engines[11] and their visibility within the app in question.

Some users prefer that their profiles are not discoverable through search engines. It is important to note that not all users are interested in gaining reach.

Likewise, users should be able to opt out of their profiles and content being circulated within in-app algorithms, and have control over when and how other users may engage with their content.

1.25 — Users should have the option to disable or easily manage algorithms responsible for recommending content.

Many queer people need to manage who in their lives their queerness is visible to. When activity is registered and used to recommend new content it could lead to people being outed if the recommendations align with queer stereotypes. Opaque algorithms can contribute to such anxieties as users do not understand which aspects of their activity that lead to the recommendations they receive or how to manage this strategically.

1.26 — Apps that facilitate selling, buying or delivering goods in person should have the option for contactless purchases and look into how they could make in-person exchanges safer for LGBTQIA+ users.

This includes exchanges of used goods, such as Facebook Marketplace or delivery of online purchases such as food deliveries or package deliveries.

Contactless purchases allow people to avoid uncomfortable discussions or questions about why they are selling or buying certain products.

Not all people are accepting of queer identities, and meeting with a stranger is by some viewed as a risk they are not always willing to take. Common fears involve misgendering, discriminatory remarks, and violence.

1.27 — Apps using user data to train AI models is seen as a red flag for privacy.

Many people are uncomfortable with the idea of their likeness or intellectual property being used to train AI models. This is often viewed as theft and disrespectful of the user base.

4.1.3 Content Preferences and Inclusive Culture

1.28 — Apps should refrain from assuming the gender or sexuality of its user base, and should not think of its user base as cis-hetero by default.

It is generally advised not to assume users' interests based on gender-stereotypes. Online stores will often categorize their content according to binary genders and apps containing adult content such as pornography sites are notorious for categorizing its content from a cis-hetero-male point of view.

1.29 — Enabling users to customize their feeds and select the types of content they wish to see is essential for queer individuals to discover relevant experiences.

LGBTQIA+ people often enjoy content that fall outside the norm. Apps that allow its users to curate their own feed could have a greater chance of retaining LGBTQIA+ users.

1.30 — For many, the options to filter out explicitly violent or sexual content from their feeds and search results is essential.

Many users often feel uncomfortable with the content they encounter online. For instance, social media and adult sites frequently display extreme or offensive material alongside less controversial content. To help users tailor their experience, features such as blacklists, content warnings, and filtering options are invaluable to allowing users to customize what content they wish to view.

1.31 — Categorizing different types of queerness together should be done with caution as drawing certain through-lines can be viewed as offensive and as misrepresentation..

A notable example is how many online retailers categorize gender-affirming attire alongside products meant for drag queens and kink-related items that involve gender-play. This can be particularly harmful, as trans women and transfeminine individuals are especially prone to having their identities misrepresented as mere costumes or fetishes.

1.32 — Dating apps should provide users with options to find other queer users.

One way of achieving this is by allowing users to filter out straight users and prevent straight users from accessing their own profiles. This is partly to save queer users the wasted time of scrolling through the profiles of straight users to find other LGBTQIA+ users. Additionally, not having this option could also result in matches that lead to awkward or hateful exchanges when the straight user realizes they have matched with a queer user.
Designers should, however, be careful with giving users too much control in how they filter other people. Factors beyond orientation are generally not advised, as they can lead to a discriminatory culture in the app that disproportionly affect people with intersecting marginalized identities.
It should also be considered that by allowing users to filter by queerness can lead to hateful individuals using the service to harass or harm the queer users on it.

1.33 — AI generated content is looked upon negatively by many..

Either having their content taken to train AI-models or having their own content wrongfully flagged as AI generated can dictate if people are comfortable with using certain platforms. It is important to note that AI is a controversial topic. Some queer users are not bothered by AI features or by seeing AI generated content. Others see it as an ethical and political issue and are willing to boycott apps that use generative AI features.

4.2 Contextual Considerations

The following considerations go beyond the bare minimums of the previous section and dive into specific contexts such as features that can be helpful in some cases, but are not viewed as critical in achieving queer inclusion. It also covers concerns that serve as examples of nuanced situations or issues where optimal solutions might not have been developed yet.

4.2.1 Profiles and Self-Presentation

2.1 — Incorporating free text fields in profiles is a valuable feature for many users.

This allows users to fill in any information they find relevant, such as including queer identifiers to communicate that they are safe to other LGBTQIA+ people.

2.2 — Some people like to include their sexuality in their online profiles, but not everyone.

Sexuality is a private issue that some see as less relevant to display publicly than gender or pronouns.

2.3 — Attempting to create an exhaustive list of labels in menus can work against its intention.

Some may believe that the most inclusive approach is to include as many labels as possible in menus for gender and sexuality. However, certain LGBTQIA+ individuals may find specific terms offensive, viewing them as outdated or inaccurate representations of their identities. Controversial terms such as "MTF," "FTM," and "transexual" are examples of this.
Offering a free-text field allows users who identify with these labels to still use them if they choose. Additionally, some individuals prefer labels that are seen as less mainstream, and making an effort to include niche labels does not necessarily guarantee a better user experience for this group.

2.4 — In some cases legal gender is a necessity because of legal factors. It should still be looked into how these systems can be inclusive of trans- and gender-queer people..

Some digital platforms, like recruitment apps, use legal gender markers to filter users. This erases trans and gender-diverse identities by treating them the same as cis-gender identities. For a process to be truly gender-inclusive this group should also be considered.

2.5 — Some apps allow users to change the display-names of their friends as a way for them to establish nicknames. This can make name changes challenging.

This is because simply changing one's own username does not overwrite the display-name given by their friends. Having the option to view and overwrite names friends have chosen for the user is a possible solution to this.

2.6 — Many transpeople like to have the option to display that they are trans in a visible way on their dating profiles [15].

Dating apps can present unique challenges for transgender and gender-nonconforming people, many transpeople "pass" as their gender identity meaning they may not be recognized as transgender by cisgender users. As a result, some transpeople may prefer to indicate their transgender status in their profiles to avoid matching with non-accepting people. In contrast, some trans individuals prefer to keep their transgender identity private or view it as a less significant aspect of themselves. A consequence of being open about one's trans identity on dating apps is that one might become a target of transphobia which can result in hateful messages or suspension from the platform due to others falsely flagging or reporting the profiles of transpeople.

4.2.2 Safety Issues and Privacy

2.7 — People are generally negative to companies keeping data on who in the world are LGBTQIA+.

Many are concerned over how much evil companies could do with such sensitive user-information. For the safety of LGBTQIA+ people, data that could out them should not be distributed or stored outside of the user's control.

2.8 — Providing LGBTQIA+ individuals with the option to create their own closed communities within servers or groups can be beneficial.

However, segregation should not be viewed as a comprehensive solution to achieve higher degrees of LGBTQIA+ safety online.
The ability to create more safe online spaces is important to many, particularly within private relationships such as friend groups. However, many LGBTQIA+ individuals also value exposure to diverse viewpoints. There is a concern that by solely engaging in closed communities, they may unintentionally create echo chambers, leading to a distorted view of the world.
In suggesting that LGBTQIA+ people should isolate themselves in closed communities, one risks diminishing their voices in public forums. This can result in a scarcity of LGBTQIA+ representation in online discourse, making queer communities and resources less accessible to those who are not already part of these exclusive spaces.

2.9 — Some queer people will refrain from commenting publicly on posts, as this is seen as putting themselves at risk.

Commenting publicly can lead to being targeted by hateful individuals. Some people even fear that such visibility might put them in real-life risk. This is important to remember if one wishes to gain public interaction from LGBTQIA+ users.

2.10 — Adopting features that allow users to use the app through different user profiles or personas can be beneficial.

Many LGBTQIA+ people need to manage where their queerness is visible. Because of this, many opt to create more than one profile at certain platforms they use. Some profiles where they pass as straight and some where they are openly queer.
Certain apps have gained popularity among queer users by streamlining the experience of managing multiple identities. These platforms allow users to easily switch between profiles or use different usernames and pronouns within various sub-communities.

2.11 — Companies that compel users to utilize an entire ecosystem of interconnected apps linked to a single user account can create both inconvenience and privacy concerns.

Many people prefer to select and use specific apps according to their needs. When companies pressure users to adopt a multitude of applications, it can be perceived as frustrating. This approach also raises privacy concerns. When user profiles are interconnected across multiple apps, it may alienate those who wish to keep their activities compartmentalized and maintain a clear distinction between aspects of their lives, such as personal and professional activities.

2.12 — Dating apps are by many perceived as unsafe.

This Perception arises from the fact that hateful individuals can easily target LGBTQIA+ people on dating apps, where users often openly disclose their gender identity and sexuality in their profiles.

2.13 — Marginalized people are often targeted by "chasers" on dating apps and social media.

Chasers are seen as both an annoyance and a safety issue that often target trans women, transfeminine people, fat women, women of color, and other marginalized people. Typically chasers are cis-men who fetishize and objectify the people they harass. Women or non-binary people sometimes also engage in chasing and men are sometimes targeted by chasers, although this is seems to be less frequent.

2.14 — Exploring features that indicate whether locations or events are safe for queer individuals can be beneficial.

Knowing if a location is inclusive and safe to queer people could lead to more queer people attending events or visiting these venues.

4.2.3 Content Preferences and Inclusive Culture

2.15 — Understanding the community dynamics within the app is important for enhancing its ability to effectively serve its users.

Queer communities are usually grown organically by allowing users to have agency over their experiences and by being aware of how they interact with the app.
Being aware of the needs and wishes of the user base can lead to beneficial relationships between the users and the app, as opposed to trying to manipulate the users in how they use the app.
People sometimes stop using apps when they feel like the app no longer delivers on the aspects that initially spoke to them or when they feel like the app is pestering them to use it in ways they don't want to.

2.16 — While feeds that adopt algorithms to recommend new content can in some cases lead to positive user experiences the technology at large is disproportionally hostile to marginalized topics..

The perceived usefulness of content algorithms is theorized to depend on whether the content that is recommended is based on the user's own interests, if it is based on what is generally popular or if it is based on what the algorithm judged could lead to higher engagement at the site. The second and third options are viewed negatively, while the first is assumed to lead to more relevant and engaging experiences.
Generally it is advised to not adopt features that have built-in biases that disadvantage minority groups, which research has shown most content algorithms do. (insert haimson reference here)

2.17 — Content algorithms should not prioritize recommendations over content from people the users are following.

While some users appreciate being introduced to new content, many express frustration at missing posts from their curated networks that they would rather see. Offering users the option to view a chronological feed, free from algorithmic interference, could address this concern effectively and offer users more control of their user experience.

2.18 — Social media is to many a source of stress, due to these apps being channels where topics such as the current queerphobic political climate are often discussed.

While political awareness and engagement are significant for many members of the queer community, constant exposure to these issues can also be a source of stress. Offering the option to disable news feeds can help alleviate this tension in some cases.
However, automatic filtering on social media platforms presents challenges, as queer identities themselves are frequently discussed in political contexts. For instance, filtering out conversations around transphobic incidents, such as the arrest of transgender individuals for using public restrooms,

might inadvertently exclude discussions that carry a more positive tone, including topics related to trans joy, pride, or supportive advice.

2.19 — Reducing the visibility of comment sections can contribute to a more comfortable and less stressful user experience.

Some individuals believe that comment sections often feature low-quality responses, heated arguments, and bullying or hateful remarks, leading them to prefer not engaging with them at all.

2.20 — Community-driven information resources are generally perceived as beneficial. However, queer topics within these platforms are particularly susceptible to malicious manipulation.[16].

Allowing LGBTQIA+ people to archive their history and interests is important and should not be a privilege of only a few. The downside to open resources such as wiki sites is that articles on queer topics and people are susceptible to sabotage or wrongful corrections by non-queer or hateful users. An example of a typical wrongful correction is misgendering of trans celebrities and the use of their deadname in place of their current or chosen name.

2.21 — Being able to incorporate third-party apps with an app can be important to enhance the user experience.

When apps fail to cater to LGBTQIA+ users' needs some will take it into their own hands to ensure a safe or enjoyable user experience, which is where third-party apps or solutions come into play. Examples of third party solutions that people use are Shinigami eyes, pronoun labels and community notes.

2.22 — Dating apps that offer features allowing users to establish their deal breakers can be beneficial.

Certain questions, such as political beliefs or other non-negotiable topics, are important for individuals to consider before engaging with others on dating apps. Addressing these matters upfront can help save time and minimize the risk of encountering potentially harmful individuals.

2.23 — Many platforms prohibit all forms of nudity and adult content. This is by many seen as a net negative for queer representation.

Designers should be critical of moralizing tendencies, such as the view that adult content should be banned by default. This villainizing of adult content often affects queer people disproportionately as their expression is more often viewed as inappropriate.

2.24 — Some nude content is non-pornographic.

An example of such is before and after pictures of results from gender affirming surgeries. This type of content is important to many transpeople to explore and discuss their medical options.

2.25 — Performative actions such as using rainbow-imagery to signal solidarity does little to make LGBTQIA+ users feel more protected..

The act of temporary "pinkwashing" in marketing and branding is widely looked down upon in the LGBTQIA+ community.
For a company to escape the impression that they are simply appropriating LGBTQIA+ iconography, the company in question needs to show that it is not merely a symbolic gesture by enacting continuous solidarity.

5. Recommended Reading

To learn more about queer inclusion in interaction design the following resources are recommended.

Look Into Global and Local Queer Organizations

Queer organizations and interest groups will sometimes offer written resources, consulting, or online and in-person courses on queer inclusion.

GLAAD offers resources on a number of queer and intersectional identities and consulting to game developers on how to create more inclusive video games: `https://glaad.org/`

The transgender Training Institute offers webinars for educators, workplaces, service providers, among other groups. Their courses can be both foundational or used to "level up" one's knowledge and dive deeper into trans-inclusive practices:
`https://www.transgendertraininginstitute.com/`

Stonewall is a british organization that offers programs for workplace training and their homepage offers explanations of terms, and research reports, among other information:
`https://www.stonewall.org.uk/`

Foreningen Fri is a Norwegian organization that offers talks on queer inclusion, called Pink Competence: `https://foreningenfri.no/`

Reia et. al's Report on Trans Digital Rights

This report[17] covers trans digital rights by exploring specific challenges gender-diverse communities face in data collection, citizen-generated data, AI and platform regulation:
`https://doi.org/10.18130/m2zw-2g87`

Everyday Ethics

Everyday Ethics[18] hosts a library of ethics-focused design methods. These methods are sorted and categorized for easy access to address different challenges and stages in the design process:
`https://everydayethics.uxp2.com/methods`

Kender's Research Project Social Media Power

This is a research project that explores the power of design in the context of social media and how specific features interplay with marginalized identities:
`http://kaykender.de/social-media-design-power/`

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