

Revised Abstract

Title: Slaying the History: A Survey on the Mainstreaming and Depoliticization of Queer Slang

(1) While queer sociolects have historically functioned as tools for identity construction and subcultural cohesion, terms such as “slay” or “tea” have increasingly transitioned into mainstream social media discourse. (2) This project investigates whether the widespread usage of such slang correlates with an awareness of its cultural and political origins or if it leads to a linguistic depoliticization. (3) Although existing literature (e.g., Benitez, 2022; Laing, 2021) extensively documents the semantic evolution of these terms, there remains a lack of empirical data quantifying the etymological literacy of the general public regarding their Black and queer roots. (4) To address this gap, we examine the correlation between the intensity of social media usage and the recognition of queer etymology across diverse demographic groups. (5) We conducted a self-created online survey targeting various age and educational groups to quantitatively assess the relationship between participants' self-reported usage and their knowledge of specific terms that originate in queer ballroom culture. (6) Our findings contribute to the broader field of linguistic justice (cf. Castillo & Pineda, 2025) by determining if the mainstreaming of queer language fosters genuine inclusivity or represents a process of erasure that strips these terms of their subversive power.

Sources:

- Benitez, K. (2022). *A content analysis of queer slang on Tik Tok* [Honors Project, University of Mary Washington]. Eagle Scholar. https://scholar.umw.edu/student_research/476.
- Castillo, A., & Pineda, I. (2025). Queering language: Tracing the evolving significance of “queer” in contemporary discourse. *Journal of Homosexuality*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2025.2558100>.
- Laing, R. E. (2021). *Who said it first?: Linguistic appropriation of slang terms within the popular lexicon* [Master's thesis, Illinois State University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global (ProQuest No. 28412751)