

Digital Phantasmagoria of the Monster & the Innocent Child

*Online Discourse of Child Harm Allegations Against Queer People Within
Twitter's Anti-Gender Fachosphere*

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To Linda, and all the people who might get radicalized by extremist content and spaces online.

And to the people who are afraid of the developments occurring in our democratic societies.

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Abstract

The study utilized a digital ethnographic approach that researched the English-speaking anti-gender Twitter community and its discourse of allegations that queer people harm children. The discourse has ballooned in the past years with the backing of major political leaders, leading to many anti-LGBTQ+ policies. The purpose of the research was to contextualize Judith Butler's (2024) newest theory of the "phantasmatic field" to the online space in order to provide clear examples of the discourse and how the discussion changes in the online space. The study also researched how social media infrastructure, specifically Twitter rage bait and the recommendation algorithm, influences behavior and expression. The fieldwork consisted of 20 days during which 170 tweets were collected and coded. The study found that queer people are regularly portrayed as monstrous figures, whereas children are portrayed as mangled victims of the monsters, convincing users to believe the allegations of harm. This leads to an intensification of violent emotions and symbolic denial of queerness from all aspects of life by the users. Moreover, rage bait seems to be the most popular tactic among prominent accounts and the Twitter infrastructure seems to be heavily influencing the community and discourse, specifically in spreading anti-democratic sentiments. The study brings awareness to the topic and recommendations on how to better approach the online space and the discourse.

Keywords: allegations of child harm, anti-gender phantasmatic field, LGBTQ+ representations, rage bait, Twitter infrastructure.

Digital Phantasmagoria of the Monster & the Innocent Child

In the past months, Donald Trump signed a slew of executive orders targeting women, people of color, immigrants, and queer people (Jingnan & Lawrence, 2025; Johnson, 2025; Norwood, 2025). Additionally, he revoked funding to gender-affirming care, progressive schools, and DEI(A) programs. Although some of the executive orders have been judicially blocked or are being challenged, the effects have signaled an intensification of antagonism against “wokeness” (Norwood, 2025). Likewise, Europe has been in suit. For example, Hungary banned pride parades (Luckhurst, 2025), the Netherlands reduced funding to human rights NGOs (NL Times, 2024), and Bulgaria outlawed teaching LGBTQ+ topics in schools (Todorov, 2024). Furthermore, anti-LGBTQ+ violence has increased in Europe and the US (Guillot & Coi, 2024). Accordingly, proponents of such actions state that the enemy is “gender” or what they call “gender ideology” (Wittenius, 2022).

In their book *Who's Afraid of Gender?*, Judith Bulter (2024) describes the workings of the anti-gender movement. The non-monolithic movement uses “gender” as a binding catalyst to destabilize democracy, affirm heteronormative Christian values, and proliferate the dilapidation of marginalized communities. This is what Butler (2024) presumes to be a “phantasm” because “gender” has been tactically and somewhat illogically constructed to mean a plethora of terms that stoke moral anxiety, fear, and hatred. One such version is that gender itself, discussions around gender, and queer people harm children. Children are seen as being indoctrinated, groomed, recruited into “wokeness”, exposed to pornographic materials, and so on. These claims are false as the actual child harms are the claims of the anti-gender movement that seek to deny critical and valuable education, certain lifepaths, and in some cases the right to exist. However, the image of child harm becomes so potent that any critical debate is halted, allowing hallucinatory panic to proliferate that rallies the movement

to stop their adversaries from “harming children” by any means necessary, especially authoritarian ones (Butler, 2024).

Although having started in the 90’s by the Vatican Church, in the last few years the anti-gender movement has ballooned because of the proliferation of digital platforms (Wittenius, 2022). This is especially the case with X (hereafter Twitter) which became saturated with extremist viewpoints, disseminated by rage-baiting accounts, after Elon Musk’s acquisition (Ingram, 2024). Specifically, Musk purposefully removed or suspended around a million accounts belonging to left-wing journalists, activists, and organizations while reinstating previously banned conspiracy theorists and (neo-)fascists (Stokel-Walker, 2022). Additionally, community guidelines were softened (Keane, 2024). Furthermore, to make Twitter more profitable, Elon Musk introduced (1) subscription-based blue checkmarks, dissolving their previous authenticating role, (2) reply-based revenue, and (3) reply-based recommendation algorithm (Keane, 2024). The massive tactical restructuring of Twitter has created an economy of rage-extraction that funnels thousands of dollars to rage-baiting accounts spewing extremist views (Spring, 2024). Additionally, this rage-extraction logic is present on other social media platforms like TikTok where some users gain \$150,000 or more from rage bait annually (Gruet & Lawton, 2024). Evidently, social media infrastructure and rage bait cannot be separated from the anti-gender movement.

Therefore, the slew of anti-gender legislation, spike in anti-LGBTQ+ violence and online hate speech, and most importantly the closure of critical debate and discussion once queer people are accused of harming children, demonstrates the societal relevance of this digital ethnographic study. The study researched how the English speaking (mainly American and British) members of the anti-gender Twitter community (hereafter “Fachosphere”) operates and constructs the discourse. This materialized in the ethnographic research question:

“How do users of the English-speaking Twitter Fachosphere conceptualize and articulate the harm that is being done to the Child by queerness and queer people?”

Throughout this digital ethnographic study, Judith Butler’s newest book *Who’s Afraid of Gender?* remains central to understanding the accusations of harm to children. However, their theory has not yet been contextualized to the online space even though online spaces have a larger capability of spreading extremist views than traditional media (Cammaerts, 2020). Hence, the academic relevance is to contextualize the newly emerged theory to the online space. Moreover, the effects of rage bait on users has been severely understudied despite its prevalence in the digital space (Shin et al., 2025). Additionally, although previous research discusses some anti-LGBTQ+ discourses pertaining to harm on children in online spaces, little of this research treats children as social constructs. Thus, this research adds a new perspective regarding online anti-LGBTQ+ narratives.

In the following section, Judith Butler’s theory of the harm on the Child discourse is presented and viewed through a social constructivist lens. Then, the section presents how online discourse is fundamentally different from traditional discourse by describing its insidious spread, profitability, and the culpability of social media infrastructure. Furthermore, the research utilized a digital ethnographic approach, presented in the methodology. Afterward, the subjectivity of the community, conceptualizations of queer people and children, main narratives of the discourse, and the role of the infrastructure are described in the ethnographic report. Lastly, user, policy, and societal recommendations, as well as advice for future research, are discussed.

Theoretical Framework

Harm on the Child

The Child

Social constructivist Philippe Ariès (1962, as cited in Stephens, 2021) stated that in many cultures a distinction is made between a child and an adult, but these distinctions are not universal. Rather, the Child is socially constructed through symbolic discourse, allowing an analysis of cultural ascriptions to unfold. Furthermore, the Child not only attains cultural meanings, but it creates the social domain of childhood, which is archetypically figured in neoliberal globalized governance as an idealized scene for cultural imagination to reify the notion of purity, innocence, and vulnerability to justify security measures. The logic follows that society protects the Child because it represents everything that is good about the world (Kanjere, 2021; Stephens, 2021). However, neoliberal society is designated as crisis-prone, but instead of addressing the structure, inevitably challenging late capitalist neoliberalism, the focus is solely on protecting the Child because if protected, society will feel stable (Kanjere, 2021).

Kanjere (2021) states that the proposed protection is figured as security in the form of surveillance over child rearing, knowledge exposure, and available lifepaths. Contrastingly, this protection constructs the “autonomous child”, one who deviates from the Child, as destructive for it cannot aspire to the ideal. This inevitably leads to a justification to inflict harm, forcing autonomous children to fit the socially constructed ideal or forcibly remove them (Stephens, 2021). Likewise, queer children and children in queer family units are often regarded as needing to be protected by the State to mature according to traditional white heteronormative values (Butler, 2024). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the naturalized concept of the Child, which is organized by late capitalist neoliberal symbolic

discourse, is conceptually used. This configuration positions the Child to be the embodiment of purity, innocence, and vulnerability to justify surveillance and as a form of guilt-relief for adult neoliberal insecurity.

Anti-gender Phantasmatic Field

However, the Child is figured as a specific version of purity that differs based on cultural and political contexts (Kanjere, 2021; Stephens, 2021). Although Judith Butler (2024) does not explicitly describe how the Child is used to justify surveillance and control, they imply how certain versions of the Child are tactically figured to fit allegations of harm. They state that the anti-gender movement organizes tangible neoliberal fears into a seemingly coherent syntax, using gender, whatever it may mean to them, as a binding catalyst. This is what Butler (2024) calls the “phantasmatic field”. An instance of a discourse within the field is the accusation of harm that queer people (and others) are inflicting onto the Child. The allegation acts as a strong rallying call because of the anti-gender movement’s configuration of the Child, conceptualized as an innocent and vulnerable heterosexual white child (Butler, 2024). Consequently, those that challenge the nuclear family, and in tandem neoliberal globalized governance, are seen as causing the felt neoliberal insecurity (Butler, 2024; Kanjere, 2021; Stephens, 2021). The accusation of harm is so intense that it permits hallucinatory panic that evokes a need for the eradication of queer people (Butler, 2024).

Nonetheless, Butler (2024) states that the actual harm is the actions and attitudes that the anti-gender movement promotes like denial of critical thought, knowledge of other forms of kinship, and life-affirming healthcare, to name a few. Butler (2024) writes that “the harm is done through cultivating an imagination of where harm is happening and who is making it happen” (p. 92). By displacing the actual harm from the imagined, the actual harm is perpetuated because the imagined harm and its perpetrators (queer people) are externalized.

Once cast out or negated, the imagined returns into the phantasmatic field and is subject to phantasmatic orderings that synthesize the threat as if it were already occurring. The synthesis is created by connecting the imagined to serious accusations of harm and nefarious concepts (Butler, 2024). For example, teaching children about queer kinships is connected to indoctrination and pedophilic abuse; two seriously harmful acts that stoke moral anxiety, fear, and hatred. Teaching children about queer kinships or gender is equated to exposing children to pornography, which leads to a complete closure of critical thought as if the Child is already being abused and not under threat of abuse. The psychic jump from accusation to the feeling that child abuse is already occurring is made possible by a “deliberate form of illiteracy” (p. 91). It is a “phantasmatic sliding” or the shifting of meaning within the phantasmatic field without the subjects being aware of it (Butler, 2024). Those accusing queer people of pedophilia have shifted the meaning of the word without being aware of the shift or that it does not make logical sense. This makes their arguments, however rallying, lack a logical thread. Instead, they are entangled together by nefarious concepts that stoke fear and hatred, closing all possible interventions. This becomes problematic as these claims are not true. What needs to be understood is that the aim is to destabilize generally accepted norms instead of opening a debate (Butler, 2024).

Therefore, the anti-gender phantasmatic field works through stoking fear and hatred by connecting the imagined to nefarious concepts. The field is wide and includes many topics on gender that intersect with race, class, and other concepts (Butler, 2024), but I argue that the field becomes the most potent and dangerous when the Child is involved. If the Child is constructed as the embodiment of everything good about the world, those that harm it are bringing annihilation. In this case, the Child is figured as innocent and vulnerable to the monstrous queer person. Once transmogrified, queer people and their allies are seen as enemies that must be stopped by any means necessary (Butler, 2024). Hence, the anti-gender

phantasmatic field is a valuable concept for this research as it clearly explains the discourse of harm on the Child. Moreover, Butler's analysis establishes clear conclusions from which to approach the discourse; namely, nefarious transmogrification and the focus on emotions (mainly *rage* and fear) rather than agreed truths.

The Fachosphere

Although Judith Butler's (2024) concept of the phantasmatic field remains useful to understand the discourse, their book lacks any substantial mention of the digital space. To expand Butler's theory, online spaces should be investigated as they not only harbor large overlapping networks of anti-gender movements, but online spaces are constructed in a way that allows a faster spread of fascist passions, leading to a normalization of fascism (Cammaerts, 2020; Tebaldi, 2020). In this research, fascism is understood as a dynamic process of discourse. Although not everyone within the discourse has fascist passions, the way the anti-gender phantasmatic field operates mirrors the operation of (neo-)fascist discourses. Hence, for a more effective research process, this research relies on Cammaerts (2020) analysis of the "Fachosphere". The sphere consists of right-wing Internet spaces characterized by four nodes: (1) ultra-nationalism and nativism, (2) naturalization of a social hierarchy and social Darwinism, (3) anti-intellectualism and conspiracy theories, (4) anti-enlightenment and anti-democracy. Cammaerts (2020) affirms that the nodes are expressed differently in different contexts, showcasing that online (neo-)fascism is dynamic. Therefore, Cammaerts' designation of the Fachosphere is combined with Butler's naming of the anti-gender movement to yield the name of the research community as the 'anti-gender Fachosphere'.

Rage Bait & Recommendation Algorithms

Cammaerts (2020) and Tebaldi (2020) state that the Fachosphere operates through scandalization. In essence, the strategy is to intentionally provoke scandals by violating publicly accepted norms to gain engagement. The reason for engagement is because of online rage bait, which is a strategy where content is tactically figured to invoke rage. Although sharing similarities with sensational news and information bait (intentionally omitting information from online news headlines), rage bait is far more popular and nefarious, especially on conservative online spaces (Shin et al., 2025). Shin et al. (2025) explain that rage bait uses “ad hominem attacks, blatantly false information, and belittling ridicule of opponents to incite outrage” (p. 5). These findings are confirmed by Caroline Orr Bueno (2023), a specialist in online disinformation. Although this study utilizes her Substack article to contextualize rage bait on Twitter, the gray literature article is pertinent as rage bait research is extremely sparse (Shin et al., 2025). She states that rage bait is profitable because rage is a renewable resource, making users the raw material being exploited for profit (what I call rage-extraction for profit accumulation) and normalization of (neo-)fascist discourse (Orr Bueno, 2023). In essence, Orr Bueno (2023) states that right-wing Twitter rage bait presents “a point of view [from the Left] that no one actually holds, and pretends that it represents the viewpoint of a broad swath of their adversaries,” (para. 7) otherwise known as a positional strawman. Due to its popularity, effectiveness, and profitability, rage bait is an important concept to understand the anti-gender Fachosphere behavior.

Rage bait yields linkages to the way digital platforms are intentionally constructed. Chun (2018) states that the spread of (neo-)fascist discourse lies in the belly of social media algorithms, otherwise known as recommendation algorithms (RAs). Effectively, most RAs are engagement-based, meaning that the more views the content gains, the more it is spread

across the user feed. This intentional construction is problematic because (neo-)fascist discourse is based in scandalization operationalized through rage bait, meaning it is prone to virality. In effect, RAs work in tandem with rage bait because the strategy gains engagement and profit which feeds the RA to spread the content further, earning more views and money. Prominent rage-baiting accounts understand this, and they use rage bait to make the RA work in their favor. The profitability aspect also sparks vast networks of rage-baiting accounts that micro target specific audiences. They also share similar images, graphics, and misinformation, overfilling the RA to normalize the (neo-)fascist content (Orr Bueno, 2023).

Stigmergy

If Butler (2024) states that the phantasmatic field is not governed by argumentative logic, it must be governed by a different kind of logic that is able to construct such elaborate discourses. I argue that stigmergy replaces the role of rhetoric-based communication in the anti-gender Fachosphere. Originally observed in ants, stigmergy refers to indirect coordination through environmental cues, such as pheromone trails, that guide collective behavior without centralized control (Zheng et al., 2023). Although originating from biology, many sociologists have applied it to online behavior like the study on Wikipedia behavior by Zheng et al. (2023), in which they explain that it “is a mechanism of coordination in which an action performed by an agent leaves traces on the environment that stimulate succeeding actions by [...] another agent” (p. 984), building piles of knowledge without communicating with each other. Instead, users are coordinated by the traces left behind by other users. Applying it to Twitter and connecting it to rage bait, prominent users spearhead a signal in the form of a rage-baiting tweet. Lured by the ‘scent,’ others add subsequent signals (replies), attracting more engagement. The discourse then evolves with almost zero direct communication, leaving a colony around a once single unconnected tweet. Like an ant nest,

users leave seeds that grow into piles. Tweets are the ‘seeds’ or ideas that once viewed in a thread or a ‘pile’ reveal the construction of the discourse. Moreover, stigmergetic logic works in tandem with the Twitter RA which detects these viral ‘scent trails’ and distributes them more widely. Returning to the infrastructure, one can observe that rage-baiting tactics and RAs support the stigmergetic logic of discourse construction, making it a valuable, although unconventional, framework to explain the construction of a discourse.

Methodology

The methodology section outlines the method, fieldwork, and ethical considerations. First, the chosen digital platform was Twitter as it has become significantly more extremist after Elon Musk’s alteration of its landscape (see Introduction). The policy trifecta of softening community guidelines, reply-based profitability, and reply-based recommendation algorithm transformed Twitter into a festering ground for (neo-)fascist discourse (Ingram, 2024; Keane, 2024). Therefore, Twitter represents an exemplary case for this research.

The research is a digital ethnography or “netnography” (Kozinets, 2019), which allows a more nuanced analysis of the community and discourse than content analysis. Furthermore, the utilization of discourse analysis and the well-reviewed theory in the overall research heightens the merit of this approach. Moreover, being an active Twitter user since 2018 allows application of my deeper understanding of the platform. Additionally, being fluent in only two languages, one of them being English, I focused solely on tweets in the English language, mostly pertaining to the American sphere of influence because of their massive impact on social medias and entertainment at large. Lastly, my positionality is that I am a queer leftist sociological researcher.

Data Collection & Analysis

The research observed the English-speaking anti-gender Twitter movement. However, the anti-gender movement might come from the Far-Right, Alt-Right, intellectual dark web,

Dark Enlightenment thinkers, white supremacists, Christian nationals, gender-critical feminists (hereafter TERFs), and anti-trans sectors of the LGB community, alongside others (Tebaldi, 2020). Because of the overlapping nature of the anti-gender movement, it remains difficult to define its parameters (or population), justifying the use of a digital ethnography. Hence, the research observed members of the English-speaking Twitter Fachosphere, as defined by Cammaerts (2020), who discussed the discourse at hand. Additionally, before entering the community, an ‘infiltration’ plan (see Appendix A) was formed in which famous anti-gender accounts were identified through prior research on the topic, which made it easier to penetrate the Fachosphere. Through the process, the follow list grew.

The purpose of “netnographic” data collection, as described by Kozinets (2019), is to establish an overview of the online environment. Hence, the research utilized two approaches. The first was taking fieldnotes of interactions, discourse construction, and exhibition of emotions. Moreover, user interactions between the Fachosphere and its outsiders (referred to as leftists) was observed to establish reactions to opposition. Observations of user accounts was also noted. Lastly, the Twitter RA was observed, specifically the type of content promoted through the “For you” feed and the change in content through time. The second approach observed individual tweets or threads (the main tweets with the replies) that implicitly or explicitly mentioned both queer people and children in order to analyze conceptualizations of the two, among other information. These tweets were screenshotted, given an identification number, and downloaded into a private Google Drive solely made for the research. Afterward, they were noted in an Excel sheet. Each of the 170 collected tweets was analyzed by noting the upload type, upload date, uploader, and engagement (likes, retweets, views, and replies). Additionally, each tweet was coded on its main theme, interpretative theme, tweet aesthetic, and conceptualizations of children, queer people, and harm.

Being in the field lasted a full 20 days. Overall, overarching themes were identified to be politics, indoctrination, conspiratorial evil, transgender children and their healthcare, LGBTQ+ acceptance, (sex) education, same-sex parents, and girls' spaces. Among these themes, several narratives were identified which informed the writing of the ethnographic report. After the fieldwork, three coding trees (see Appendix B) were made from the codes used to describe user conceptualizations. Based on the coding trees, the coded tweets were put into Gephi (n.d.) to create two network analysis graphs (see Ethnographic Report). A network analysis was made to extrapolate co-construction of the discourse. The graphs, tweet screenshots, and rereading of fieldnotes constituted the analysis and the writing of the report.

Participation & Ethical Considerations

Before starting the research, a new Gmail and Twitter account was made under the pseudonym "Linda." The profile had a set location in the United States and a set birth date, both needed to create the profiles. The Twitter account was made private. The account followed prominent accounts, but it *never* liked, retweeted, replied, entered private group chats, or privately messaged users. The purpose of limiting interaction was to feed the algorithm and go deeper into the Fachosphere, while only working with publicly accessible data. The decision to respect private user data was based on ethical considerations mentioned in the *Netnography* book by Kozinets (2019) as not all Twitter content is intended for public viewing despite being accessible by any user. Regarding anonymity, accounts that were *not* anonymized were public figures, organizations, and accounts that did not reveal any personal information. Those revealing personal information were anonymized by redacting their profile picture and username in screenshots and the spreadsheet. Lastly, after the research period ceased, the account was deleted, whereas the Google Drive, Excel spreadsheet, fieldnotes, and Gephi data were archived.

Ethnographic Report

During data collection, it was hard to not be personally affected by the slurry of intense and violent depictions present in the Fachosphere. Therefore, a trigger and content warning are due: the topics discussed, and the content presented feature malicious dehumanization, name-calling, and misgendering of LGBTQ+ people (especially trans individuals) alongside depictions and descriptions of violence against them. Additionally, users' claims were not fact-checked because the focus of the research was on user expression rather than validity of their claims.

Throughout the entire research process, despite being exposed to very vivid portrayals of rage and violence, my mind kept on wandering to the infrastructure. Specifically, how its construction not only allows extremism but actively develops it for its own gain and profit (Orr Bueno, 2023). Not only is rage bait profitable to the prominent accounts and the social media companies, but the normalization of anti-democratic sentiments present in these spaces works in favor of the companies by discouraging democratically mandated regulations. Therefore, my narrative is that although the examined discourse is problematic and should be researched and critiqued and users should be held accountable, no valuable change can be made without exposing and problematizing the social media infrastructure.

Lastly, some sections were written in an impressionistic writing style to present the anti-gender Fachosphere subjectivity. The inspiration for these italicized texts was J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* because throughout the research process, the users were actively preparing for war by either using war analogies or explicitly mentioning the waging of war against LGBTQ+ people. This was such a prevailing feeling that could only be portrayed through Tolkien's work as he was a proprietor of the good vs evil trope, with the evil side being so heinous that no empathy would arise for them, which was a

consistent feeling in the Fachosphere. Therefore, we shall enter through the looking-glass and experience the Digital Phantasmagoria of the Monster and the Innocent Child.

The Waging of War

“The world is changed. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air. Much that once was is lost, for none now live who remember it.” (Jackson, 2001, 0:00:30). In the shadow of the West, a darkness has been lingering, festering, and preparing for its spread. A breath of foul stench idles. Men have started turning on men. People have been falling ill, succumbed by the Dark. The time of the marble-white West is over, and an age of perverted evil shall take its stand. It will spread to every corner of the land and take hold of the strongest and most innocent among us. As the evil forces assemble in the darkest pits of the underworld, the Saviors shall rise and destroy the foul evil that will gain dominion over all life on this earth. The only way forward is with might and fury. The West must squash the black serpent underneath our boots for it is the only way to ensure our existence. This is the waging of war.

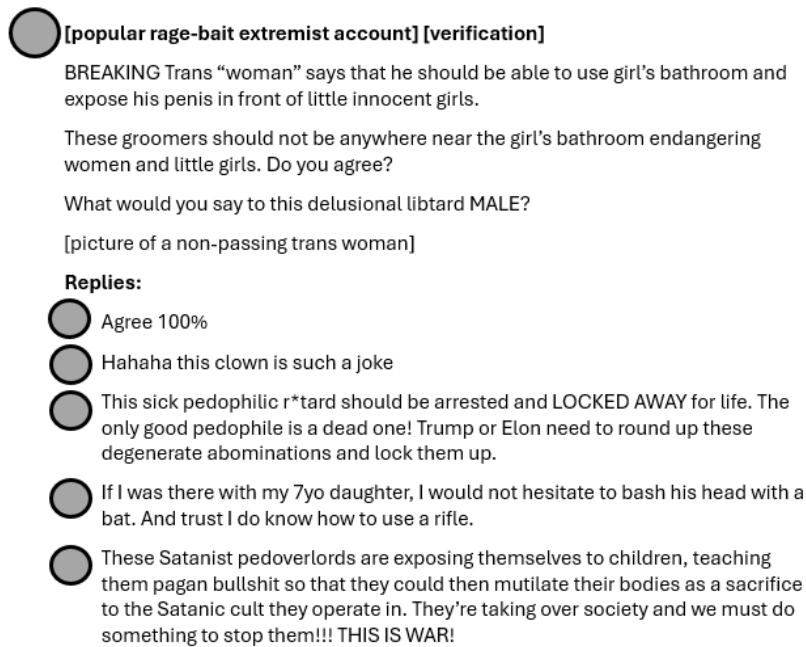
Rage Bait

To understand the Fachosphere is to understand rage bait. During the research process, rage bait usually materialized as presenting an unlikely situation, blowing it out of proportion, presenting it as urgent, and asking a question to the users, which encouraged replies (see Figure 1). Rage bait is promulgated by very prominent rage-baiting accounts that spew extremist posts several times a day, which gain several thousand and even million views and hundreds of replies. The engagement not only created virality but earned profit for prominent users because of the Twitter reply-based revenue system (Orr Bueno, 2023), making it the most popular tactic among prominent Fachosphere accounts. The accounts also shared or promoted each other, forming a sort of creative community, confirming Orr

Bueno's (2023) findings. The accounts seemingly created and pushed ideas onto 'regular' users. However, they also seemed to have created a space for users to express their frustrations, fantasies of violence, and emotions. Seemingly, without these prominent rage-baiting accounts, the Fachosphere would not be so coherent. This reveals an imbalance of power as prominent users were able to steer the discussion while regular users could only respond to them, usually with little engagement. Although prominent accounts could plead innocence by stating they are 'citizen journalists,' their behavior showcased a targeted approach at regularly misinforming users, tactically using politically incorrect words, lacking multiple perspectives, editing and distorting multimedia, not referencing credible organizations or academics, dehumanizing and name-calling opponents, ordering users to attack opponents, promoting conspiracy theories, hiding behind anonymized accounts, or not being held accountable like journalists.

Figure 1

Stereotypical rage-baiting Twitter thread made by the researcher.



Regarding the replies, the users could be understood as fitting five archetypes (designated by the researcher): one-worded supporters, name-calling jokesters, dictatorship yearners, aggressors, and conspiracy theorists; each materialized as examples of replies in Figure 1. First, the most common responses to the analyzed Twitter threads were one-worded responses that agreed with the post or mirrored the original tweet. Second, the “name-calling jokesters” were users who belittled or degraded queer people through a humorous lens. Third, “dictatorship yearners” were users who urged for stronger actions to be inflicted onto queer people. They either expressed a call to action by, for example, saying “something needs to be done” or a call to specific actions, namely, doxxing, firing, defunding, arrest, incarceration with or without due process (and sometimes for life), mental asylum institutionalization, and even queer genocide (see Figure 2). The tag “dictatorship yearners” was given to users who yearned for extreme unconstitutional measures, consequently expressing a desire to live

under a dictatorship. These users often zealously supported Trump and Musk and perceived them as laurel-wreathed saviors. Fourth, “aggressors” were users who participated in, what I have deemed, the ‘fantasy of violence,’ aided by the rage-baiting infrastructure that created a space in the replies under which users could express their wishes to hurt, bash, shoot, mangle, or kill a queer person for being accused of child harm. This fantasy was alluded to either jokingly or openly (see Figure 3 & 4). Lastly, “conspiracy theorists” were users who expressed existential doom or stated that a conspiratorial evil was strumming the strings of societal trends. In essence, the prominent accounts and the archetypes represent the anti-gender Fachosphere ecosystem with its prominent predators on the top of the food chain and the scavengers feasting off their scraps, all creating a functioning reciprocal system of right-wing rage bait. Illustratively, the prominent accounts provided a space for regular users to have a feeding frenzy from which the prominent accounts raked profit and solidified their anti-gender attitude into the community and the wider user feed.

Figure 2

“Dictatorship yearner” calling for queer genocide.



Figure 3

Responding to a meme about trans influencers with a wish to throw them in a woodchipper.

**Figure 4**

Responding to rage bait about trans women in the women's bathroom with an anime GIF of shooting a gun.



Communal Behavior

As is typical of Twitter communities, they respond fast and they respond hard, usually with nary a critical thought guiding their actions. Whether it be Nicki Minaj fans or members of the Fachosphere, each Twitter community has their golden calf binding them together to form a destructive force. That is just the name of the game on Twitter. However, what Nicki Minaj fans lack from the Fachosphere is the support of influential political figures that

actively advocate for rights-stripping policies. Users doxed queer people and their allies to later unleash a canting horde of hate and death threats against them. Being on their turf felt like being in shark-infested waters because users would actively wait for a drop of ‘liberal’ blood to send them toward a dogpiling frenzy. In non-internet terms, users would reply and attack in disproportionately high numbers to any user whether friend or foe who would express even a smidge of empathy toward queer people. In fact, very few productive conversations or debates were found. Even those that were observed (see Figure 5) would oftentimes start serious but would later dissolve into name-calling by the hands of both members and the leftist challengers. Despite the reply ecosystem lacking productive conversations, the amalgamations of thoughts and fantasies were a way of constructing a discourse. A discourse that is unlike a ‘real life’ conversation among neighbors or relatives but rather emulating the energy of a political rally in which the prominent accounts spearheaded the conversation and users chanted along, meaning-making via stigmergy rather than argumentative logic. In effect, with each reply added to the original rage-baiting tweet, the ‘seed pile’ grew and provided a more complex understanding of the discourse. As users left more traces, they effectively solidified certain narratives without directly communicating with each other. Hence, the theory of stigmergy proved to be helpful as it was able to show that discourse construction can occur on Twitter despite very little user communication.

Figure 5

Responding to a tweet condemning the act of a surrogate baby being handed to a gay couple.



Additionally, emotions often overrode argumentative logic. In several cases, emotions even melted together. Hate of queer people turned into love for the Fachosphere, especially when ‘normal’ right-wing citizens would oppose the ‘villainized’ leftists. This was especially pronounced in some examples where teenage girls would refuse to compete against their trans opponents in sports’ leagues. Under these tweets, love and admiration for the teenage girl “standing up against her oppressor,” as one user said, was quickly melted and mixed with hate, fear, and disgust for the trans athlete (see Figure 6). In fact, fantasies of violence and videos of ‘liberals getting owned’ were celebrated and cheered like the users were watching a WWE wrestling match. Illustratively, violence toward the enemy was often mixed with joy, admiration, and revelry as if the opponents were not human beings worthy of being shown kindness or respect.

Figure 6

Responding to a video of a teenage girl speaking at a school board assembly about how she feels unsafe around her trans athletes while the people in the crowd are booing her.



Harkening back to rage bait, the locker-room-like environment of dog-pilling, stigmergy, and mixing of emotions showcases how the Twitter infrastructure, which is structurally geared toward rage-extraction for profit accumulation, redirected many users to forget that those they were attacking are human beings within their shared space. Scrolling through the Fachosphere felt like driving a sports car with my adrenaline pumping because of the vast amount of extreme and violent emotions that I would oftentimes have to remind myself to rehumanize queer people into a living flesh and blood image rather than the portrayed skeletal remains. Has the dehumanization of queer people become so accepted that it has been infused into an unnoticeable component of the Fachosphere milieu? Or is the

Twitter infrastructure organized in such a way that flesh and blood humans become malleable weapons used in culture wars?

The Evil Forces

The time of war is here. The dark forces are pulsating with malicious intent like an overgrown pimple begs to ooze its foul puss outward. The hordes of repugnant orcs, pale coarse-skinned goblins, and hairy cloying beasts are ready for their dark masters to blow the horn of chaos. Evil is drawn to their power like flies to dead flesh. The harbingers of filth and disease are upon us. Don't you see that entire realms are being subsumed within their putrid grasp?! They want nothing more but to rid the earth of our way of life and to scorch the soil our forebears fought for! They are close now, so close to achieving their goal. But our strength is fiercer. We shall raise our swords and ride upon horseback to meet the wicked enemy. Their screeches, howls, and shrieks will fill our souls with the valor needed for each part of their ranks to be splattered across the battlefield. Evil will be defeated, and our future kin will look proudly on our effort to annihilate the festering vermin off our beloved land.

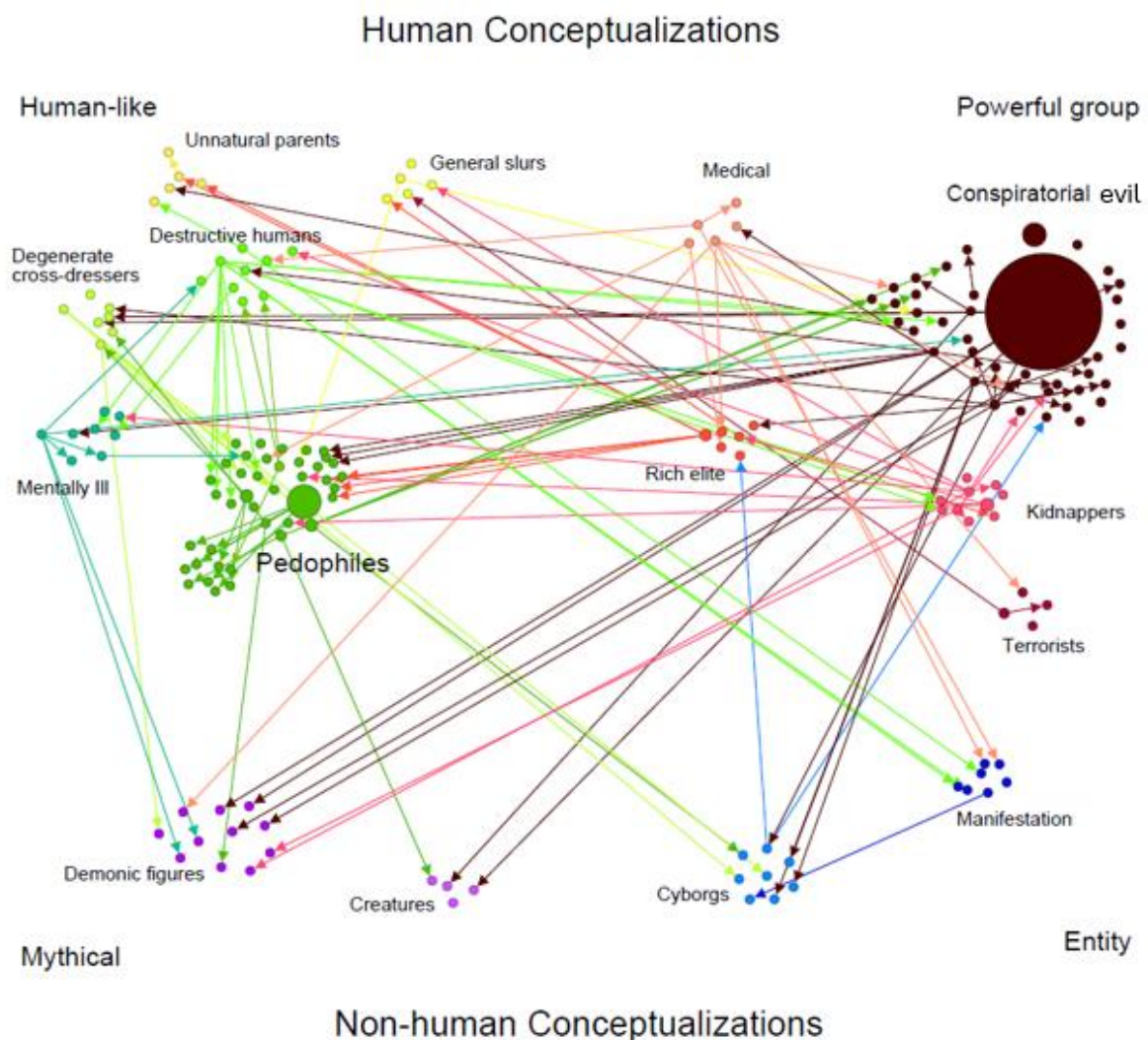
The Queer Person

Judith Butler (2024) states that to make allegations of child harm believable or even 'truly felt,' the figure of the queer person must go through phantasmatic ordering, during which the figure is connected to nefarious concepts that dehumanize it into a believable monster that nabs, mangles, and feasts upon the Child. The most common descriptions of harm, according to Judith Butler (2024), are pedophilia and indoctrination, which was corroborated in my research. However, additional descriptions of harm diverging from Butler's theory were found such as medical abuse, kidnapping, destruction, other harm, pornography, Satanism, and surrogacy (see Appendix B). These descriptions were found to have coalesced with conceptualizations of queer people. Viewing Figure 7 reveals not only

the different conceptual categories found but also connections between them with each node representing a coded tweet (adjusted in size based on the sum of likes, retweets, replies, and views) and each link representing a response to a tweet.

Figure 7

Network analysis graph made in Gephi depicting different conceptualizations of queer people.



Note. The largest node represents a J.K. Rowling tweet that garnered above 70 million views, superseding most coded tweets.

Users represented queer people as either human conceptualizations (human-like figures or powerful groups) and non-human conceptualizations (mythical creatures or entities) with the former being most prominent (see Appendix B & Figure 7). Pertaining to the human-like figures category, the most popular queer embodiment was a pedophile often visualized as a wigged man lurking around girls' spaces ready to pounce on unsuspecting children. Regarding powerful groups, the category was ascribed when users portrayed queer people as a highly influential shadowy organized group. Additionally, users pertaining to the conspiracy theorist archetype constructed queer people as being demonic creatures or even beasts, usually emulating Christian beliefs. Lastly, a prominent conceptualization was also "cyborgs" which was found in specific narratives that painted queer people as transcending humanity due to them 'changing their biology' by using gender-affirming care.

Regarding the graph itself, it revealed a process of intensification because conceptualizations in the replies were far more intense than conceptualizations found in original tweets, usually made by prominent users. For example, "destructive humans" conceptualizations were often transformed in the replies to be more nefarious like pedophiles, manifestations, kidnappers, or conspiratorial evils. Even if an original tweet was harsher in its conceptualization, intensification was still seen like in the example of "conspiratorial evil" being transformed into "demonic creatures." Additionally, some narratives could also be observed in the graph like that same-sex parents are kidnappers, part of a rich elite, and/or child molesters, showcasing solidifications of some prominent narratives within the discourse.

Therefore, viewing the graph confirmed some conclusions found in the previous section. Specifically, prominent rage-baiting accounts are not only less intense in their original conceptualization of queer people than replies, but their tweets create a sort of playground for regular users to experiment with more intense conceptualizations. Viewing the 'seed pile' left

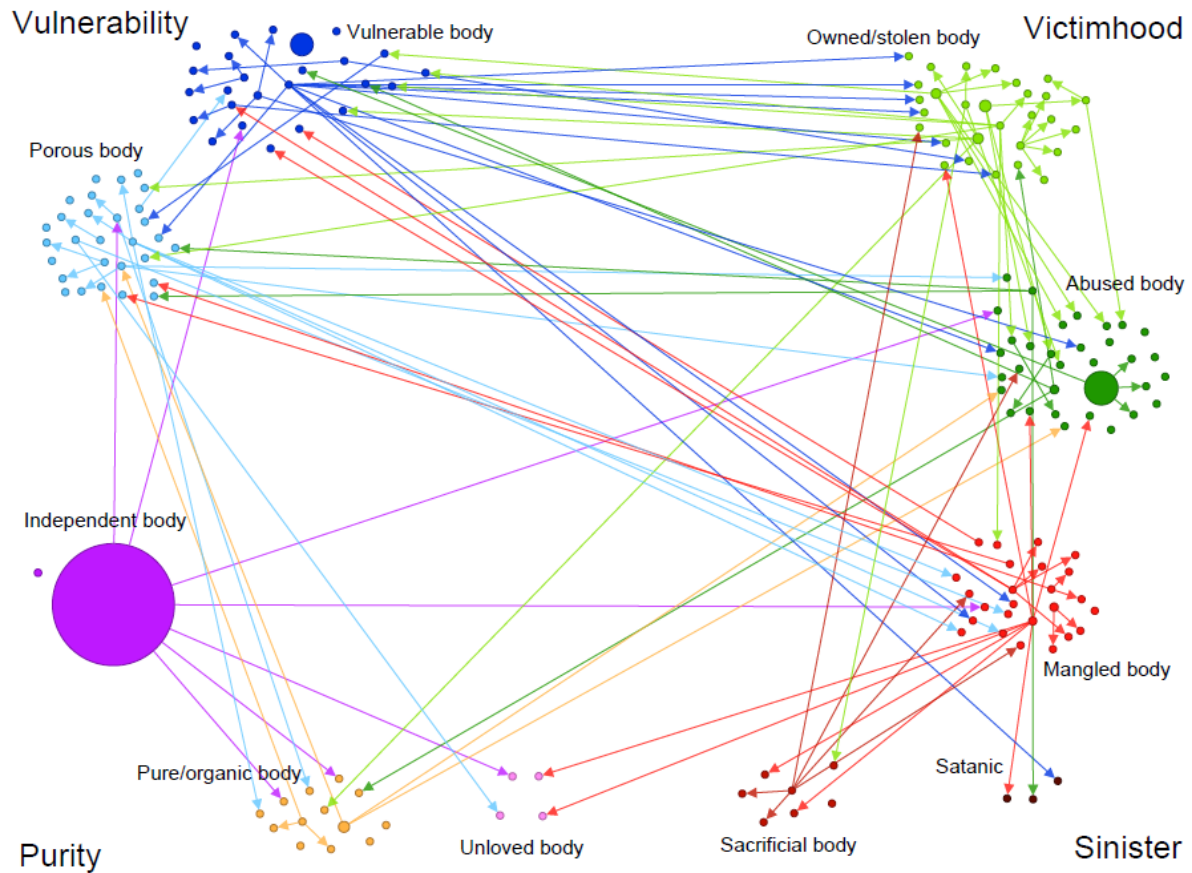
by stigmergy, original tweets have not only expanded and intensified the discourse but solidified it in users. Connecting it to Judith Butler (2024), it was observed that this intensification with the use of nefarious concepts made allegations of child harm seem more real, seemingly convincing users to believe in the allegations.

The Child

As the queer person transforms into a monster through phantasmatic ordering, so too the Child transforms into the embodiment of everything that is good about the world, materialized as innocence, purity, and vulnerability (Kanjere, 2021). In fact, viewing Figure 8, four main selective codes were found, namely, children representing vulnerability, purity, victimhood, and more sinister conceptualizations. Additionally, two minor selective codes were used such as children being independent bodies, discussed as being able to oppose queer indoctrination, and unloved bodies, discussed as being uncared for by parents and society. Overall, the graph and the coding tree (see Appendix B) reveal that children were mainly conceived as being vulnerable, indoctrinated/porous, or sexually abused, with the last two pertaining to both the main conceptualizations of queer people (conspiratorial evil and pedophiles) and main mentions of harm (indoctrination and pedophilia), showing an interplay between the three.

Figure 8

Network analysis graph made in Gephi depicting different conceptualizations of children.



Note. See note on Figure 7.

As in Figure 7, Figure 8 revealed the process of intensification as the replies transformed the Child into a more sinister victim of the monster. For example, many original tweets conceived children to be a vulnerable body but replies conceived them to be a stolen, abused, or mangled body. For this reason, the graph is a bit imbalanced with darker conceptualizations of children being more prevalent on the right side. Moreover, like in Figure 7, Figure 8 revealed some solidified narratives. For example, tweets discussing indoctrination were often followed by replies discussing how it caused children to believe they were trans, inadvertently putting them ‘under the knife’ for gender-affirming care (from

porous to mangled body). Similarly, the narrative that same-sex parents kidnap and sexually abuse their adopted children was also seen here (from owned/stolen to abused body).

Therefore, both the monstrous queer person and the Child portrayed as a mangled carcass of the monster's attack provide a great psychic jump from accusation to realization and with each conceptualization added to the 'seed pile,' the prophecy is seemingly made true and the ant colony flourishes. The realization also solidifies the dehumanization. Queer people are not assumed to be pedophiles; they *are* pedophiles. Children are not assumed to be sexually abused; they *are being* sexually abused. It is at this moment one wonders how far the dehumanization goes. By falling victim to rage bait, the users are seemingly blinded to the fact that they have not only dehumanized queer people but children as well, the members of society they hold most dear. Children are no longer autonomous beings able to laugh, cry, fear, anger, play, have friends, be loved by their family, make decisions, be respected, and interact with the world, but have become sinister amalgamations perpetually trapped in nightmarish scenarios of torture, abuse, and death that have no logical basis. In effect, to dehumanize queer people is to dehumanize children and inadvertently yourself by becoming a person that would hurt and suppress another human being.

The Aftermath of War

The war is over. The Enemy has been slain. Peace has been restored. But at what cost? Seeing the foul beasts' carcasses, their vile blood poisoning the soil, we can't help to ignore the scratching feeling nibbling at our brains: we have brought destruction, but we had to do it; we have exterminated the Enemy, but we had no choice; our beloved kin have been slain by the thousands, but we had to defend ourselves. Peace was fought but we are unfulfilled. Has this war been a farse? Have our leaders deceived us? Was the Enemy truly attacking us or was that a fabrication? We brought peace for our future kin, but now we wonder whether we have gone too far. Are we just literary figures commanded by fantasy

authors who waive their quills like swords to construct a storyline that has nothing to do with us? We know not the answer to these questions, but what we know is that we had to do it, we had no choice, we were only defending ourselves. The Enemy has been slain and when new evil arises, we shall do it again. We have no choice but to.

Symbolic Denial

If children are the embodiment of the world, discourse about their protection reveals the hidden wishes users have for queer people and society. By taking children as social constructs (Kanjere, 2021), one could see that users were symbolically denying queerness from the domain of childhood and society itself. Over the course of the study, some users, especially those claiming to be parents, held the belief that parental authority was like the word of God; meaning if questioned, one would be seen as blasphemous. However, parents of queer children, especially trans children, were not afforded such respect. Pertaining to topics of transgender children and gender-affirming care, the symbolic denial of queerness from childhood was apparent. Users often villainized gender-affirming care on minors by stating that, as one user put it, it is the "medical world's greatest crime," often providing very vivid portraits of children being mangled and forever scarred. However, some users like @SubToGambitYT in Figure 9 took their time to reveal the community's symbolic denial of queerness by stating that gender-affirming care should only be for adults. In translation, the user, like many others, believed that trans children should postpone treatment until their 18th birthday, drawing a line in the sand.

However, @SubToGambitYT also revealed the popular narrative that "there is no such thing as a trans child" (see Figure 10). Instead, children are "transed" which @PrefixBond describes as a "passive verb describing something someone else did to them [trans children], rather than an adjective describing some intrinsic feature of them (which

they don't have).” Users firmly opposed the idea that children could be trans and even hated that children were told they were born ‘in the wrong body’ (see Figure 11). Effectively, they affirmed their belief that children are born natural and completely pure. Surprisingly, some users like TERFs, LGBs, and detransitioners stated that children are allowed to experiment with gender roles by playing with different toys or wearing dresses (see Figure 12).

Nevertheless, like the parental authority plea, this claim did not apply in the fullest sense.

Rather children were allowed to play with gender roles under the condition of being gender normative as adults (see Figure 13). In effect, as more lines are drawn in the sand, queerness is pushed outside of adulthood as well.

Figure 9

Responding to a meme.



Figure 10

A regularly spread image in the Fachosphere.



Figure 11

Responding to a tweet about a public-school teacher stating her classroom is safe for queer children.



The greatest love you could have for a confused kid is to give them solid guidance and let them know about the woke pitfall many have set for them.

Telling a child they are in the wrong body, knowing this will lead to further confusion, sterilization, and years of physical trauma is wrong.

This is why I have said gay couples adopting children will lead to worse atrocities.

Marriage is between a man and a woman. We must protect these children from being raised in massive confusion.

8:26 AM · May 10, 2025 · 118 Views



Figure 12

Tweet by a famous online detransitioner.



Figure 13

Responding to a post about two detransitioners testifying against gender-affirming care.



If queerness is barred from childhood and adulthood, there is little room within society in which queer people can exist and yet for some users that is not enough. Queer people must be denied from humanity entirely. Effectively, if children's identities are painted as immutable, natural, and organic; queerness must be unnatural, fictitious, and even inorganic. In other words, some factions of the anti-gender Fachosphere, self-described as the

“Stay Human movement,” actively portray queer people as being cyborgs. The most influential figure and nomenclator of the movement is Jennifer Bilek (@bjportraits) who is a conspiracy theorist and blogger that wrote a book on the topic. In her own words, she states that transgender people are at the “intersection of humanity, technology, and runaway capitalism.” Unafraid to self-reference, Bilek describes her views in Figure 14 in which she attests her fear of a loss of identity, biology, and humanity. In fact, many other users expressed the same fears as Bilek. This was especially seen among TERFs and LGBs who self-described themselves as “Human female,” “Human gay male,” or “Human female grandmother,” seemingly showing a symbolic denial of humanity to queer people by affirming their own humanity. In effect, as queerness is symbolically barred from all aspects of life, it remains difficult to give the users the benefit of the doubt over their beliefs. However, it becomes even more pertinent to examine the underlying fears behind their claims. The deeper we dive into the Mariana Trench of the Fachosphere, the more we discover despite the enveloping darkness of the tweets.

Figure 14

Referencing her Substack.



Abuse Determinism

As was stated two sections above, queer people are no longer *assumed* to be monsters, but they *are* monsters. Confirming this finding, a major trend seen across factions and topics was abuse determinism. Illustratively, if queer people ‘are’ pedophiles, anything they do around children will be perceived as abuse. This was especially pronounced in discussions regarding same-sex parents as they were seen (and *not* assumed) as abusing their children, so much so that users actively tried to find any ‘evidence’ to support their belief. Some users, for example, stated that they could “see” and “know” that the adopted children in the provided videos were “acting weird” or were “horrificed” (see Figure 15). Other users, however, did not need ‘evidence’ because they ‘knew’ that if the children were not being abused now, they will be later. Additionally, some users provided a screenshot of a news headline of a rare case of child abuse occurring in a same-sex family unit (see Figure 16) or they provided a highly shared image called the “Slippery Slope” (see Figure 17), aiding the solidification of this narrative. Abuse determinism was so prevalent that when a ‘leftist’ user (in Figure 18) directly asked them whether they think all gay people are pedophiles, they unanimously agreed, much to the shock of the ‘leftist’ user. Abuse determinism was also found in topics about girls’ spaces, transgender children, and education, all presenting their belief that solely being in the presence of a queer person is enough ‘evidence’ to conclude that child sexual abuse is occurring or will occur.

Figure 15

Responding to a tweet condemning the act of a surrogate baby being handed to a gay couple.

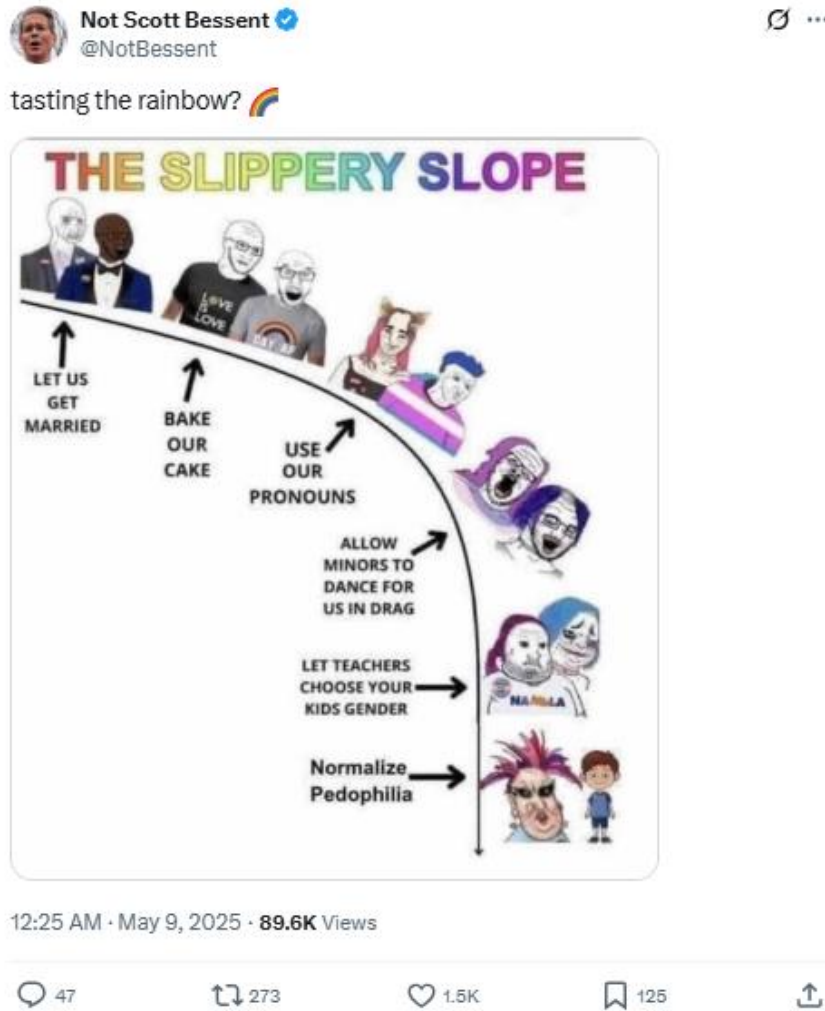
**Figure 16**

Responding to a tweet showing a surrogate baby with its two fathers.



Figure 17

Responding to a tweet showing a surrogate baby with its two fathers.



Note. Notice the progression of queer people going from humans to troll-like creatures.

Figure 18*Responding to Figure 16.*


John Smith
 @smith_john25194

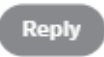



One couple = all gay men?

12:09 PM · May 9, 2025 · 1,625 Views

 8
 
 42
  1
 






John Smith @smith_john25194 · 22m




The amount of people saying "yes" in the replies shows there is no limit to the amount of retards in the world. Or the amount of people who need to take a basic statistics class.



 2
  16
 



Horace Derwent @bloodydamsayin · 1h




Yes.




 57
 



YoloCrayolo @Damien94678715 · 1h




Yes



 2
  63
 



Lisa Corrigan @lisaeco23 · 25m




Yep




 16
 



Lev @Leviath78503286 · 4h




It's been more than one gay couple, retard. Also the amount of gay priests that joined the church to have access to young boys is astronomical.

 1
 

 247
 


The above trend of abuse determinism is just one of the many assumptions that the community makes about queer people, which is aided by their conceptualizations and stigmatization. As Judith Butler (2024) states, the community has committed a “phantasmatic sliding” or a shift in the meaning of “abuse” from its legal and general definition into a broader context without the users realizing it. If this belief gets institutionalized, many baseless assumptions of abuse might be shouted at larger swaths of people like immigrants, people of color, and many more. In fact, the community was *already* doing this as if they were on a Slip ‘N Slide course toward institutionalized fascism.

Hidden Fears

Judith Butler (2024) stated that queer people are connected to nefarious concepts leading to dehumanization, but as the research progressed, it became clear that queer people themselves have become the nefarious concept that is being connected to other actors. In math, if $A=B$, then $B=A$. Likewise, by the transitive property, if queer people ‘are’ pedophiles, the inverse is seen as true. Hence, by connecting actors to queer people or queerness, the actors are being connected to all the evil that is associated with it. Additionally, anyone associating with queer people is seen as a supporter of this ‘evil.’ Overall, teachers, leftist politicians, doctors, activists, news media, Hollywood actors, and many more were connected to the nefarious concept of queerness (see Figures 19, 22, 23, & 24). This is made clear in Figure 19 where the public-school teacher is connected to nefarious right-wing concepts like queerness, symbolized as the pride flag sticker. The teacher herself is drawn like a serpentine monster who is preying on the student, portrayed as the embodiment of right-wing American values. By connecting the teacher to queerness, the users have realized allegations of child harm, which can be seen in the replies to the tweet (see Figure 20 & 21). Evidence for queerness becoming a nefarious concept could also be seen in the TERF and

LGB factions as both vehemently tried to distance themselves from queer people (especially trans people). However, their zealous attacks continued even though the right-wing did not fully accept them (see Figure 25).

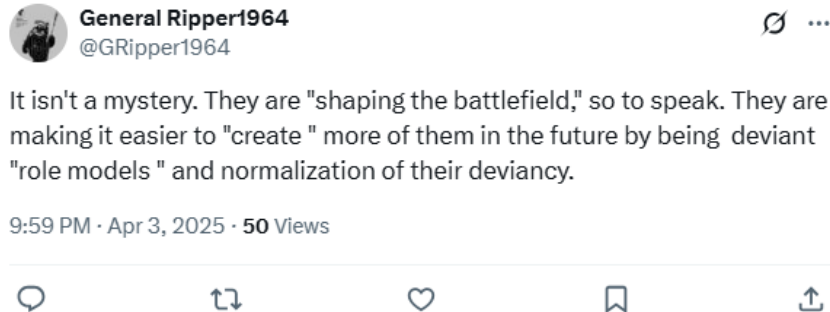
Figure 19

Responding to a video of a trans teacher dancing in an empty classroom.



Figure 20

Responding to Figure 19.

**Figure 21**

Responding to Figure 19.



Figure 22

Rage-baiting tweet targeting Democrats.



Figure 23

Detransitioner targeting doctors, medicine, NGOs, tech elites, and the media.



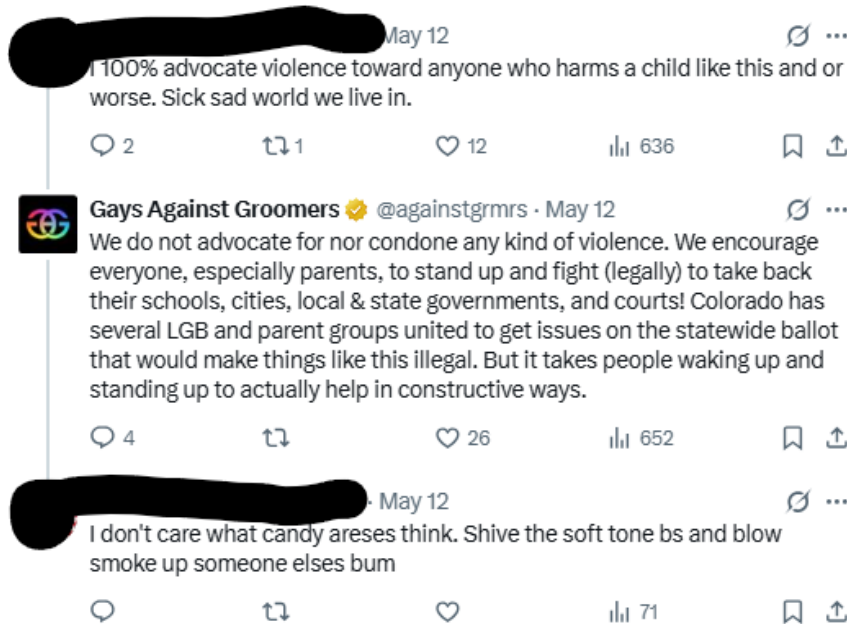
Figure 24

Rage-baiting tweet targeting Hollywood actors.



Figure 25

LGB account being confronted by a far-right user.



If queer people are symbolically denied from all aspects of life and have become a nefarious concept, seemingly all hope of reasoning with the users is lost. However, Judith Butler (2024) states that the anti-gender movement uses “gender” to organize tangible neoliberal fears into a seemingly coherent syntax, binding those fears into spears that jab at the LGBTQ+ community. Butler makes this conclusion by looking beyond the surface-level interpretations to reveal hidden fears. Therefore, by reexamining the tweets, a plethora of hidden neoliberal fears revealed themselves, namely, corruption, oligarchy, poverty, AI, tech companies, criminality, terrorism, destructive forces (like climate change), pandemics, medical corruption, racism, misogyny, homophobia, rise of authoritarianism, loss of autonomy, censorship, and many more. Whether it be Figure 14 revealing fear of AI and tech companies, Figure 23 revealing fear of medical corruption, or queer people often conceptualized as conspiratorial oligarchies, the users seemed to have started from a place of fear but later dispersed to attacking queer people. Hence, while exhibiting commonly felt

fears, the users seemed to have operationalized the discourse to make sense of those fears, even if illogically. Therefore, if everyone, including the anti-gender Fachosphere, is afraid of existential developments plaguing our late capitalist society, why are the users gripping onto the discourse at hand?

In effect, as the theory suggests, Fachosphere discourses, whether openly or not, sow distrust in democratic institutions and critical thought. For example, looking back at Figure 19, by connecting public-school teachers to the nefarious concept of queerness, the user is sowing distrust in public schools. In fact, many replies advocated for homeschooling. In essence, users' fears are bundled and filtered through the anti-gender phantasmatic field to then sow distrust in educators, leftist politicians, doctors, journalists, and the likes, who are all important components of a healthy democratic system.

Harkening back to my narrative, although the users have contributed to the problematic discourse, because of stigmergetic logic, it is difficult to hold them accountable as they 'only' added one meager seed to the large pile. This is precisely why stigmergy, which is supported by the Twitter infrastructure, is problematic. Instead, the bulk of the accountability should fall onto prominent rage-baiting accounts and more importantly the tech companies. Rage-baiting accounts extract rage for profit specifically because the Twitter revenue system is reply-based. Whether aware or unaware, users are generating profit for the prominent accounts who see their rage and emotions as raw material free for the taking and the users themselves as pawns who further their anti-democratic and anti-intellectual aims (Orr Bueno, 2023). The tech companies are also complicit. This is especially apparent on Elon Musk's Twitter because the entire infrastructure (verifications, revenue models, softening of community guidelines, and the recommendation algorithm) is geared to host and profit from extremism (Keane, 2024). Social media infrastructures and the logic that governs them were deliberately

constructed, meaning they can also be deconstructed in a way that does not inculcate anti-democratic sentiments.

Discussion & Conclusion

Being in the Fachosphere, there are few words that can describe the true horror of the tweets. Although what I have presented above is horrific, I would also like to bring attention to the fact that despite mostly following anti-gender accounts, most of my feed was filled with violently racist content, unrivaled by the likes of anything I have ever heard in my life. The overlap of Fachosphere topics showcases the effective synergy of online extremism. There is no place to hide in the Fachosphere and people who go on Twitter without being aware of the infrastructure can quickly fall victim to the (neo-)fascist content. Throughout the process, what gave me hope was reading Shoshana Zuboff's (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism* book, in which she states that "The capacity for self-determination is understood as an essential foundation [of democracy] [...]. Every threat to human autonomy begins with the assault on awareness 'tearing down our capacity to regulate our thoughts, emotions, and desires'" (pp. 306-307). Therefore, this research should be viewed as bringing light to the atrocities promulgated by the infrastructure so that users can approach online spaces informed.

Main Takeaways

The purpose of the research, as designated by the research question, was to contextualize Judith Butler's (2024) theory of the anti-gender phantasmatic field to the online space, while taking children as a social construct (Kanjere, 2021; Stephens, 2021). This theory provided a valuable framework to the somewhat illogical Fachosphere discourse. The findings showed that queer people were connected to nefarious concepts to dehumanize them into monsters, whereas children were constructed as vulnerable and mangled victims of the monsters. The conceptualizations provided a psychic jump from accusation to feeling like

child harm is being inflicted. Observing the realization process further, it revealed that queer people are symbolically denied from all aspects of life. Extending beyond Butler's theory, this research demonstrates that queer people have become the nefarious concept that is being connected to other actors, showing the solidification of the realization process. Understanding this, it was revealed that users sowed distrust into actors within foundational democratic institutions. Lastly, hidden late capitalist neoliberal fears (Butler, 2024; Kanjere, 2021) were also found as a motivator for anti-gender sentiments.

Returning to the infrastructure, it was found that rage-baiting accounts invoke intense and violent reactions from users who in their bloodlust become *unaware* of the dehumanization of queer people, children, and themselves. Being guided by stigmergetic logic (Zheng et al., 2023), each user leaves a 'seed' in a Twitter thread that grows exponentially with the guidance of the Twitter RA, prompting an ever-larger quantity and intensification of replies. Additionally, rage-baiting accounts do not critically inform the users on right-wing issues, as was also confirmed by Shin et al. (2025) and Orr Bueno (2023). Instead, they spearhead the discourse toward goals that support, what I designate the 'rage-extraction imperative,' which rests upon the Twitter infrastructure. The prominent users and tech companies seem to be working together because of the tactical construction of the Twitter infrastructure and the promulgation of the discourse, which inculcates anti-democratic sentiments that ensures unbridled profit accumulation. Therefore, the research successfully contextualized Butler's theory and expanded the sparsely researched field of rage bait by showing detailed examples. Moreover, by looking at the infrastructure, the research was able to add more nuances to Butler's theory with the help of stigmergy as it painted a clear culprit for the intensity, violence, and promulgation of the discourse.

Recommendations

Rage is a valid emotion and it is often used for emancipatory purposes, but constructing an economy around rage extraction (Spring, 2024) shows an imperative for profit accumulation. To tackle the ‘rage-extraction imperative’ is to target and regulate social media companies to transform them into spaces that respect user privacy and autonomy. Rage bait is not solely a right-wing issue, although more popular on that sphere (Shin et al., 2025). In fact, understanding Fachosphere tactics (rage bait, misinformation, and belittling) helped me to see in my private Twitter experience that left-wing accounts also use these tactics, although to achieve different means, all fueling anti-democratic and anti-intellectual sentiments. Moreover, rage bait occurs on other social media platforms because most RAs are engagement-based, making it an overarching social media logic (Shin et al. 2025; Orr Bueno, 2023). Therefore, it remains pertinent to use our self-determining democratic power to regulate social media companies in favor of users (Zuboff, 2019). Digital platforms and the logic that governs them are constructed, meaning they can be deconstructed. In fact, there are many digital platforms that differ from the current logic like the streaming site Nebula (n.d.) or the decentralized social network Mastodon (n.d.).

Moreover, Fachosphere users often started from a place of being afraid of existential threats plaguing our late-stage capitalist societies. As Butler (2024), Kanjere (2021), and many others identified, the fact that we fear similar developments, although expressed differently, is an opportunity for coalition-building. Butler (2024) states that it is pertinent to not abandon people in the anti-gender movement but empower them by emphasizing *life* instead of destruction and detailing a vision of a prosperous life on a *living* planet. In a world envisioned as geared toward an apocalypse, it remains pertinent to be *aware*, hold tech companies accountable, protect users, reinvigorate democracies, promote critical thinking, and hold space for empathy and *life*.

Limitations & Future Research

As in any ethnographic study, my experience in the Fachosphere might differ from other researchers who would repeat this approach. Moreover, the data collection could have been longer to solidify certain conclusions. Additionally, collected tweets were purposefully selected, meaning some selection bias might be present. Regarding advice for future research, this study has anonymized smaller accounts with exposed personal information and did not encroach on private conversations. Therefore, researchers interested in digital ethnographies should vehemently respect user privacy. Moreover, future research on online discourses or user behavior must not shy away from considering and problematizing the social media infrastructure. By doing just that, we gain more knowledge of how the infrastructure might hinder users' experience and autonomy, to then restructure the landscape to fit the users' needs.

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Appendix A

Infiltration Plan

Follow list:

(Koo et al., 2024)

- Greg Abbott [Republican Texas Governor]
- Ron DeSantis [Republican Florida Governor]

(Elis, 2022)

- Three Precenters (or members of) [paramilitary militia]
- Operation Cold Front [far-right media outlet]
- InfoWars [far-right media outlet]
- MassResistance [religious group]
- Warriors for Christ [religious group]
- ‘Activist Mommy’ Elizabeth Johnston [high-profile Ohio-based Christian blogger]

(Shenton, 2023)

- Glenn Youngkin [Republican Virginia Governor]

(Dias et al., 2021)

- All of the below are famous Twitter white supremacists:

- Stefan Molyneux
- Kevin MacDonald
- Steve King
- Jean-François Gariépy
- Lana Loktef
- Henrik Palmgren.

- Nick Fuentes [right-wing influencer]

(Holpuch, 2023)

- Kid Rock [anti-trans musician]
- Sen. Marsha Blackburn [Tennessee senator]
- Caitlyn Jenner [trans republican celebrity]

(Kelly, 2025)

- Donald Trump
- Adin Ross [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- Ben Shapiro [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- Dave Rubin [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- Lex Fridman [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- Logan & Jake Paul [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- Jordan (B.) Peterson [manosphere podcaster/streamer]
- DC Draino [meme page]
- RagingAmericans [meme page]
- Snowflaketears [meme page]
- Turning Point USA [American conservative non-profit]

- Charlie Kirk [leader of Turning Point]
- CJ Pearson [conservative creator and committee board member of RNC and Heritage Foundation]
- Jessica Reed Kraus [right-leaning writers]
- Curtis Yarvin [right-leaning writers]

(Shah, 2023)

- Andrew Tate [anti-feminist]
- Hannah Pearl Davis [anti-feminist]
- Alex Jones [far-right online influencer]
- Oath Keepers [right-wing extremist group]
- Stewart Rhodes [founder of Oath Keepers]
- Elon Musk

(Center for Extremism [ADL], 2023)

- Ali Alexander [antisemitic conspiracy theorist and right-wing influencer]
- Andrew Anglin [antisemitic neo-Nazi]
- Jacob Creech (aka Clandestine) [conspiracy theorist]
- Liz Croking [conspiracy theorist and anti-groomer]

(Baig, 2024)

- JK Rowling (TERF)

(Wiggins, 2025)

- Lauren Bobbert
- Nancy Mace

(GLAAD, n.d.)

- The Daily Wire [far-right outlet]
- Matt Walsh [anti-trans commentator]
- Gays Against Groomers [anti-trans LGBTQ+ organization]
- Libs of TikTok [alt-right and anti-LGBTQ accounts]
- Jack Posobiec [alt-right and anti-LGBTQ accounts]
- James Lindsay [alt-right and anti-LGBTQ accounts]
- Marjorie Taylor Greene [US Congresswoman]
- Liz Wheeler [right-wing online influencer]
- Troonytoons [anti-trans Twitter/X account]

From my own knowledge of being on Twitter:

- Blaire White [trans republican influencer]
- Maia Poet [detransitioned turned extremist]
- Oli London [detransitioned turned extremist]
- Chloe Cole [detransitioned turned extremist]

Additions to the follow list after the research ceased:

- Tesla Owners Silicon Valley (@teslaownersSV)
- JD Vance (Fanpage News) (@JDVanceNewsX)
- Elon Musk (@elonmusk)
- Tesla (@Tesla)

- @amuse (@amuse)
- Trump Army (@TRUMP_ARMY_)
- iamyesyouareno (@iamyesyouareno)
- Official Street Preachers (@WCFPreacher)
- Candace Owens (@RealcandaceO)
- End Wokeness (@EndWokeness)
- America (@america)
- [emoji] @5uffragette (@5uffragette)
- Adult_Human_Mother [emojis] (@LydiamamaTerf)
- Gay Not Queer (@Gaynotqueer1)
- Mr PitBull (@MrPitbull07)
- Dewey McG (@DeweyMcG)
- Kalopsia (@Kalopsiac1984)
- Silver Sentinel [emojis] (@h81418541)
- Anti Left Memes (@AntiLeftMemes)
- Anti Woke Memes (@AntiWokeMemes)
- Magnetic Norse (@MagneticNorse)
- Pro Right Memes (@ProRightMemes)
- Western Decline (@WesternDecline_)
- Lib Tears Memes (@LibTearsMemes)
- Courage Is A Habit (@CourageHabit)
- Planet Of Memes (@PlanetOfMemes)
- NoPubertyBlockersForChildren [emoji] (@Muttmere1)
- Concerned Citizen (@BGatesIsaPsycho)
- Global Index (@TheGlobal_Index)
- HumanGayMale (@HumanGayMale)
- Sex Matters (@SexMattersOrg)
- Mr. Chairman of the Board (TheStaties) (@RacistSinatra)
- The Babylon Bee (@TheBabylonBee)
- The Feminist Turned HouseWife (@turnedwife)
- Mary Liggio Ross [emojis] (@MaryRoss815)
- LGB (@L__G__B)
- Juanita Broaddrick (@atensnut)
- Natalie Jean Beisner (@NJBeisner)
- #WalkAway Campaign (@RealWalkAway)
- [emojis] (@LibertasRedux)
- Jennifer Bilek (@bjportraits)
- The 11th hour blog (@11thBlog)

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Appendix B

Coding Trees

The Queer Person

The Queer Person		
Open codes (n)	Axial (n)	Selective (n)
pedophile (30) groomers (6) perverts (5) child abusers (3) mad and demanding fat and ugly monstrous pedophiles (2) pedophilic teachers (2) pornographic "creepy groomers/predators" predators abusers promoters of abuse unbelonging to girl's bathroom "grooming process" "harming babies" "pedos" "child rapists"	Pedophile (58)	Human-like (110)
degenerates (3) man in dress (2) sick (2) "deviant role models" lewd "freaks" "men with fetishes" "degenerate sexual deviants" degenerates "depraved" "kink machine" "sick fucks" man in wig	Degenerate cross-dressers (10)	
deserve death (2) confusing children attention seekers bullies	Destructive humans (19)	

"self-declared champions of tolerance" "intellectually bankrupt" encroaching on parents should be thrown into a "wood chipper" "self-absorbed people who desperately need validation" miserable "viscious" "looks/is dangerous" "edgelord woman" "criminal garbage" "high" "disgusting liar" making children not love themselves "destroying lives"		
mentally ill (2) insane natural when an adult "left leaning lunatics" "insecure sick adults" "narcissistic need for attention" "mentally ill men" "evil sick Munchausens" "insane"	Mentally ill individuals (10)	
"faggot" "shit" "bitch" ugly "gay sissies" clowns "theybeen" "candy arses"	General slurs (8)	
unnatural parents "rough parents" "nothing maternal or paternal" child harm barred from children	Unnatural parents (5)	
conspiratorial evil (16) propaganda machine (4) cult members (4)	Conspiratorial evil (42)	Powerful group (76)

governmental control (2) lobbyists (2) indoctrinators (2) dangerous zealot "real danger" powerful figure secret service agents patriarchal power public schools autroicious actors pedophilic elite "pedoverlords" the enemy "castration cult" "giant child perversion machine"		
rich elite (7) "elitist oligarchy" social elite "horny deviant white men with money" "deranged or greedy entities"	Rich elite (11)	
human traffickers (5) slave owners (4) kidnappers "replace parents" stealing children cartel members	Kidnappers (13)	
terrorists (2) recruiters "militant LGBTQ pressure groups" mindless terrorists	Terrorists (5)	
medial abuse (2) immoral doctors "big pharma cash cows" "activists masquerading as doctors"	Medical (5)	
demons (2) evil (2) "pure evil" (2) Satan "demonic ideology" godless evil beings	Demonic figures (13)	Mythical (18)

Satanists wicked evil force "sick Luciferians" "evil motherfuckers" pagans possessed by a demon "possessed" "diabolical" villians evil actors		
"poisenous creature" (2) hairy monster creature ugly monster with yellow teeth	Creatures (5)	
fear-inducing (2) "societal cancer" "it" farse spreading connected to disease "woke pitfall" "woke mind virus" "highly transmissable infectious disease" existential threat "the worst humans to walk on this earth" extremly dangerous	Manifestations (13)	Entity (21)
unnatural (3) anti-human (2) reprogramers innorganic "innorganic"	Cyborgs (8)	

The Child

The Child		
Open codes (n)	Axial (n)	Selective (n)
being punished justice warrior	Independent body (2)	Independent (2)
innocent (4) natural (4) untainted knowledge (3) born in the right body (3) pure (2) blond white girl (2) born to wrong parents potential breeders unable to make decisions "innocent souls" pure american pressured to be adults	Pure/organic body (24)	Nature (24)
neglected neglected by parents uncared for	Unloved body (3)	Unloved (3)
in danger (14) vulnerable (3) unsafe (3) helpless (3) scared (2) sad running under threat "horrified" "acting weird" frightened should be protected autistic doomed "they are after them" defenseless "vulnerable kids falling victim to" need to be protected "lives ruined" young and vulnerable children babies	Vulnerable body (41)	Vulnerability (80)

indocrinated (15) confused (9) "should be taught math" being corrupted prevented from having a normal life becoming intolerant forced to fit gender ideals "impressionable mind" ashamed to speak up undignified ridiculed "in the wrong body" "force fed paganism" "impressionable youngsters" "impressionable" "confused vulnerable kids" "lifelong customers"	Porous body (39)	
abused (13) groomed (5) soon to be abused (5) exposed to pornography (3) exposed to penis (3) child abuse (2) in danger from pedophiles (2) SA victim shown porn raped sexualized incestously raped sex slaves "little rape slave"	Abused body (40)	Victimhood (74)
kidnapped (9) props (2) betrayed being "created" into queers "designer surrogate baby" something to be bought "removed from its mother" products to be bought "sold like a slave" "unloved pets"	Owned/stolen body (34)	

"fashion accessory" parentless stolen from their mom "donated to the government" "designer handbag" "higher status symbol" fashion accessory innocence is stolen from them "ensnared and brainwashed" loss of daughter/son abducted from father trafficked separated "enslaved" "sterilized, kidnapped, and funneled into the sex trade"		
medical abuse (5) school shooting victim (3) poisoned (2) "physically damaged" mutilated castrated unhealthy forced into treatment being turned trans mentally poisoned "science experiment" human experiments "taken away their children's ability to reproduce" sterilized & mutilated sterile experiments "forever childless and sexless" "unable to orgasm" sterilized disembodied destroyed "created with technology" forced to transition hate themselves "will live sad and miserable lives"	Mangled body (30)	Dark (39)

sacrifice for fame (2) catalyst for profit Satanic sacrifice sacrifice "sacrifices to a technological god" "initiation rite toward transcendence from flesh" sacrifice for money	Sacrificial body (6)
"little Baphomets" exposed to evil exposed to Satanism	Satanic (3)

The Harm

The Harm	
Open codes (n)	Selective (n)
indoctrination (33) corruption (3) confusion (3) propaganda (2) "reprogram" denying fact mislead forced to be adults denial of non-conformity "war on parents with common sense" fear of speaking out marginalization, termination, and silencing of opposition	Indoctrination (49)
pedophilia (30) child abuse (15) grooming (4) penile exposure (3) pedophilic abuse (2) pedophilic SA abused abuse adult abuse pedophilic incest sexual offence "sex trade"	Pedophilia (61)
pornography (8) being exposed to porn	Pornography (10)

DQS	
forced transition (15) medical abuse (12) sterilization (4) sterilization and mutilation (2) irreversable damage "strelization" drug and hormone fed nightmare body mutilation elite science project chemical castration "medical scandal" "medical world's greatest crime" "deliberate sterilization" castration	Medical abuse (43)
babies as designer products (2) "something's wrong" "arranged professional pregnancy"	Surogacy (4)
kidnapping (14) control (3) human trafficking (3) child arrest slavery "largest mass human trafficking cartel known in human history"	Kidnapping (23)
loss of humanity (2) poison (2) toxic (2) "destruction" moral corruption "destruction of childhood innocence" "catastrophe" disaster "human horrors" "terrorist threat" spiritual death "coordinated social and medical experiment" "destruction of identity, purpose, society, culture, civilization, etc"	Destruction (16)
Satanism (2) child sacrifice (2) Satanic indoctrination "perversion of God's Creation"	Satanism (9)

Satanic ritual	
"return to paganism"	
human sacrifice	
harm (4)	Other harm (12)
child neglect (3)	
school shooting (3)	
bullying	
profit accumulation	

Appendix C

Ethics & Privacy Checklist



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Digital Phantasmagoria of Monster & the Innocent Child: Online Discourse of Child Harm Allegations Against Queer People Within Twitter's Anti-Gender Fachosphere

Name, email of student: Franc Kravos, 607285fk@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Rogier van Reekum, vanreekum@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: 09/01/2025 – 22/06/2025

Is the research study conducted within DPAS

☒ YES ☐ NO

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants.

YES - NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research?

YES - NO

Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants.

YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else).

YES - NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? YES - NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? YES - NO

3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? YES - NO

4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? YES - NO

Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? YES - NO

Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? YES - NO

Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? YES - NO

Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? YES - NO

Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? YES - NO

Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? YES - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

Fieldnotes will be written manually in a notepad.
 Screenshots of collected tweets/posts will be stored in a private Google Drive made specifically for the research.
 Descriptions, categorizations, and links of tweets/posts will be stored in an Excel sheet on cloud.
 Some tweet data from the Excel sheet will be stored in the app Gephi, which creates network analysis graphs out of tweets.
 Some other personal notes or sketches will be stored on paper.
 This data will be stored during the time of the research process, up until the thesis will cease all operations.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

The researcher (me).

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

The data stored on cloud backs-up automatically. And the fieldnotes on paper cannot be backed-up but will be stored by my side.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

The only private and personal data are those that come from private users or are expressed in private messages or group chats. The latter will not be collected as the users have not consented to it whereas the former will be anonymized. The only accounts that will not be anonymized would be public figures, organizations, and anonymous content accounts because those accounts are not private users or they are already anonymized, plus their information is for public consumption. With private users their personal data like username and handle were redacted when a screenshot was made. Redactions will also be made if a private user mentions any personal information like place of residence, names, place of work, etc. in the tweet/post itself. In the Excel sheet, private user posts will be coded as well and will be noted as of a private user, so when it will be referred to, I will know to not include any leading information.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Franc Kravos

Name (EUR) supervisor:
Rogier van Reekum

Date: 12-03-2025

Date: 12-03-2025

APPENDIX I: Informed Consent Form (if applicable)