



A Playbook to be Proud of: Making the Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusive User Account Design

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ABSTRACT

Digital platforms often require users to select from a limited set of options that may force them to misrepresent their gender identities and sexual orientation, which disproportionately affects the LGBTQ+ population. To provide digital product teams with a feasible industry-focused tool to ensure the inclusion of this population, we surveyed 151 participants, including 81 who identify as LGBTQ+; conducted five interviews with LGBTQ+ participants and 11 interviews with product managers in the technology industry; and analyzed the user account creation processes of 45 digital platforms commonly used or mentioned in survey responses to understand LGBTQ+ users' wants, needs, and pain points in navigating user account sign-up. Participants recounted instances of microaggressions or micro-affirmations, and often had strong feelings about companies based on their account creation experience. Based on these results, we present a 'Playbook' of design recommendations, which is online at bit.ly/LGBTInclusive_UAGuide.

CCS CONCEPTS

- Human-centered computing → Empirical studies in interaction design.

KEYWORDS

digital platforms, account creation, LGBTQ+ user experience, microaggressions, micro-affirmations, inclusive design

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1 INTRODUCTION

People are frequently asked to create digital representations of themselves online using avatars, screen names, and other representations in user accounts [10]. The standard taxonomy for user accounts (UAs) includes collecting information regarding personal data (i.e. name, age, etc.) and preferences (i.e. language) [28]. Categorizing this personal data provides the benefit of reducing information overload and is often used for personalized content, but inaccurately representing users can result in feelings of exclusion [13], and can even render them unable to interact with an interface [16], ultimately curtailing platform growth [13]. These feelings of online or digital exclusion can add to already existing offline hardships for those who fall between or outside restrictive classifications of gender, sexuality, or other demographics, and can impact the mental and physical health of those affected [25, 26].

Identifying digital product teams as the onus of power in creating meaningful change, we decided to focus on Product Managers (PMs) in our initial interviews because two of the authors had experience working in technology companies and found that PMs are responsible for charting a project's development, making design decisions, and ensuring those decisions are implemented. Though the context of our work is situated in the design space, PMs are directly addressed rather than UX Professionals because "UX Professionals generally do not have final decision-making power over product decisions, and thus need to tactfully translate and legitimize their values concerns to decision-makers such as product managers" [39]. This was supported by articles from researchers who studied PMs in industry roles, specifically IT or software industries, and found that the most frequently mentioned PM responsibilities include defining goals, proposing solutions, spearheading change and prioritizing projects or tasks [12, 37]. Focusing on creating a resource for PMs can ensure users are comfortable (even happy) with how they are represented within their product systems, as there is an urgent need for those professionals to understand the full range of their user base.

A significant portion of those born between 1997 and 2012, often called "Gen Z," identify as LGBTQ+ [20]. Further, Gen Z and Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996) are value-driven consumers and take inclusivity into account when considering purchases [15].

When work within the technology industry often prioritizes performance metrics and these metrics do not necessarily reflect to users' lived experiences or values, product managers and designers can use our work as a tactic of soft resistance to expand their work to LGBTQ+ users should they struggle to communicate and justify company actions towards meaningful change [39]. If companies can ask the right questions, their data quality will improve and they can better understand users and how to best design for them [27]. Facilitating attention to structural inequities through principles such as those described in Sasha Costanza-Chock's *Design Justice* can bring light to these structural inequalities by providing concrete suggestions through a scoped lens [9].

Seeking to serve as the intermediary between those who can enact meaningful change and the community that would benefit from this change, we use survey and interview responses to inform the creation of a "Playbook" of best practices describing how to implement more inclusive user account creation processes on digital/computing systems, with a focus on the LGBTQ+ community. The goal is to answer the research question: *How might we ensure Product Managers and Designers are able to easily educate themselves and advocate with up-to-date information on inclusive design, focused on LGBTQ+ communities?* With this guide, we hope to reduce the cognitive and emotional labor that comes with learning and embedding empathy in human centered design for digital products.

1.1 Researchers' Positionality and Reflexivity

Inclusive research must begin with a clear-eyed assessment of where the researchers themselves are starting from, to understand their position in the Matrix of Domination [9] and work against replicating these oppressive structures in newly-designed spaces. We thus briefly discuss our positionalities and reflect on how they might impact this work.

The first author (they/she) is a non-binary lesbian and Southeast Asian immigrant. They have completed previous research looking at topics in the space of equity and inclusion, including adolescent racial consciousness and technology for coping amongst LGBTQ+ People of Color. While those projects are not representative of real world consequences and oppression, this current paper adds to their professional and academic goals of contributing to work that ensures digital technologies are designed equitably with all users and user experiences in mind.

The second author (she/her) is a cis-gendered Black woman. She is aware of the experiences of marginalized populations, and the prevailing impact of systemic oppression against racial, sexual, and gender minorities. Her first hand experience with systemic oppression combined with her interest and experience in user research motivates her to use her skills and experiences to improve conditions for vulnerable and diverse populations.

The third author (she/her) is a white, cis-gendered, able-bodied woman. As a lesbian, she has a personal connection to the LGBTQ+ community but recognizes her experiences alone cannot be representative of this diverse population. Her professional experience with digital products includes perspectives from a consulting and user research background. She looks to supplement her industry knowledge with this paper's academic approach to applied inclusivity.

The fourth author (she/her) is a cis-gendered white woman with minor disabilities and over two decades of experience researching people and communities who are marginalized by technologies and the tech industry. She advises the first three authors, who conducted this research for their capstone project.

2 BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM) has conducted extensive research through its Measuring Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Research Group [1]. This group highlights the need for inclusive language in order to have accurate, rich data that represents people's unique identities, which in turn allows agencies to accurately measure areas where sexual and gender minorities (SGM) need additional support or visibility.

Digital user account interfaces collect user data, however, do not always utilize SOGI data principles when asking for data, which can lead to harm. An example of such a digital user account interface is how Facebook's "real name" policy "requires that users display 'authentic identities' by using 'the name they use in real life,'" which researchers Haimson and Hoffman point out "generates conditions that exclude or make online life disproportionately difficult for certain groups, including trans people, abuse survivors, and Native Americans" [17]. The authors demonstrate that entering user account data has become so commonplace that unofficial and exclusionary standards have arisen, further entrenching harm for those who fall *outside* of commonly-used categories.

Approaching the problem from the product design side, Bouma-Sims and Acar explore how software developers discuss and operationalize gender, finding that many have incomplete or flawed understandings of when and how to inclusively collect gender data [4]. Our product manager interviews corroborate their findings and our Playbook seeks to provide a nuanced yet accessible tool to address this lack of understanding.

2.1 Excluding LGBTQ+ Users Leads to Harm

During a typical data collection process, interfaces ask users to input information such as name, birth date, gender, and race, sometimes providing a limited set of options that force those who fall outside these taxonomies to misrepresent themselves. Mari Ramler calls the result "digital inhospitality," and highlights that LGBTQ+ users' needs in particular are often ignored and excluded [29]. Ramler's concept of Queer Usability anticipates the needs of Queer users and applies it to user-centered design to create digital spaces that center Queer populations, which helped inform our guide of examples for user account design teams.

Even more relevant to our study is Scheuerman et. al's exploration of how nonbinary individuals navigate gender input forms [31]. They found that participants felt excluded and uncomfortable by restrictive binary choices for gender, which our findings further corroborate. They conclude with design recommendations, which our Playbook expands on by incorporating the experiences of Product Managers to more effectively intervene in the design process. Call and Roscoe articulate design challenges for transgender individuals in computing systems [6]; we likewise build on their design recommendations in our Playbook.

We were also moved by Sasha Costanza-Chock's book *Design Justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need* [9], where its introduction describes the harm caused by enforcing a gender binary. Costanza-Chock discusses how the millimeter-wave body scanners used by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and elsewhere are not built with non-binary individuals in mind, thus causing targeted harm to this population. This is a powerful example that can help explain to technology makers that failing to design inclusively can cause concrete harm to users. We leveraged Costanza-Chock's value-based approach [9] to challenge current designers' and product managers' norms of how they "should" create products and offer a well-researched alternative that focuses on LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

On the other hand, a number of researchers have illustrated that there are cases where users do not want to disclose SOGI data, and being forced to do so can be harmful. Scheuerman et al. explore how transgender individuals navigate and manage experiences of safety and harm in technology-mediated spaces, finding that some harms came from others but some came from the system design itself [30]. They outline opportunities for building safer spaces for vulnerable users, work that we build on here.

In the same vein, Jaroszewski et al. survey gender identities in two very different online communities, the Tumblr blogging platform and a Fantasy Football site, and found opposite comfort with/hostility toward nonbinary identities between them [19]. Based on this, they provide guidelines for researchers to account for nonbinary erasure and minimize trolling. Keyes et al. further develop recommendations for HCI researchers to account for gender in a nuanced, flexible, and inclusive way by framing gender as "multiplicitous" [22].

It is thus important to design for flexible representations, including (whenever possible) the option to withhold SOGI data entirely. While the focus of our research was to create a Playbook of best practices for collecting this information, it is clearly very important to carefully consider whether this information is really needed in the first place and to assess the tradeoffs in safety, accuracy, and more that this visibility can bring, which varies by community.

Moreover, a user's gender identity and/or sexual orientation may be fluid. This could be because they are still exploring what 'fits' best for themselves, or because their identities continue to fluctuate throughout their lives. Researchers have found that this fluidity, while common, is often not well-supported in data systems, which often demand more rigid categories and do not always allow for changes [6, 19, 21, 22, 31, 32, 36].

We were inspired by a number of personal accounts of the implicit or sometimes explicit violence of being misgendered in information systems. Spiel, Keyes, and Barlas discuss their experiences along these lines and imagine what a more gender-utopic world might look like [36]. HCI researcher Amy Ko writes about the experience of "100 hours of name change labor" [23], in which Ko documents her labor-intensive journey to remove her 'deadname' (her name given at birth that does not match her current gender identity) from all of her government forms and digital accounts to avoid the mental harm of encountering it. She accounts for the time, money, emotional energy, and many obstacles she faced during this process. Ko highlights that it is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to change a name for digital services.

This study corroborates these documented needs for flexible and changeable representations, and illustrates some of the current challenges of implementing them on the technology design side. With participatory research-based inclusive design frameworks like our Playbook, we can educate product teams on the importance of better name-change policies, SOGI data collection standards, and other inclusive representation options.

2.2 Poor Design Leads to Harms

Several HCI articles highlight relevant design frameworks that both consider the LGBTQ+ user experience and explore how data visibility in digital product information systems can affect this community. Specifically, HCI scholars explore how opportunities for selective data visibility and presentation is considered "good design" [7] and LGBTQ+ young people negotiating potential consequences of the visibility of their identities online by utilizing specific platform functions [18]. While the present study did not focus on this impact, we did touch on the default visibility of common user account data points with participants, as a measure of how context impacts participants' willingness to share certain data points at account creation.

Further, when data such as gender is presented in an information systems' data collection, the categorization of such data poorly impacts the LGBTQ+ community. Scheuerman et al. analyzes computer vision databases and analyzes how they categorize for race and gender [33]. In the case of gender, this data was tied to binary and stereotypical notions of what it means to appear as a woman or man, limiting the system to accurately reflect LGBTQ+ individuals.

2.3 Frameworks for LGBTQ+ Inclusive User Account Design

The ubiquity of user accounts within today's digital culture has raised concerns regarding the presence of inclusivity within user account interfaces, particularly regarding LGBTQ+ populations [8]. Previous research, such as Costanza Chock's "Design Practices: 'Nothing about Us without Us'" [9], discusses design principles that "rethink" design processes and center communities that are normally marginalized by design. This research discusses how inclusive strategies can benefit LGBTQ+ populations, when and where they are left out, and what can be done to rethink design processes to make them more inclusive. Our current project contributes to this research by including LGBTQ+ populations throughout every step of our work, providing more insight into their user needs and apply design principles that can make user accounts more inclusive.

Costanza-Chock's design justice principles are meant to bring attention to marginalized communities under the Matrix of Domination [9] by scoping and framing these issues through broader narratives and then offering design based strategies and concrete suggestions to maximize the impact of solutions. Costanza-Chock's strategies and tools provide a framework for the Playbook's users to follow throughout their own product process, serving as an example in the product guide for implementing inclusive design frameworks in workplaces and incorporating LGBTQ+ voices into technology.

Research such as *How to Do Better with Gender on Surveys: A Guide for HCI Researchers* [35] discusses the burden that the "gender

question” places on marginalized people and offers best practices for surveying gender. This work recounts how current change processes rely on marginalized users speaking up for themselves and these marginalized groups are expected to expend time, mental energy, and responsibility in order to be authentically accounted for within surveys and research. We value the approach taken to spare already marginalized communities from having to bear the burden of change-making and include this approach in the Playbook to highlight the importance of asking the right questions when collecting data—whether through surveys or in this instance user accounts—right the first time.

Psychologists Anna Lindqvist, Marie Gustafsson Sendén, and Emma A. Renström [24] dissect the complexities and social construction of gender and highlight the importance of social science researchers’ understanding of these layers in order to develop inclusive, accurate research questions. In this paper, we aim to do the same for the technology design space by researching the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and technology creators and using them to create a Playbook for future technology design.

2.4 LGBTQ+ Inclusive Design Frameworks in Practice

Research such as The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine’s *Measuring Sex, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation* [26] discusses how agencies who need SOGI data can best collect it, outlining 5 key principles: Inclusivity, Precision, Autonomy, Parsimony, and Privacy. Tate et al. [38] expand this to include the transgender population, developing a two-question method that asks about a user’s gender identity and sex to more accurately represent the user and to increase question response rate. This research serves as one example of an alternative way to ask users about their sex and gender identity in a digital product that requires this information. These frameworks are useful starting points for the technology industry to consider, but are tailored more toward contexts such as healthcare or nonprofit funding allocations that rely on accurate data more than on accommodating the needs and wishes of LGBTQ+ individuals represented by it.

To address this point more concretely, we build on exemplary work from HopeLab, which champions collaborative design with marginalized users. Their product “imi” is a web application that supports LGBTQ+ youth with mental health topics relevant to their experiences as part of the LGBTQ+ community. Jose Bauermeister et al. document the process of implementing and the impact of imi, finding that the success of the project was largely due to the nature of the design process: including a diversity of LGBTQ+ youth voices throughout research, design, testing, and deployment [2]. The team did this by hiring LGBTQ+ youth and emphasized the importance of inclusion *within* the LGBTQ+ community through recruitment of predominantly racial and ethnic minorities. The team focused on lifting up communities rather than taking from them through actions such as ethical compensation, attribution, and highlighting LGBTQ+ artists of color. This project serves as inspiration in our own research and is a model for other companies to consider how they can include LGBTQ+ voices in their user account designs.

2.5 Contributions

These sources provide excellent insight into the potential harms, mitigation strategies, and ongoing efforts associated with LGBTQ+ inclusivity in technology. Many Product Managers, despite best intentions to create products for a wide variety of users, are often limited by company goals and a poor understanding of how to design inclusively for LGBTQ+ users. To improve this experience for both PMs and LGBTQ+ users, we spoke to LGBTQ+ users in a survey and interviews to inform our goal of creating a Playbook that presented their experiences and possible solutions to PMs. We then spoke with PMs to understand their perspectives and work processes and informed the narrative and presentation of LGBTQ+ user information. Finally, we had PMs review the final Playbook to ensure its practicality in the workplace. By synthesizing multiple approaches to LGBTQ+ data into one cohesive review, incorporating current views from the LGBTQ+ community and bridging these with the experiences and priorities on the technology design side, we provide a source for both academics and professionals to better design for LGBTQ+ inclusivity in user account creation and modification. As the first author has done the work to present the playbook to community organizers and individuals across the globe, there is significance in how this playbook is used to embed more inclusive user experiences for the LGBTQ+ community.

3 METHODS

We began our study with a survey of 151 people, including 81 who identified as LGBTQ+, to understand people’s experiences with user account creation processes. We followed this with 16 one-hour interviews over Zoom with two different groups: LGBTQ+ Users and Product Managers. We then analyzed the account creation process of 45 platforms that were mentioned by participants or in common use. Following transcription of interviews with users, we conducted multiple rounds of inductive thematic analysis to inform themes of user sentiments regarding their user account experiences. After designing the Playbook, we tested it with seven LGBTQ+ individuals and three Product Managers. This research was approved by our university’s Institutional Review Board.

3.1 Survey of Account Creation From A User Perspective

We created a Qualtrics survey of fifteen questions (which took approximately ten minutes for participants to complete) to query participants’ perceptions of the user account creation process. The goal of this survey was to ask participants about multiple levels of representations, reflecting the ways Baumer and Brubaker argue for the representations of technological subjects and how they can be grouped into four levels: Systems, Interface, Design Process, and Ideological [3]. From the Systems level, which represents users as “codified in the technical workings of a system,” our survey asks the following: Was there ever a time when you were creating a user account and there was not an option that fit your gender or sexual identity? Following this, we asked questions at the Design Process and Ideological level, which Baumer and Brubaker clarify design as something that “may involve crafting personas, writing scenarios, and accounting for stakeholders,” while ideological representations

are “their [users’] needs, qualities, and experiences.” Questions addressing these levels included “Which app/product were you using to create your user account? What could this app/product have done better? Using 3 adjectives, how did this make you feel?” Further, we asked about their comfort levels with sharing personal information with user accounts from six groups of industries: dating, social media, telehealth, games or puzzles, hotels or vacation rentals, and finance. For each of these industry groups, we asked participants how comfortable they would be sharing their legal name, preferred name, gender, sex, pronouns, sexuality, and photo. Table 4 outlines respondents’ comfort levels by industry group and field. Finally, to engage with participants at the Interface level which is defined as representations which deal with what users see and interact with, our survey provided a screenshot of the Facebook sign-up page and asked participants to imagine they are creating a profile that is representative of their gender identity and sexual orientation, then complete a series of Likert scale questions that asked about their feelings and preferences based on the options provided in the sign-up page. See Figure 2 in the Appendix for screenshots of these questions. These provided us with an understanding of the most pressing user issues to bring to our subsequent interviews.

The first three authors used their personal networks to recruit participants, including members of campus gender and sexuality organizations, campus academic departments, and national LGBTQ+ organizations and conferences. To ensure confidentiality, we did not ask any questions that included personally identifiable information (PII). Participants had the opportunity to be compensated for their participation in the survey through a randomized drawing for one \$25 gift card. In order to participate in the drawing, participants had to click on a separate hyperlinked form which asked for their PII in order to be contacted if they had been drawn. To provide data for comparison, the survey included non-LGBTQ+ participants, but our work was focused on LGBTQ+ participants’ responses. The survey ran for two months and received 151 responses, of which 81 identified as LGBTQ+ and five preferred not to answer.

3.2 Interviews with Product Managers and LGBTQ+ Technology Users

We completed 16 one-hour interviews split amongst the following: five with LGBTQ+ technology users prior to Playbook creation, five with Product Managers prior to Playbook creation, and six with Product Managers post-Playbook creation. We adopted this timeline first to explore the circumstances and contexts in which LGBTQ+ technology users notice and are impacted by SOGI collection practices on digital platforms. We concurrently conducted initial interviews with Product Managers to better understand the realities of their work when trying to implement meaningful changes in their industry. Finally, we once again interviewed Product Managers as expert reviewers after we created the first draft of the Playbook, to ensure the Playbook content was communicated effectively and could be used feasibly within their industry contexts.

Since the key eligibility criteria for the five interviews with LGBTQ+ users was an LGBTQ+ identity, the initial survey also acted as a recruitment screener in which we asked participants if they were interested in a follow-up interview. Recruitment for

Product Managers was primarily conducted through previously-established industry networks such as the researchers’ institutional career office and alumni, the Out in Tech Slack Group, and word of mouth. We conducted these interviews through Zoom, using closed captioning and recording features to transcribe the data for future use and further analysis. To better protect any sensitive information that interview participants shared, we transcribed and then deleted all video/audio recordings within two weeks of the interview, and removed all personally identifiable information from transcripts. See Tables 1 and 2 for more details on interview participants.

Interviews with LGBTQ+ users covered two main topics: inclusivity and pain points. We asked questions such as how participants defined inclusion, any instances where they recognized markers of queer inclusiveness in the digital products they used, and any memorable experiences in user account creation. Follow up questions sought further clarification on whether those instances were positive or negative and how participants felt about them. In a non-traditional interview activity, we implemented a card sorting activity, seen in Figure 3. This activity was geared towards gauging participants’ willingness and instances of hesitancy when sharing data points such as gender, sex, preferred name vs legal name, etc., to digital product information systems.

Meanwhile, interviews with Product Managers were split into three main topics: Work Background, User Accounts, and Inclusivity. The first two topics sought to explore any previous experiences working on user account features in their career, what they value, and how they prioritize design decisions as PM, and how they might handle pushback or conflict within the workplace. Within the User Account portion of the interview, we conducted a live review of the Facebook sign-up page from March 2023, asking them to walk us through potential changes to the sign up interface and the realistic next steps to implement change. This allowed us to witness their PM work processes in practice and better understand how to create complementary resources for the implementation portion of our Playbook. The final topic allowed them to share their own definitions of inclusion, and how that might show up in their work practices and values. The breakdown of these topics was intended to inform how to frame content in our three sections of the Playbook, to speak to a PM’s workflow, as they are our Playbook’s main audience.

After transcription, the first three authors split up interviews to complete a first pass of inductive thematic analysis, using a software tool called Taguette. We chose this method for analysis to recognize the power of our participants’ lived experiences, both within their LGBTQ+ identities and within their work contexts. We then met to recalibrate the initial codes, sharing what we found and merging similarly-defined codes to create a final set of codes. Once completed, we reassigned previously analyzed interviews to a different author and re-tagged each interview according to the final set of codes. After the final round of tagging was completed on Taguette, we held a whiteboarding session to pull out larger meaning from our codes [5]. This ultimately informed our themes of Hesitancy, Resistance, Compliance, and Alternate Paths found in Table 5.

Table 1: Overview of User Interview Participants. Participants were asked “How do you identify?” This open-ended manner allowed participants to respond which parts of their identity they saw fit to inform their experiences. Additionally, the Persona Created column directly links to the personas presented in the final Playbook. Participants P0 through P5 each have brief demographic info and their corresponding persona created in the Playbook. See Figure 5 for an example of these personas.

Participant Code	Demographic Info	Persona Created
P1	Non-Binary Lesbian	User 9-5
P2	Agender, Asexual	Student User
P3	Questioning, Pansexual	Content Creator User
P4	Woman, Asexual	Out of Necessity User
P5	Queer Bisexual	Impact Driven User

Table 2: Overview of Product Manager Interview (PM0-PM5) and Feedback (PM4, PM6-PM9) Participants. Each participant has a title and industry.

Participant Code	Title	Industry
PM0	Junior PM	E-Commerce
PM1	Mid-Level PM	Human Resources
PM2	Mid-Level PM	Social Media
PM3	Mid-Level PM	Healthtech
PM4	Senior PM	Finance
PM5	Senior PM	Non-Profit
PM6	Junior Designer	Construction
PM7	Junior PM	Cybersecurity
PM8	Mid-Level Designer	Technology
PM9	Senior PM	Healthtech

3.3 Analysis of Existing User Account Creation and Editing Processes

We conducted an analysis of the user account experience of 45 existing digital platforms to better understand the variety of approaches taken by different platforms. This included new account sign up as well as the process for editing one’s existing digital user account. The platforms we chose spanned a variety of industries and companies, including healthcare and social Assistance (e.g. ZocDoc, MyChart), entertainment (e.g. Spotify, Hulu), social media (e.g. TikTok, Instagram), and professional, scientific, and technical services (e.g. Care.com, Handshake). We chose the companies from responses from users in the user survey, our personal experiences with products, and a list of popular applications in the United States [11]. We included both mobile and web applications.

In each interface, we examined data collection practices with particular attention to whether the user account asked for certain SOGI data points and the inclusivity of options provided. The SOGI data points we examined include sex, gender, sexual orientation, title, marital status/familial relationships, pronouns, and preferred name (or equivalent). We created a scoring sheet from 1-5 on how inclusively the question was asked, which we developed from best practices in related work. These scores were meant to stand as a relative value for researchers to reference when sharing examples of notable or avoidable data collection approaches.

We next noted the characteristics of SOGI fields. We determined which SOGI fields were required for the user to enter, and the automatic settings of the publicity of SOGI fields on the platform.

Then we explored whether SOGI-related fields could be changed within the product, without the need to contact customer support. Because SOGI-related data is often fluid, we regarded the ability to change these values regularly as a key inclusivity metric. Finally, we added free-response notes to call out key areas of the user account process that were done notably well or notably poorly by each company. This analysis allowed us to better understand the user account process from a user’s perspective, identify notable examples, and explore inclusivity behaviors across industries.

3.4 Playbook Creation and Evaluation

We used the results of the survey, interviews, and account analysis to iteratively create a Playbook of best practices. In creating a draft of the Playbook, we first needed to choose a hosting platform, create information navigation flows and infrastructure, and create methods for interactivity and engagement with any readers. Based on their previous industry experience, we chose Notion as the hosting platform due to its ease of use, low cost, open access, minimal learning curve, and many possible integrations with other industry tools. After the full draft was complete, we user-tested it with two Designers and three Product Managers, as described in the Interviews section. We also designed a detailed feedback survey for LGBTQ+ users. This survey linked to specific pages, where we asked questions such as, “is this information accurate with your experiences?”, “what would you add?”, and “is this language accurate?”, among others. Seven LGBTQ+ technology users responded, sharing their feelings towards the language used in the Playbook

and whether or not it accurately represented their experiences. Three Product Managers and two Designers reviewed the Playbook over Zoom, where they addressed the practicality of the content in their day to day roles. We used these responses to fine-tune the structure of the Playbook; the final structure is outlined in Table 3.

Main Page	Sub-pages
1. START HERE	1.1 Playbook Overview 1.2 How To Use 1.3 Inclusion IS Essential 1.4 About The Research 1.5 About The Researchers 1.6 FAQ
2. UNDERSTANDING	2.1 Personal Buy-In 2.2 LGBTQ+ Language 101 2.3 User Personas 2.4 Professional Buy-In
3. DESIGNING	3.1 Whom Does Exclusionary Design Affect? 3.2 Current Federal Design Practices 3.3 How To Design Inclusively for Users 3.4 Current User Account Examples
4. IMPLEMENTING	4.1 Getting Key Stakeholders On Board 4.2 Bringing To Your Team 4.3 Making LGBTQ+ Inclusivity A Habit
5. RESOURCES	5.1 Document Appendix 5.2 Glossary 5.3 Activity Appendix

Table 3: Outline of Playbook Navigation. There are five main pages, each with up to six sub-pages. Main pages are Start Here, Understanding, Designing, Implementing, and Resources.

4 SURVEY RESULTS

This section provides a summary of survey responses, including user accounts (UAs) providing no options for accurate gender identity or sexual orientation, UAs providing thoughtful inclusion, the types of industries participants would feel comfortable sharing information with, and users' feelings about the current Facebook UA sign up. This section is focused more on reporting descriptive statistics from the surveys with some corroborating open-ended responses to provide context; we further incorporate open-ended survey responses that mirrored interview responses in the Interview Results section.

4.1 Inclusivity of Gender or Sexuality Options on User Accounts

Question 3 of the survey asked respondents if there was ever a time while creating a user account in which the options provided *lacked* representations of sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI) that were accurate for them. 55% (41 of the 75 LGBTQ+ participants who answered this question) of LGBTQ+ respondents reported yes (compared to 5% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents) while 45% (34 of 75) reported no (compared to 84% (53 of 63) non-LGBTQ+ respondents).

Thus, the vast majority of respondents who identified to us as non-LGBTQ+ usually felt accurately represented when sharing SOGI data on digital platforms, effectively facing less design exclusion, while just over half of respondents who identified to us as LGBTQ+ felt that they were misrepresented when sharing SOGI data on digital platforms.¹ In an open text follow-up question, participants indicated that they did not have accurate SOGI options on social media apps such as Snapchat, a number of gaming apps, health apps, and academic apps. Participants noted that these apps could have included more options for gender (ex: non-binary), a drop down of multiple options including a blank option, and more diverse options for sexuality, or they could have not asked about SOGI. Participants reported feelings of exclusion, erasure, and invalidation.

On the other hand, in response to the survey question “Was there ever a time when you were creating a user account where you felt your gender identity or sexual orientation was thoughtfully included?” 77% (45 of 58) LGBTQ+ respondents who answered this question reported that they had experienced thoughtful inclusion, compared to 36% (20 of 55) Non-LGBTQ+ respondents. This suggests that thoughtful inclusion makes a noticeable—and memorable—difference in the user experience of LGBTQ+ participants. One LGBTQ+ survey participant stated: “having to pick just one pronoun, with only 3 options, doesn’t feel sufficient. No identifying pronouns used would be my biggest preference on 99% of platforms.” In contrast, one non-LGBT user elaborated: “Don’t remember, but I identify as female so basically everything accommodates that.” The top answers for LGBTQ+ participants included six mentions of Instagram and four of Hinge. Participants said that these apps’ inclusive options helped them feel “included,” “seen,” and “heard.”

4.1.1 Comfort sharing personal information by industry. We asked survey participants about their comfort levels with sharing personal information with six kinds of industries and their applications that involve user accounts: dating, social media, telehealth, game or puzzle, hotel or vacation rental, and finance. For each of these industry groups, we asked participants how comfortable they would be sharing their legal name, preferred name, gender, sex, pronouns, sexuality, and photo. Table 4 outlines respondents’ comfort levels by industry group and field.

Participants were most comfortable sharing Pronouns and Photos on social media as well as Sexuality on dating (96%), followed closely by Photo on a dating and Legal Name and Sex on Telehealth App (93%). Participants were least comfortable sharing their Photo on a game or puzzle (15%) or a finance (19%). Overall, participants were most comfortable sharing personal data with telehealth, followed closely by social media and dating. Game or puzzle ranked lowest in comfort across almost all data fields. For hotel or vacation rental and finance, participants were more comfortable sharing their Legal and Preferred Names, but notably uncomfortable sharing other personal data. This may reflect the discrimination and even violence that LGBTQ+ people can face when traveling or when making large financial decisions such as buying a house.

¹Though we do not have the data to say conclusively, we hypothesize that the discomfort of a few non-LGBTQ+ individuals here might be explained by people who are fluid/questioning or don’t want to disclose to us, or by allies who are answering on behalf of LGBTQ+ friends instead of themselves.

	Legal Name	Preferred Name	Gender	Sex	Pronouns	Sexuality	Photo
Dating App	45%	77%	86%	79%	90%	96%	93%
Social Media App	65%	83%	85%	68%	96%	63%	96%
Telehealth App	93%	75%	85%	93%	81%	64%	66%
Game or Puzzle App	31%	57%	45%	41%	59%	25%	15%
Hotel or Vacation Rental App	76%	68%	49%	48%	57%	24%	27%
Finance App	77%	65%	53%	47%	54%	27%	19%

Table 4: Percent of respondents that are comfortable sharing data points with each industry listed. Cells are lighter for higher percentages and darker for lower percentages. Note that this matrix does not take into account users who are not comfortable sharing any of the specified data with any of the listed industries, as we were unable to differentiate between these and non-responses due to survey design.

5 INTERVIEW RESULTS

This section presents findings from interviews with LGBTQ+ individuals (with corroborating open-ended survey responses) and with Product Managers (PMs). Before drafting the first Playbook iteration, we interviewed five LGBTQ+ technology users to understand the journey and pain points of LGBTQ+ technology users' experience in navigating user account sign-ups, and 11 PMs and interaction designers to understand experiences, constraints, and limitations in product design. We first discuss themes from LGBTQ+ user interviews, then themes from PM and designer interviews, and finally insights from reviews of the Playbook with additional LGBTQ+ technology users and PMs.

5.1 Key Interview Themes from LGBTQ+ Participants

Our interviews with LGBTQ+ participants deepened our understandings of the survey results presented above. In these interviews, participants discussed their understandings of data collection motives, their methods of data collection resistance, and their desire for data autonomy. We also note where these themes came up in the open-ended responses on the survey, further corroborating their centrality to LGBTQ+ experiences with data collection practices. These three topics then contributed to a broader theme of user hesitancy with user account (UA) sign-ups, resulting in resistance or reluctant compliance—or an alternate path. We discuss these themes next. The counts of how many times each theme was mentioned in interviews can be found in the Code column in Table 5.

The following sections will describe these four key themes from our interviews: LGBTQ+ users' hesitancy, resistance, reluctant compliance, and alternate paths for sharing representative data with user accounts (UAs). Figure 1 illustrates how the Playbook hopes to disrupt exclusionary design practices and their effects. This, in turn, can prevent instances of hesitation, data resistance, and reluctant compliance, which result when users experience microaggressions about their identities. The alternate path suggests how given the intended use of our work, UAs can instead provide micro-affirming

UA sign-up experiences. The following subsections elaborate on these themes and will provide context to Figure 1.

5.1.1 Hesitancy to share representative information. We noted frequent mentions of *hesitancy* in LGBTQ+ interviewees' willingness to share information on digital platforms. Moreover, though we did not prompt for it specifically in the survey, a number of survey respondents brought it up in their open-text answers. This hesitancy stemmed from concerns of safety, data privacy, uncertainty in users' identity, and users' distrust of technology. Participants noted fear of mental and physical safety upon disclosing personal information due to historical marginalization and harm, especially for LGBTQ+ populations of color. They also noted feeling ignored and discouraged when asked to share personal information. As one interviewee put it,

There's definitely some trauma around it, too, you know, it's like, is it always safe to identify in some way that's ... different in some ways. So it's just not so easy always to answer with someone that you don't feel safe with. (P4)

Moreover, due to the historical lack of safety for LGBTQ+ populations, interviewees described uncertainty around their understanding of data collection practices. They highly valued data privacy and were concerned about how their data is collected, stored, shared, and de-identified. When they were asked to share personal information by UAs, they described feelings of frustration, anxiety, and insecurity.

The fluid nature of LGBTQ+ identities was also a common theme. When asked to disclose SOGI-related information, some participants described feelings of discomfort due to uncertainties about how to identify, either overall or in that specific context. The concept of fluidity as it relates to identity and representation is an integral aspect of importance within LGBTQ+ communities, as previous research has demonstrated (e.g. see [6, 19, 21, 22, 31, 32, 36]). An individual who might be asked to disclose their gender identity or sexual orientation on a particular user account sign up may not know themselves how they identify, or might feel unsure about how they want to identify in that space. When forced to respond to that field, they may have to again confront this internal struggle.

Finally, the persistence of rainbow capitalism—the commercialization and commodification of support for LGBTQ+ causes [34]—has led to further distrust of corporate intentions among many of our participants. Participants noted awareness of the faux-LGBTQ+ support of anti-LGBTQ+ companies who may add rainbow colors to their logos in “support” of Pride Month, while simultaneously donating to anti-LGBTQ+ campaigns. It is important to note here that the recognition of faux-LGBTQ+ support goes hand in hand with why businesses and organizations can adopt this work, so they may get closer to more holistic LGBTQ+ support. Overall, the feeling of hesitancy that participants expressed is rooted in both macro- and microaggressions toward the LGBTQ+ community.

5.1.2 Resistance: refusal to share representative information. The next theme that frequently came up in interviews was the concept of *resistance* to information sharing. Participants reported that if they wanted to get something out of a product that was requesting personal information that they did not feel comfortable sharing,

Table 5: User Interview Themes. Each row of the table contains a code, definition, an example from interviews, and which theme the code informs.*User Interview Themes*

Code	Definition	Example	Informs
Mental and Physical Safety	How participants feel in terms of mental and physical safety both offline and online.	“I’ve lived through times where you are very judged, or friends are attacked, for identifying certain ways.” -U4	Hesitance
Data Collection Motives	What users question around why an application or platforms is asking for certain information	“From a user standpoint. It doesn’t really make sense why they would need to know what my gender is, or my pronouns are, but I can see how from their standpoint, they might want data on who was using their app.” -U1	Hesitance
Data Privacy	How users are concerned with data privacy	“There’s just constant breaches on every platform all the time, and so I do get frustrated when they are asking for such personal information. If they’re going even farther and asking things that might be unsafe for someone to know, it makes people not want to fill it out genuinely” -U2	Hesitance
Performative Inclusion in Tech	How genuine users feel technology companies are in their inclusivity efforts	“Just showing that you’re having the likeness of a queer creator doesn’t necessarily mean that you support the communities behind them. You might just be trying to attract them to use your app.” -U1	Hesitance
Data Collection Resistance	Embodies anonymity, lying, and disinterest in sharing	“It’s not like I have to give them 100% my information. I could be Jonathan from Texas and I was born in ‘62. They don’t have to know my full information” -U5	Resistance
Data Entry Options	Available options to users when creating a user account - they cannot be accurate if they don’t have the option	“But when I sign up, it asks “what’s your gender?” and it only has male or female. It’s like wow, you didn’t even try here.” -U0	Resistance
Forced or Hesitant Compliance	When participants mention that they must comply to use technology that they want or need, but feel they do not have a choice	“I’m used to choosing all these markers about yourself forever and I’m desensitized to it. Ugh, this is what I have to do even if it’s not truly how I want to fill it out.” - U0	Compliance
Negative Tech Relationships	How participants describe their negative relationships with technology and/or tech usage	“ I, you know, have given all this information, and then I don’t remember ever getting any benefit from it”	Compliance
Autonomy Over Data	How users take control over their data and how it’s shared	“I feel like with a lot of identity and preference questions, it’s often like a multi-choice answer, where sometimes it would be nice to self-select, self-describe, self-define. That’s really the only problem I have” -U5	Compliance
Genuine Inclusion in Tech	Participant attitudes towards genuineness of inclusion	“When other platforms not only include trans people but disabled gay people, people of all views and backgrounds, I think that is also a marker that they are making an effort.” -U5	Alternative Path
Delightful moments in UI/UX	What moments do participants find delightful in relation to specific features, UI, and/or UX in applications	“the fact that [options] included bisexual and pansexual. I was like, oh, nicely done.” -U2	Alternative Path

they often chose to or were forced to provide inaccurate data about themselves. This ‘resistant’ behavior may result from a number of factors including a lack of choices, a personal distrust of corporations, and an imbalance of trade-offs in which the benefit they would get from providing accurate information is not worth the potential costs of disclosing that information.

Particularly common in participants’ experiences were a set number of identity categories (e.g. only “Male” and “Female” for gender) that does not allow a user to provide accurate information about themselves, requiring them to mis-represent their identity

in order to proceed. Costanza-Chock refers to these kinds of problems as ‘dysaffordances’ [9]. P4 told us, “there’s not an option or prefer not to say how you feel about answering those, and … to be honest, I might lie if I didn’t feel comfortable.” Corroborating these interview findings, 53% of survey responses from LGBTQ+ users stated that they have experienced a situation in which they were creating a user account that did not present an option that fits their gender identity or sexual orientation. Many participants described feelings of exclusion, frustration, and invisibility when navigating this process.

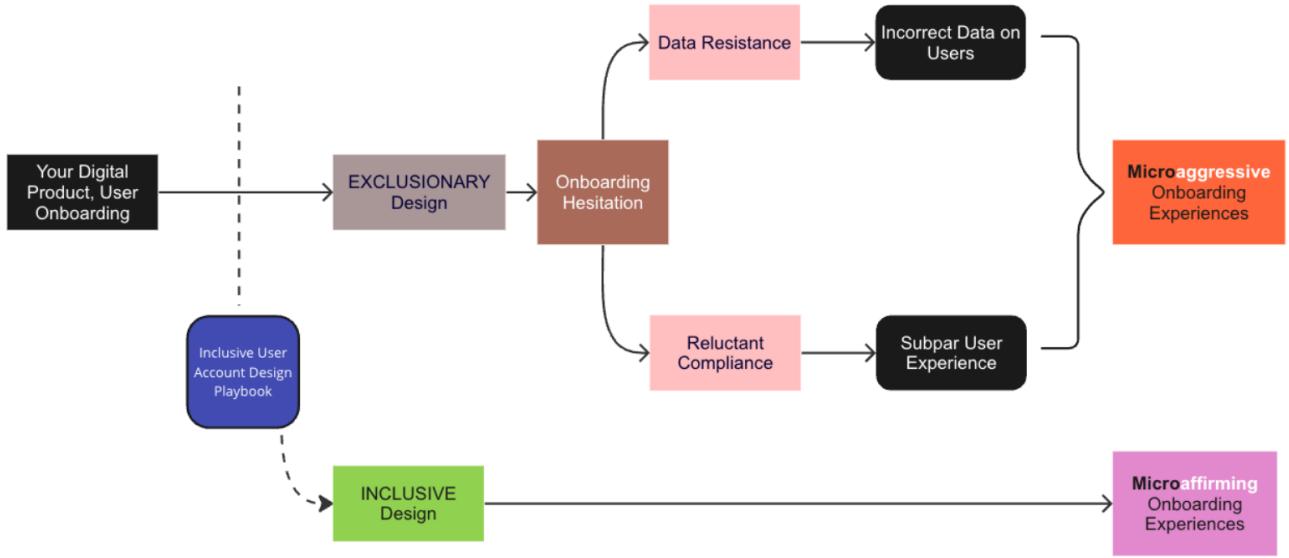


Figure 1: Flow of exclusionary design versus inclusive design, the former resulting in microaggressions and the latter in micro-affirmations during the UA sign-up experience. With the use of our Playbook, the path for micro-affirmations open up.

Additionally, a number of participants highlighted personal distrust of corporations and their intentions with users' personal information. They stated feelings of "annoyance" when asked to share information on corporate platforms. Finally, users displayed resistant behavior and described feeling "exploited" when they perceived that the risks of sharing information—for instance, data leaks (P3) or concerns about physical safety (P3 and P4)—outweighed the benefits of having a more personalized experience. In these cases, participants preferred anonymity to personalization.

Participants reported resisting data collection the most when they did not see any negative consequences for providing false information. For example, when using technology for mundane purposes such as playing a video game, they were more likely to resist providing accurate information about themselves, as opposed to situations in which providing accurate information benefited them, such as a telehealth app. This was also reflected in survey respondents' comfort levels with providing personal information to different types of industries, as presented in Survey Results: users were most uncomfortable sharing SOGI-related data with industries that they felt should have no legitimate use for their data, or that would not benefit them in any way. For example, most survey respondents were comfortable sharing their gender with a dating app because they felt it would benefit their experience in connecting with the right groups of people, but were not comfortable sharing their gender with game or puzzle apps.

5.1.3 Reluctant Compliance: reluctantly sharing representative information. Another theme that came up during interviews was *reluctant compliance*: rather than ending the user sign-up flow, participants still went through the user account sign up process and reluctantly accepted the inaccurate classification systems and data standards provided by the platform. Participants reported feeling

that they had to comply with categories that platforms provided them despite feeling "boxed in" (P4) by them because of their ubiquity. One participant mentioned, "I think in some ways it really can't be avoided because I have to use a computer at work" (P2), while another elaborated that "A lot of my hobbies also take place over the Internet, or just with technology in general. So it's my work, my family, my friends, and my hobbies, like most of this is all technology based" (P3).

This reluctant compliance also stems from participants' self-described apathy towards how they understand that data collection and categorization affects them as an individual. Some described feeling desensitized to giving out information—as one interviewee stated, "I'm just so used to it, I'm used to choosing all these markers about yourself forever and I'm desensitized to it. Ugh, this is what I have to do even if it's not truly how I want to fill it out. It's just how it goes" (P1). Here, the participant is referencing the frustrating feeling that they are not being accurately represented by the data they are required to input. This feeling of desensitization and being "boxed in" ultimately led to reported feelings of microaggressions during UA sign-up experiences.

5.1.4 An alternate path: the desire to share representative information. In our non-traditional card sorting interview activity, we asked participants what would need to change for them to want to willingly, even eagerly, engage with the user account sign-up process. Their requests tended to cluster around four areas: customization, the ability to opt out, awareness of data privacy and usage, and up-front presentation of company values. For customization, we found that providing the user with the ability to self-describe using language that doesn't "other" them makes them more appreciative and comfortable sharing how they authentically identify. P3 exemplifies this through the lens of usernames:

I think customization always lets the user be genuine. How they want to be in terms of things that are from a dropdown menu, people are never going to fit in a dropdown menu. The more questions where you put dropdown menus, the worse it's going to be. Usernames—we pick our own usernames. On what website is it a dropdown for picking your own username, where they don't give you any option?

Other interview participants hinted at this same feeling. P1 talked about how they preferred if “you weren’t forced to pick between what they’ve decided are the ‘acceptable’ choices” while P5 mentioned that “I feel like with a lot of identity and preference questions, it’s often a multi-choice answer, where sometimes it would be nice to self-select, self-describe, self-define.” This was further supported by open-text survey responses: there, participants noted that having self-description options felt more thoughtfully inclusive. Further, 90% of survey participants who had experienced exclusionary user accounts said that adding more options for gender identity, sexual orientation, and pronouns could have made their user experiences better.

Another method that digital products can employ to create a better user experience is to provide the opportunity for users to opt out of answering a question. Participants in both the survey and the interviews wanted control over what they shared and understanding of data flows and access behind the scenes. When they came across data entry points that they were not entirely sure about, they tended to feel a strong sense of reluctance—as P3 stated, they often wondered, “Can I get away with not giving you my real information? I do see if it’s required or not.” Additionally, a sense of control over information disclosure was important to participants, with P4 elaborating that they’d prefer “answering as much as I feel comfortable, and nothing extra.” When participants felt more autonomy over their data through opt-out options, they felt micro-affirmations.

Participants also said they would more eagerly engage if they had some transparency around why user data is being collected, and how it is going to be used. Some were curious about what other users on the platform could see. This was a particular concern for P5, who said, “When people do see a public social media page, what do I want them to interact with? I feel like I can control that.” If participants do not feel confident in the company collecting their data, the inclination to resist arose again, because what mattered to many was, as P4 put it, “if I felt like the people doing the work were also members of the community and were really safe people.” If digital platforms were more transparent during their user account sign-up process, participants like P1 would more willingly partake: “if sign ups ever ask me, ‘can we ask you extra questions so that we can get data so that we know more?’,” they stated, “I’d be more inclined to answer it.”

Lastly, participants noticed and even told others about transparency of company values and contributions to genuine LGBTQ+ advocacy and inclusion. It helped them feel welcome on the platform, which in turn allowed them to be more engaged with that product. When asking for examples of user accounts that were positively memorable to users, P5 mentioned that if a company had marketing materials “including LGBTQ+ experiences and voices

throughout the year, I think that you were making that important effort to retain those relationships and build that community.”

Overall, when participants came across exclusionary design on user account interfaces, they hesitated to use that product, which resulted in them either resisting its designed use case or reluctantly complying with its categorizations. In both of these options, they felt disingenuous to their true identities and less safe when using these products. Their responses pointed toward an alternate path, where technology designers recognize the impact of user account features and design according to inclusive strategies and markers. P5 shares their positive UA experiences and what they called an inclusive platform: “When other platforms not only include trans people but disabled gay people, people of all views and backgrounds, I think that is also a marker that they are making an effort.” Thoughtful inclusion was recognized by not only LGBTQ+ survey participants but also a number of non-LGBTQ+ participants: 75% of users who reported coming across a user account that thoughtfully included their gender identities and sexual orientation mentioned it was because of the inclusive options.

5.2 Interview Themes from PMs and Designers

In our PM interviews, we confirmed that PMs are usually the primary decision-makers in product development and have well-connected, cross-functional roles. PM3 stated that “Product managers fit in the middle of the problem space and solutions phase to figure out what the problem is.” PMs act as liaisons within different disciplines in a given company, making them an ideal audience for the Playbook. After learning about the time constraints PMs deal with, we aimed for this resource to be reference-able and easily digestible for PMs during their busy workdays, largely influencing our approach to the Playbook and informing our “Playbook Overview” page seen in Figure 4.

5.2.1 PM values: collaborative problem solving for user joy. In our interviews, PMs described valuing problem solving, spreading joy, and having empathy in their work. PMs leveraged products’ affordances to solve problems and mitigate pain points that users experience. They viewed products as a way to, as PM1 put it, get to “rolling up my sleeves and digging into the weeds of what the customer needs are.” PMs also valued “spreading joy,” with multiple talking about the distinction between “Minimum Lovable Product” (MLP) and “Minimum Viable Product” (MVP) in which the former focuses on the core of users’ likes, values, and interests at the foundation of the product development process, instead of just focusing more abstractly on viability within a given market. PMs highlighted the importance of user experience, comfort, and enjoyment while using a product. PM1 stated their goal as “making sure that … 100% of our users are comfortable using the product and that our product is meeting some sort of unmet need for them.” The third value that was most common amongst the PMs we interviewed was a focus on empathy and ensuring that customers feel included. Including customers looked like asking questions and listening to better understand them, as well as ensuring that PMs are not developing this product for themselves but for their user base. Learning about these values allowed us to use a first person writing style when creating the Playbook and address this intended audience more personally.

Collaboration with others was highly valued among PMs in terms of access to and utilization of resources. All PM participants in this study noted that they often seek guidance from others in the industry whom they respect when they are looking for further information, whether learning from other experienced coworkers or obtaining advice from managers, mentors, or professional coaches. PMs noted that while their role required a lot of these “soft” skills and adaptability, “hard” (technical) skills were necessary as well. To address these needs, PMs often utilized static reference materials such as books, online courses, YouTube videos, or other online guides as well as interactive courses such as business school classes, PM degree classes, and workshops. This finding informed the resources we made available in the Implementing section, specifically our “Bringing to Your Team” page (see Figure 7) and a template message to add to meeting agendas about the importance of this Playbook.

5.2.2 PM approaches to designing user products. In determining the process of product development and implementation that PMs must navigate, we wanted to understand the level of experience that PMs have in user accounts. Our PM participants had different levels of experience: PM0, PM1, and PM5 had no experience in designing user accounts, while PM3 and PM4 had some experience with parts of the user account design process. PM2 had experience in developing a user account experience from end to end.

Because PMs have many details to consider for a user account beyond inclusivity, they look to companies they perceive as leaders in the field, like Facebook (which we used as a case study to ground PM’s responses during one part of the interview), to inform their product choices. This further exemplifies their need for simple and direct guidance around inclusivity that the Playbook aims to provide. All of the PMs were aware of the importance of asking for the least amount of data possible from the user. Especially in regards to a sign up flow, PM3 explained, “With each field and step that you have in a flow, the more drop off and abandonment there’s going to be. If their goal is to get more people to sign up for Facebook then adding more requirements is going to make that more challenging and therefore fewer people are going to sign up.”

Regardless of product or feature type, PMs described using a number of strategies during the product development process. These frameworks go hand-in-hand and include (1) user-led decision making, (2) open problem solving, and (3) prioritization strategies. The user-led decision making framework aligns with the Minimum Lovable Product strategy, which centers users’ delight with a given product. PM1 stated that they “develop the core of what users need, but instead of thinking about it in terms of what users need, you should think about it in terms of what users will love.” Additionally, PMs highlighted the use of open problem solving. For this, PMs conduct research and analysis with users to identify the true underlying problems of a situation so they can successfully design and ship lovable products. PM2 stated “I am less a product principles and product process minded person and more a product is a really amazing vehicle to solve problems and understand them in a really cool way.”

Finally, PMs discussed how they prioritize features to decide what gets built and when. Three PMs reported utilizing the Risk,

Impact, Complexity, and Effort (RICE) method to develop prioritizations. Risk is considering who is at risk of being negatively impacted by a product, Impact considers how many people will be affected, Complexity is the level of difficulty to build it within an existing product system, and Effort considers the amount of time, money, and other resources needed to build a product. This finding informed a large part of our “How to Design Inclusively for Users” page, seen in Figure 6. In addition to the RICE prioritization method, PM5 mentioned the “One, Three, Nine” framework, which prioritizes value of features from low to medium to high. Finally, PMs utilized internal prioritization guides specific to their company.

5.2.3 Barriers PMs face during product development. PMs described dealing with a number of constraints to consider during the product development process such as resources, time, legalities, and higher-level stakeholders. As mentioned in the Methods, the intention of asking PMs how they might prioritize design changes and manage conflict was to inform how we presented our final Playbook. As limited resources were the most often mentioned constraints, this gave an indication of how our Playbook might be useful to address this. The specific issues PMs mentioned were most commonly having limited availability of workers able to perform a task, while the second most common, legal constraints, entailed government and policy measures to be accounted for when developing products. The third most common constraint among PM interviewees was higher-level stakeholders such as company leadership who make decisions about what steps should be prioritized and where funding will be allocated. Regarding this, PM2 stated that “solving important problems might not always align with where the business wants to allocate their time and resources.” This constraint was further observed when this PM’s business prioritized a multi-million dollar deal over users’ concerns about a product’s inclusivity, showcasing a common theme of businesses prioritizing money over other factors.

The inclusiveness of products is often affected by the constraints that PMs deal with in the product development process. Since there are resource and time constraints and PMs are balancing inputs from many sources, PMs’ focus is often dependent on a company’s business goals. Additionally, senior leadership may be responsible for deciding business goals, scope, and a roadmap that might be out of a PM’s control. PM0 described how they would “make a pitch to the VP of why this feature should get funded this quarter. Ultimately it’s the VP that’s deciding if we’re prioritizing these features.”

Since legal measures and policies are a constraint, if these particular measures do not specify inclusive measures within the requirements, inclusion could be left out in an attempt to fulfill minimum legal requirements. As PM1 described, “The government recognizes he and she right? They don’t recognize other gender options, which is really something that is troubling to me, to our founders, to the company, because we’ve focused very deeply on building a very inclusive company.” In order to acknowledge the inclusive limitations that result from external policies, PM1 noted that although they are restricted to using binary gender options, they provide additional explanation underneath this data collection field, noting their limits due to government reporting.

Along with constraints, PMs must navigate pushback from internal and external stakeholders who may not agree with their decision making and prioritization results. On internal pushback, PM3 explained,

As a product manager, when you are presenting a PRD (product requirements document), depending on how your company works, you should be prepared for different types of pushback and (be aware of) all the different stakeholders that will be there, what questions they might have. That way you can anticipate it and have an answer so that you're not forced to think on the spot of what problems they might have with it.

In addition to internal pushback, PMs also noted that they received pushback externally. One example of external pushback mentioned was a Twitter user tweeting about a given company's lack of inclusivity. Depending on the resources available and level of severity of the complaint, external pushback sometimes results in direct change, while other times is put on a team's backlog to be revisited at a later date.

5.2.4 How PMs prepare and respond to internal pushback. When PMs integrated inclusive features on product developments, they noted that it was generally well-received within their teams and that companies were beginning to be more conscious of inclusive features and to “build without bias.” Even so, while there has been positive reception to inclusive features, when there are resource and time constraints inclusivity is often one of the first things that is cut. PM1 said, “There are still companies that index really, really heavily on moving fast. Unfortunately, I feel like when things get cut out of the process, this (inclusivity) is one of the first things to go.”

In managing and anticipating pushback, PMs said that it is important to have specific data points to present to higher-level stakeholders. Preparing data entails understanding what stakeholders are looking to hear, what questions they might have, and what their concerns might be. Additionally, being proactive in setting expectations was another way that PMs described managing pushback. PM5 stated, “I realized even positive change freaks people out. I think the way to alleviate that or reduce the scary feelings around it is to make sure they (stakeholders) are involved from the beginning.” PMs also have to know when is appropriate to pushback against pushback, even from senior stakeholders, when a particular issue is not what it seems. PM4 provided an example of this:

I knew their full solution was too far. It would give us tech debt and we weren't informed enough on what they were going for so I worked on a compromise. I really focused on what outcome are you all trying to solve for now, and then we came up with a much simpler approach that got them unblocked but would need more future work to really be what they're envisioning it to be over the long haul.

This form of pushback management for PMs was knowing when to cut their losses and simply accept pushback. This often happens when high ranking stakeholders or CEOs are invested in a particular decision. PM1 noted that “we got pushback from him (the CEO)

a lot of different stuff, and what that meant for me and what that meant for my team is, a lot of times you get feedback or push back, and you have to take it.”

6 PLAYBOOK TESTING WITH LGBTQ+ USERS

Feedback from seven LGBTQ+ respondents in the user-testing survey after the Playbook was created reflected frameworks mentioned in related work, validating that the best practices in this research space should be developed with the involvement of users themselves. Our respondents praised the user personas section of the Playbook, which were created directly from the LGBTQ+ users we interviewed (See Table 1). Our goal was to provide experiences from actual users and include direct quotes, positions, and feelings towards LGBTQ+ inclusivity in user accounts through a professional user experience methods framework to allow PMs and their companies to trust this resource.

The primary suggestions for improvement from LGBTQ+ survey respondents focused on nuances of language and design, as well as the constraints that we were aware of such as monetizing the impact to appeal to business strategies. Respondents asked for changes in definitions that differed from their understanding, such as “MLM” changing from “Men (who) Like Men” to “Men Loving Men.” We originally presented “added time to engage with community” as a “con,” informed by business practices of “time costs,” but LGBTQ+ users pushed back on that language and suggested that it changed to “Benefits and Efforts” instead of “Pros and Cons.” Additionally, there were requests to add *more* to the Playbook, particularly more content on intersectionality and sections on trauma-informed practices. Lastly, an important piece of feedback that we asked for was how users actually go about giving feedback to digital platforms, so we could provide these preferences to product professionals. We found that respondents preferred anonymous feedback forms and multiple channels to contact the company such as social media or email.

Overall, LGBTQ+ respondents found that the experiences that interviewees shared in initial Playbook interviews were mostly correctly communicated successfully, with the caveat of wanting more content. In the next section, we share the context that provided the implementation of user feedback and findings for the key audience of the end deliverable.

7 PLAYBOOK TESTING WITH PROJECT MANAGERS AND DESIGNERS

In our expert reviews with three PMs and two technology Designers, we sought to resolve any points of confusion and uncertainty that might exist in the Playbook from their perspective. Was the Playbook a self-contained resource that included useful and digestible information that could realistically be implemented in industry? The participants in this phase of the project are labeled PM6 through PM9 plus PM4 (who participated again; see Table 2 for more about these participants). Note that while there were two Designers in this group, for simplicity we will refer to this participant pool as “PMs” in this section.

In tension with the request for more content from LGBTQ+ users, PMs noted confusion when navigating the Playbook. Still, despite this, the majority of PMs navigated to the “start here” page. PMs

suggested that there should be simpler navigation within pages and between pages to find relevant content more easily without feeling overwhelmed by the amount of information. They suggested breaking up information by adding visuals such as diagrams and charts to improve navigation, which we implemented. Relatedly, PMs asked for a better overview of the Playbook, and perhaps multiple kinds of summaries for different roles (e.g. leadership vs. engineering). At the same time, PMs noted the Playbook structure resembled a physical book, allowing them to borrow those affordances to move between the main sections.

Additionally, some were unsure of the intended audience of the Playbook. As PM4 stated, “When I come into a page, who’s it directed at? Who’s the audience? And how should I be reading it?”, noting that language using “You” should be clarified, which we revised. A few participants moreover mentioned that this may not fit Business-to-Business (B2B) as well as Business to Consumer products. P6, who had experience in B2B, said, “Contractors and distributors aren’t, I feel, incredibly worried about inclusivity. We also don’t necessarily ask anything about gender, so it’s not really too applicable in our software in general. If it were something that came up often with our users it would be something we’d want to implement.”

PMs also had several positive reactions towards the Playbook, praising the examples and interactive visual representations of data. They also noted that concrete examples of “Dos” vs “Don’ts” and templates were very helpful, and having examples allowed them to better conceptualize what inclusive language may look like in practice. And in agreement with the LGBTQ+ feedback, they really liked the personas, which they said helped to ground recommendations and offered enough detailed nuance that they felt that they did not have to read up on in other, more dense sections.

When we asked PMs about the use case of this guide, they said they found value in having a consolidated resource with reputable research that they could trust. They reported wanting external validation that they are using correct information without having to spend a lot of time researching it themselves. While we did not require PMs to identify as LGBTQ+ to be a part of the study, those PMs who did identify as LGBTQ+ also found the Playbook resourceful in this way. They also commented on the usefulness of having concrete, actionable steps. While we could not provide exact solutions for systemic issues, PMs agreed that the Playbook provided the tools for informed decision-making.

As a measurement of the Playbook’s potential impact, we asked about whether PMs would share the Playbook, and if so, with whom. PMs talked about sharing with co-workers, company leadership, and affinity groups. PM8 stated that “I would feel so comfortable, I would actually love to just share this link with everybody if I were to put it on like a slack channel, or even have it as an email signature.” By and large, participants felt confident and secure in presenting this knowledge as a valuable and informative resource, and did not feel like there was a risk of pushback within their teams and companies.

8 DISCUSSION

As we saw above, it is clear that LGBTQ+ users notice the difference between an inclusive user account (UA) sign-up processes and

exclusionary ones. This leads to consequences of feeling “unseen” that contribute to negative mental and physical health effects. In the same vein as Hanckel et. al’s findings of how LGBTQ+ young people negotiate visibility, privacy, and identity on social media platforms, our findings expand that understanding. LGBTQ+ users generally are able to distinguish user account sign-ups that feel inauthentic to them, and decide whether or not they will continue using such a product [18]. Whether or not digital products *intend* to create that feeling in their users, it is important to recognize that they *do* create them, and it’s up to them to implement this change. Furthermore, as LGBTQ+ individuals fluidly explore their identities, it is important to recognize the ephemeral nature of identity in relation to static information that is asked of users when creating UAs. Overall, exclusionary UA sign-ups remove a sense of belonging in digital spaces that in turn affect LGBTQ+ users’ sense of identity.

Furthermore, it is clear that product managers need reliable resources for advocacy. Even when PMs and others in similar roles have personal values of inclusion that they want to embed in their workflows, company culture and project constraints can derail these good intentions. They can use a tool like the Playbook to implement change. This should involve using all the pages in the Implementing section (See Table 3) to craft pitch letters to senior management, effectively communicate this information to their product teams, and learn the best efforts in adding LGBTQ+ inclusion to company cultures. Depending on the organizational processes at companies, PMs may not have full decision-making power on the prioritization of LGBTQ+ inclusive features. Allyship is especially important in this case, as fewer LGBTQ+ individuals are in positions of power [14]. Providing the decision makers, both senior and lateral team members, with the research presented in this paper and the Playbook gives PMs the tools to educate co-workers and leadership on why inclusive user accounts are a must-have in their products.

So what would meaningful change look like? Based on our work, we believe that this paper and Playbook could have meaningful change for HCI scholars and in corporate industries. Within the HCI context, our findings support other work that suggests users are well aware of the affordances of technology, but expand on findings by attributing autonomy over their experiences. A prototypical HCI user may not have direct access to implement meaningful change, but as HCI scholars are situated in networks of researchers, academics, and industry leaders, our methods provide insight to HCI scholars on how to act as intermediaries between users and industry workers who may implement this change. For LGBTQ+ users, more inclusive UAs mean that they will experience micro-affirmations rather than microaggressions from online products and thus engage with them more often, providing a mutually beneficial relationship. Additionally, LGBTQ+ technology workers may have their mental stress and cognitive load be reduced, since they may not be called on to do the kind of often-unpaid and underappreciated advocacy work that the Playbook can also do. Overall, meaningful change could look like continued practical tool building from research, more positive outcomes for LGBTQ+ users, and better learning opportunities for product development teams.

8.1 Limitations and Future Work

We acknowledge that there are a number of limitations in this research. Our focus overall was on the user account sign-up process, which is only one aspect of the LGBTQ+ user experiences online; future work could explore more aspects of the experiences of these users. For our survey, we recruited a number of LGBTQ+ participants through snowball sampling within our local networks, which likely meant generally more privileged respondents. Future work could explore the experiences and test the Playbook with a wider variety of LGBTQ+ technology users. We would also recommend further exploration of intersectionality in design practices specifically. Additionally, while we collected data across several industries, the types of industries was limited, affecting the depth of that particular aspect of the research design. Future work could explore more industry types, focus on detailed analyses of particular industry types (e.g. healthcare), or conduct comparative studies between types (e.g. healthcare vs. social media). Our technology worker sample, focused on product managers, was also relatively small; future work could expand and diversify the roles to include more designers, engineers, and executives, which could provide a more holistic picture of opportunities and challenges in the product design process.

9 CONCLUSION

Our goal was to enable PMs to implement changes they often recognized were needed with resources that catered to their frameworks and spoke to their access to power. To this, we have crafted an inclusive user account design Playbook. Considering users' sentiments and experiences navigating user accounts, this research highlights experiences of misrepresentation, distrust, and exclusion when LGBTQ+ users are subjected to options they found limited or inaccurate during the process of disclosing personal information across user account creation processes. In addition to safety concerns as an effect of the historic marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals and the commodification of support from corporate entities (sometimes called "rainbow capitalism" or "performative allyship"), data shows that LGBTQ+ users face further marginalization and feelings of erasure by exclusionary practices that permeate current user account design.

While PMs noted workplace constraints including time, resources, and business values, they also noted the importance of creating "lovable" products for all users. Even so, we found that PMs generally did not necessarily have the resources or background knowledge to realistically develop more inclusive products. In response, we developed a Playbook of best practices, which was informed by the experiences of our LGBTQ+ interviewees and survey respondents as well as insights from PMs. The Playbook is meant to be an inclusive design resource for product teams to advocate for and implement inclusive design strategies. In user testing, PMs noted the informativeness and effectiveness of the distribution of this resource into workplaces within industry.

As LGBTQ+ populations continue to experience hardships offline, it is imperative that their online experiences provide micro-affirmations about their identities. Empowering PMs and those who help develop digital products is certainly one path to reducing hardships on the LGBTQ+ community. Presenting the culminating work,

we encourage readers and audiences to read, explore, and actively engage with the Playbook at bit.ly/LGBTInclusive_UAGuide.

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10 APPENDIX

Following are screenshots from our survey, card sort activity, and Playbook.

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Which types of information are you comfortable with sharing to each of the following kinds of services? Please select N/A if not applicable

	N/A or I don't wish to answer	Dating App	Social Media App	Telehealth App	Game or Puzzle App	Hotel or Vacation Rental App	Finance App
Legal Name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Preferred Name	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pronouns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexuality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sign Up ×

It's quick and easy.

First name ! Last name

Mobile number or email

New password

Birthday ?

Feb 8 2023

Gender ?

Female Male Custom

Select your pronoun

✓ Select your pronoun

She: "Wish her a happy birthday!"

He: "Wish him a happy birthday!"

They: "Wish them a happy birthday!"

Gender (optional)

Figure 2: Screenshots from Participant Survey. Above: Survey Matrix; see results in Table 4. Below: screenshot of Facebook Sign-Up Page Presented in Survey.

U# - Public vs Private

You are being asked for this information when creating a user account. Do you have a preference for which data points are automatically public vs private?

date of birth	legal name	preferred name	photo	gender
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private				

sex	sexual identity	relationship status	email	pronouns
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private				

U# - Ranking

Remove any industries on which you would not be comfortable sharing the specific field. Explain your reasoning out loud.

photo	date of birth	relationship status	sexual identity	preferred name	sex	pressure	gender	email	legal name
dating app									
social media app									
telehealth / doctor app									
social game app									
finance app									

U# - 2 question analysis

In general, how do you feel about the following two question approach for sharing your sex and gender identity?

1. What is your current gender identity?
 Woman
 Man
 Transgender
 Genderqueer
 Two Spirit
 Write in your own answer: _____

write your thoughts here:


2. What sex were you assigned at birth?
 Female
 Male
 Intersex

Click and drag the industry to correspond with how comfortable you would be answering the two-question approach

Healthcare and Social Services (ex. healthcare)	Educational Services (ex. Duolingo)	Controllable (ex. Social Media, Instagram)	Uncontrollable (ex. Telecommunications, Banking)
Food Service and Beverage (ex. Starbucks)	Social Media (ex. Instagram)	Video Games (ex. Grand Theft Auto V)	Universities (ex. Harvard, MIT, Stanford)
Administrative, Financial, and Professional Services (ex. Accountants)	Real Estate, Rental, Leasing (ex. Airbnb)	Automotive (ex. Ford, GM, Toyota)	Automotive (ex. Ford, GM, Toyota)
Retail Trade and Marketing (ex. Walmart)	Finance (ex. Banking app)	Manufacturing (ex. GM, Ford)	Manufacturing (ex. GM, Ford)
Entertainment (ex. Netflix)	other		

Figure 3: Card Sorting Activity Presented to LGBTQ+ Users

Welcome!

This Playbook will equip you with knowledge on creating Inclusive User Account Experiences for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning+ (LGBTQ+) Community.

"Upskilling employees with definitive 'how-to' guidance that enables allyship by showing employees how, specifically, they can advance DEI goals via the actions they take in their professional capacities."

- Harvard Business Review

Do it right *the first time* - using this collection of cross-industry research, recommendations, & inclusivity guides.

Through this playbook you will learn how to:

- **Understand** the social issues related to LGBTQ+ user accounts
- **Design** with these considerations top of mind
- **Implement** these inclusive practices across your organization

What problem spaces does this playbook aim to solve?

Disjointed Information Access Contains compiled research across disciplines for quick, easy, & reliable reference	Inaccurate Data Collection Ensure accurate data, especially for already marginalized groups, for inclusion in data-driven products
Burden on Marginalized Groups Upskill product teams so they do not have to rely on LGBTQ+ individuals for self-education	Experience of Not Belonging Challenge the industry norms and create products with and for LGBTQ+ users in mind

Who is it for? Product Team Members, including: PMs, Designers, UX Researchers, and more.

This guide can be used for those in a variety of different industries, ranging from B2B to B2C.
Curious about if it fits your niche? Explore the section below to find what might be most relevant to you.

Federally Mandated If your company or role requires you to take a look at federally mandated data collection pieces, we suggest taking a look at the following pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Inclusion IS Essential - When: Now! ➲ Current Federal Design Practices - Whole Page ➲ LGBTQ+ Language 101 - Terminology ➲ Getting Stakeholders on Board - Monetize ➲ Making LGBTQ+ Inclusivity a Habit - Impact Measures 	Industry Focus If you work for a primarily Business to Consumer (B2C) company, we suggest you take a look at the following pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➲ User Personas ➲ Current User Account Examples ➲ Getting Stakeholders on Board ➲ Making LGBTQ+ Inclusivity a Habit If you work for primarily a Business to Business (B2B) company, we suggest you take a look at the following pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➲ Personal Buy-In ➲ LGBTQ+ Language 101 ➲ Bringing to Your Team
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Role Based Navigation Paths

Based on your role on product teams, which pages should you check out? Expand on drop downs for action specific pages.

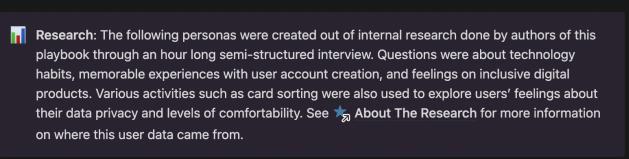
Product Manager / Team Lead The ➤ Implementing pages will be most relevant for your role. We also encourage that you check out the following pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➲ Professional Buy-in ➲ Current User Account Examples <p><i>I Want To..</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► New Product Development ► Current Product Review 	Designer The ➤ Designing pages will be most relevant for your role. We also encourage that you check out the following pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➲ Making LGBTQ+ Inclusivity a Habit ➲ User Personas ➲ LGBTQ+ Language 101 <p><i>I Want To..</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Design A New User Account Flow ► Audit A Current User Account Flow
User Experience Researcher There are various pages that will be most relevant for your role, we encourage that you check out the following: <p><i>I Want To..</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Exploratory Research on LGBTQ+ Communities ► Supporting UX Designers ► Testing & Field Studies 	People Team There are various pages that will be most relevant for your role, we encourage that you check out the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➲ LGBTQ+ Language 101 ➲ Personal Buy-In ➲ Professional Buy-In ➲ Bringing to Your Team ➲ Making LGBTQ+ Inclusivity a Habit

Figure 4: Screenshots of “Playbook Overview” Page

Who Are LGBTQ+ Users?

To make the best use of this page, consider expanding the "Learn More about User X Here". The "Average Digital Product Uses" will inform you if they are relevant to your company. For further understanding of the following users, see [LGBTQ+ Language 101](#)

A user persona card for User 9-5. It features a topographic map background with a briefcase icon. The persona's name, "9-5", is in a central box with a cursor icon pointing at it. Below the name are four colored boxes: red (Feeling 'Othered', Disingenuous Attempts), green (Inclusive Data Entry Methods, Genuine Acts of Solidarity), and a speech bubble containing the quote "It's either you are cis or something else".

A dark card with white text. It includes a small icon of a person with a bar chart. The text reads: "Research: The following personas were created out of internal research done by authors of this playbook through an hour long semi-structured interview. Questions were about technology habits, memorable experiences with user account creation, and feelings on inclusive digital products. Various activities such as card sorting were also used to explore users' feelings about their data privacy and levels of comfortability. See [About The Research](#) for more information on where this user data came from."

User 9-5

Full Time Worker & Community Engagement

User 9-5 works hybrid full time utilizing their Masters' degree in a metropolitan city. On average, outside of being on a screen for the 8 hour work day, User 9-5 personally engages with their smartphone for an additional 30 min-4 hours every day for personal entertainment and connection with their community. They are generally skeptical about data collection motives when prompted to create user accounts across all different types of platforms.

▶ [Learn More about User 9-5 Here](#)

User Persona 9-5's Pain & Pleasure Points. Quote that says "It's either you are cis or something else"

Figure 5: Understanding: First Persona Presented in the “User Personas” Page.

What Values Might LGBTQ+ Digital Product Users Have?

Based on our research, we found LGBTQ+ digital product users value:

- 👉 When sharing Pronouns, Sexual Orientation, Sex, and Gender data, Users Value:
 - Pronouns
 - Autonomy of what data to share
 - Gender and Sex
 - Intentional data collection
 - Transparent and Consistent company motivations and intentions
 - Autonomy of what data to share
 - Sexuality
 - Intentional data collection
 - Transparent and Consistent company motivations and intentions
 - Autonomy of what data to share

How Might We Design with User Values in Mind?

Designing with these stated user values in mind requires a number of strategies that can be implemented in your design.

Why?

Inclusive features create a sense of belonging among traditionally marginalized groups.

Studies show that gender-nonconforming groups experience significantly higher psychological distress compared to their gender conforming counterparts. Contributing to gender affirming inclusive design can reduce risk factors affecting mental health

Source: Williams Institute

How?

Take a look at the table below, which presents findings from our research that highlights user values as well as strategies to design with these values in mind:

Inclusive Design Strategies

Research Finding	Design Strategies
Queer users appreciated when there was a list of drop down gender and sexual identity options that provided them with a multitude of options to choose from when sharing their information	Provide a Drop Down List of Data Entry Options
While providing options for users to choose from, it is important to be intentional about what options and nuances exist in terminology for LGBTQ+ populations.	Design Attentively and in Acknowledgment of Queer Terms and Nuances
Queer users value the ability to opt out of questions that they do not feel comfortable responding to.	Include Option to "Opt-out" of Questions
Users appreciate when user accounts ask for the least amount of information needed.	Collect Data Intentionally
LGBTQ+ users already know that companies use their data, so as a company, being up front about how this data is used and secured gives these users true autonomy of whether they are willing to share this information.	Be Transparent About Motivations When Requesting User SOGI Information

Exploring the Design Strategies Further

- ▶ Providing a Drop Down List of Data Entry Options For Users
- ▶ Designing Attentively and in Acknowledgment of LGBTQ+ Terms and Nuances
- ▶ Including Option to "Opt-out" of Questions
- ▶ Intentional Data Collection
- ▶ Being Transparent About Motivations When Requesting User SOGI Information

Benefits and Efforts Required In Designing Inclusively

While using the above strategies to design inclusive user accounts will empower LGBTQ+ users, we can also take a look at the benefits and efforts required in integrating these inclusive design strategies.

User Wants	Strategy	Benefit	Effort Required
Inclusive Data Entry Methods [User Example]	Providing a Drop Down List of Data Entry Options For Users	Allows users to feel a sense of belonging and representation when filling out user account information	Requires background research as well as more engineering effort and capabilities to accurately and respectfully present options
Genuine Acts of Solidarity [User Example]	Designing Attentively and in Acknowledgment of Queer Terms and Nuances	Users feel validated in their identities	Similarly, requires background research and effort to accurately and respectfully present options
Inclusive Data Entry Methods [User Example]	Including a Custom Write-in Option When Asking About Gender	Users are not constrained by options, and can find comfort and satisfaction in self describing	Requires an effort to maintain necessary restrictions to avoid inappropriate misuse of write-in freedoms
Design for Anonymity & Autonomy [User Example]	Including Option to "Opt-out" of Questions	Users are not forced to share information they are uncomfortable sharing, thus privacy wishes are respected	Depending on business objectives, some information might be necessary to ask for
Intentional Data Collection [User Example]	Asking for Minimal Information	Friction is reduced, and users do not need to share excessive information	Again, depending on business objectives, some information might be necessary to ask for
Upfront Data Transparency [User Example]	Being Transparent About Motivations When Requesting User Information [this can be done through use of tool tips]	Users will feel more comfortable and willing to share information when they understand motivations and intentions	Depending on company values, is your company comfortable with being transparent about data intentions and motivations?

Figure 6: Designing: Screenshots of the “How to Design Inclusively for Users” page

Auditing current product designs

This section was inspired by a paper, Model Card for AI models, written by Google researchers for the Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency Conference. We adapted it to be specific to LGBTQ+ inclusivity in user accounts. This is a section provides questions designed for reflection and to help your team identify areas or blind spots that you want to provide more attention to in your product.

User Account Details

- ▶ What industry is your company associated with?
- ▶ Who developed the user account feature?
- ▶ When was the user account feature built?
- ▶ What iteration is the current user account?
- ▶ How can users give feedback on user accounts?

Intended Use of User Accounts

- ▶ Primary Intended Use:
- ▶ Primary Intended Users:
- ▶ Out-of-scope use cases:

Ethical Considerations

- ▶ Risks and Harms:
- ▶ Safety for users:

Data Related to User Accounts

- ▶ Data Usage:
- ▶ AI / ML Models' Influence:
- ▶ Data Security:
- ▶ Data Authenticity:
- ▶ Data Representation & Intersectionality:

Inclusion

- ▶ SOGI Data Fields:
- ▶ SOGI Data Options:
- ▶ Fluidity of SOGI Data:

Reflection Questions for Discussion

LGBTQ+ Inclusive User Account Design Guide

Introduction

These reflection questions for discussion are designed to be used in conjunction with the interactive [LGBTQ+ Inclusive User Account Playbook](#) (bit.ly/LGBTQInclusive_UAGuide). These questions are meant to be introspective, require reflection, and foster an open discussion around LGBTQ+ inclusivity needs for a team. Ensure your team is in the right mindset to engage in meaningful discussion, and are dedicated to creating a safe space for honest reflection.

Within your company

1. What does your current user account process look like?
2. What does inclusion mean to your company?
3. What inclusive strategies are currently in place at your company? How might your company build onto these inclusive practices?
4. What are some ways your company can provide microaffirmations for users and employees?

Within your team

5. What does inclusion mean to your team?
6. Where does LGBTQ+ inclusion fit into your team's values & goals?
7. How might your team build upon existing inclusive strategies within your company?
8. How does your team consider who is not in the room and advocate for them?
9. How can your team contribute to lessening the stigma & negative experiences for the LGBTQ+ community, within and outside of your users?

10. How can you design for **all** LGBTQ+ populations?
11. In what ways can your team alleviate the mental burden on already marginalized LGBTQ+ coworkers?
12. How can you be mindful of the impact of your digital product team within your company?
13. What intersectional identities does your team include within their research? Consider *race, ethnicity, class, tech experience, mental/physical ability, and age to start*.
14. What are ways your team can encourage microaffirmations for your users?

Within yourself

15. What does inclusion mean to **you**?
16. What aspects of **your** identity would you share with a stranger?
17. How do **you** advocate for those not in the room?
18. How can **you** contribute to lessening the stigma & negative experiences for the LGBTQ+ community?
19. How can you be mindful of the impact of **your** role within your digital product team?
20. How do you consider intersectional identities in your research? Consider *race, ethnicity, class, tech experience, mental/physical ability, and age to start*.
21. How can you encourage microaffirmations for your users?

Figure 7: Implementing: Screenshot and Content Presented on the “Bringing To Your Team” page.