

Understanding the Impact of Misinformation on Trans Lives

The Staff Pride Network is honored to have hosted an insightful event featuring TJ Billard, who provided an in-depth analysis of the role media plays in perpetuating harmful stereotypes and disinformation. TJ Billard is an Assistant Professor in the School of Communication at Northwestern University and Executive Director of the Center for Applied Transgender Studies in Chicago, USA.

The discussion kicked off with an exploration of how media outlets contribute to the spread of misinformation, especially concerning trans issues. The speaker then delved into the influence of capitalism on media narratives, highlighting how profit-driven motives can compromise the integrity of information disseminated to the public.

The talk also covered the legislative landscape affecting trans rights, both in the United States and globally. The speaker provided a comprehensive overview of state policies and their implications for the trans community, offering insights into the challenges faced in different cultural and social contexts.

One of the standout moments was the exploration of the Media System Dependency Theory, which shed light on how media shapes our perceptions and attitudes. The speaker also touched upon the importance of community and social networks in combating misinformation and fostering a more inclusive environment.

The event concluded with a lively Q&A session, where attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and engage in meaningful dialogue. The questions ranged from the role of media in shaping public opinion to the steps that can be taken to counteract the negative impact of misinformation.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in this event, making it a resounding success. We look forward to hosting more such events in the future to continue the important conversation around LGBTQ+ issues.

Decoding the Misrepresentations: A Look at Straw Man Arguments in the Gender Critical Movement

Ever been in a debate where your opponent twists your words, attacks this distorted version, and then claims victory? Welcome to the world of straw man arguments! Today, we're going to explore how this tactic is used within the gender critical movement.

What's a Straw Man Argument?

Imagine you're in a boxing ring, but instead of fighting your real opponent, you're swinging at a straw-filled dummy. You land punch after punch, and unsurprisingly, the straw man doesn't fight back. Victory, right? Not quite. This is the essence of a straw man argument – a tactic where someone distorts, exaggerates, or oversimplifies an opponent's position, attacks this misrepresented position, and then claims to have refuted the original argument.

Straw Man Arguments and the Gender Critical Movement

The gender critical movement, which often questions the concept of gender identity separate from biological sex, has been known to use straw man arguments. Let's unpack some examples:

Straw Man:

Transgender and non-binary individuals want to erase biological women and men.

Reality Check:

Transgender women, trans men, and non-binary individuals are advocating for recognition and rights, not the erasure of cisgender individuals. They're asking for a seat at the table, not to flip the table over.

Straw Man:

Transgender rights activists want to allow men into women's bathrooms.

Reality Check:

The goal is to allow transgender and non-binary individuals to use the bathroom that aligns with their gender identity.

This includes trans men and non-binary individuals using the bathrooms they feel most comfortable with. It's about safety and dignity, not causing chaos in restrooms.

Straw Man:

Affirming a transgender or non-binary child's identity is the same as medical transition.

Reality Check:

Affirming a child's identity can simply mean using their chosen name and pronouns. Medical transition is a separate issue and isn't pursued without careful consideration. It's about letting kids express themselves, not pushing them into medical procedures.

Why Should We Care?

Straw man arguments can be misleading and harmful. They can perpetuate misconceptions, fuel division, and hinder productive conversation. In the context of the gender critical movement, they can contribute to misunderstanding and stigmatization of transgender and non-binary individuals.

Wrapping Up

Straw man arguments are like shadow boxing with distorted versions of our opponents' views. Recognizing them is the

first step towards more honest and productive conversations. So, the next time you're in a debate and your opponent starts swinging at a straw man, call it out. Let's ensure our discussions around gender and identity are based on understanding, not misrepresentation.

Want to Know More?

If you're interested in diving deeper into this topic, we highly recommend watching the original video lecture that inspired this article. It provides an overview of arguments used by the gender critical movement. You can watch the video [here](#).

Decoding the Hidden Messages: A Look at Dog Whistles in the Gender Critical Movement

Have you ever heard a phrase and felt like there was more to it than meets the eye? That's the essence of a "dog whistle" – a term that's been buzzing around a lot lately. But what exactly does it mean, and how does it relate to the gender critical movement? Let's dive in!

What's a Dog Whistle Anyway?

Imagine a whistle that only dogs can hear. Now, apply that concept to language. A dog whistle, in the realm of communication, is a coded message. It's a phrase that seems ordinary but carries a hidden meaning for a specific group.

Dog Whistles and the Gender Critical Movement

The gender critical movement, which often questions the concept of gender identity separate from biological sex, has been known to use dog whistles. Let's take a look at some examples:

Dog Whistle Phrase	Surface Meaning	Hidden Meaning
"Sex Matters"	Only your birth sex should matter	Used to deny the validity of transgender identities
"Homosexual Means Same Sex Attracted"	Gay men are attracted to trans women	Used to deny the validity of trans women's identities
"Defend Women's Sports"	Advocating for fair competition in women's sports	Used to exclude trans women and girls from all sports at every level
"Keep Prisons Single Sex"	Advocating for safety in prisons	Used to argue for placing vulnerable trans women in men's prisons
"Woman: Adult Human Female"	A biological definition of a woman	Used to assert that trans women are men and shouldn't have protection from misogyny etc
"Defending Sex Based Rights"	Advocating for rights based on one's biological sex	Used to argue against rights for transgender individuals

Dog Whistle Phrase	Surface Meaning	Hidden Meaning
“Watchful Waiting”	A cautious approach to medical transition	Used to delay or block transition for as long as possible
“Protect Single Sex Spaces”	Advocating for the safety and rights of women	Used to exclude trans people from single sex spaces
“Exploratory therapy”	A therapeutic approach to understanding gender identity	Used as a euphemism for conversion therapy

Why Should We Care?

Dog whistles can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to a culture of exclusion. In the context of the gender critical movement, they can marginalize and stigmatize transgender individuals.

Wrapping Up

Dog whistles are like secret codes in our everyday language. They can subtly convey controversial ideas, making them a powerful tool in social and political discourse. Recognizing these hidden messages is the first step towards promoting inclusivity and combating discrimination. So, the next time you hear a phrase that seems loaded, take a moment to listen closely. You might just hear a dog whistle.

Want to Know More?

If you're interested in diving deeper into this topic, we highly recommend watching the original video lecture that inspired this article. It provides a comprehensive overview of

dog whistles used by the gender critical movement. You can watch the video here

The importance of gender diversity in neuroscience research

In this blog post, Professor Tara Spire-Jones (she/her) highlights how the lack of gender representation in neuroscience research is limiting medical progress:

I've been thinking a lot lately about the importance of considering gender in neuroscience research. My day job is a dementia researcher. Our group is trying to understand the brain changes that cause Alzheimer's disease and related neurodegenerative conditions in order to effectively prevent or treat them. We always include sex as a variable in our analyses whether we're looking at donated human brain tissue or animal models, but for humans, we do not have any information about gender as this is not routinely collected by the tissue banks we access.

It turns out, it's not just our lab that has this problem. I recently wrote an editorial on the topic of gender in neuroscience research in my journal *Brain Communications* and, while reading about the topic, found some disturbing data about the lack of inclusion of trans and nonbinary people in medical research which is contributing to health disparities.

An analysis of over 20,000 clinical trials concluded that many medical fields, including neurology, had a serious underrepresentation of women in clinical trials. Further, the authors state:

Despite the high rates of sex reporting in the ClinicalTrials.gov registry, a meaningful analysis of the representation of gender was not possible because of the small number of clinical trials that included and reported on nonbinary genders or transgender health, highlighting a need for greater inclusion of gender diversity in medical research. A standardized system that includes all sexes and genders, including transgender and nonbinary genders, in reporting is necessary to improve health for all. The relative absence of the gender nonbinary and transgender community from clinical trials limits medical progress for these communities.

I discussed some of these data in a webinar with the UK Dementia Research Institute.

In addition to the need for research inclusive of all genders, in my field we have a lack of representation of gender diversity among researchers. We need all of the best minds to solve neuroscience challenges like dementia. One shining star in this respect was Prof Ben Barres, who sadly died a few years ago. Ben was a transgender neuroscientist who was an inspiration and advocate for diversity in neuroscience. I highly recommend his book, *Autobiography of a Transgender Scientist*.

I'm very proud of the Staff Pride Network for supporting our local LGBT+ scientists, whose successes are a reminder that everyone deserves to be included in neuroscience!

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- Learn more about Tara's research
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Gender Neutral Toilets

Gender neutral toilets are bathrooms which can be used by anyone, regardless of gender.

While anyone can use a gender neutral toilet, they are particularly important for trans and non-binary students and staff who may feel uncomfortable in or unable to use gendered bathrooms.

The map below shows the locations of gender neutral toilets across the University's campuses.

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/estates/buildings-information/gender-neutral-toilets>

Recommendations for Inclusive Data Collection

During Pride Month in particular, we're glad to highlight opportunities for our members and allies to focus on LGBT+ inclusion in their work.

Don't forget that we can seize these opportunities all year round, not just in June!

Check out the following recommendations for designing an inclusive survey, kindly provided by Ariadne Cass-Maran, Senior Content Designer with Website and Communications.

Language changes and evolves all the time. Any list you offer people, especially a global community as we have at the University of Edinburgh, will inevitably age over time, or leave someone out. It helps to consider inclusive data-gathering as an evolving thing.

There's a lot of talk at the moment about blanket terms being used in inclusive language guides to try to cover everyone. However, we should be careful not to use a neutral term that might imply different things to different people. We should also be aware that there are circumstances when people prefer to see their identity represented.

So if you're designing a form or survey, here are some recommendations:

- Be clear on what quantitative and qualitative data you want to gather.
- When providing a list, include the identities you want to know about, and include 'prefer not to say' as an option.
- In addition to your list for participants to select an identity, provide a free text box to give the option for people to provide their identity if they don't see it in the list provided. The reason for this is that there are always unknowns and unknown unknowns. By providing a

list, you give people the opportunity to see themselves represented, but you also risk leaving an identity out. Provide the opportunity for people to tell you about themselves.

- If you want to ask people about their gender, including cis and trans genders, to understand self-identification and the intricacies of societal definitions, a free text box will allow participants to provide more nuanced information about an identity they selected.

Ariadne's work has informed an inclusive language guide for the University community. Explore the Inclusive Language Guide

Check out Advance HE's guidance on collection of diversity monitoring data. Advance HE guidance on data gathering

Rainbow background images for video conferencing or slides

The designs taking inspiration from our Flags Survey results, we are delighted to present new Teams backgrounds which are available on the University website and saved in the Staff Pride Network Members SharePoint for you to download. Please add to your Teams (now!) and consider using these as backgrounds for lectures and meetings, both internal and external meetings.

"We are really pleased that these backgrounds play a small but welcome part in emphasising the importance of diversity and

inclusivity at our University.”

Niall Bradley, Deputy Director of Marketing, The University of Edinburgh

As we continue to work with the University to increase awareness of the importance of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, tools for all staff and students to show support and allyship are key to that journey.

In this digital age where Rainbow Lanyards are less visible, rainbow lanyard Teams backgrounds were proposed by **Melissa Highton**, Director of Learning, Teaching and Web Services and Assistant Principal Online Learning at ISG, which became a (*lengthy, multiple emails*) very senior management collaboration between Katie & I for the Staff Pride Network, ISG graphic designer and SPN graphic design volunteer Gill Kidd, HR’s Head of EDI Caroline Wallace, with final designs and corporate approval by University Communications & Marketing, including Head of Brand, Head of Marketing, Deepthi de Silva-Williams and Deputy Director of Marketing Niall Bradley.

Available to download “(Virtual backgrounds (zip)” from [https://ue.sharepoint.com/sites/Brand/SitePages/Branded-environment-\(digital-&-virtual\).aspx](https://ue.sharepoint.com/sites/Brand/SitePages/Branded-environment-(digital-&-virtual).aspx)

Mark Pace has also kindly shared his two PowerPoint templates masters using these designs:

SPN Powerpoint

SPN Powerpoint2

Research Seminar: Transgender Gaze, Neoliberal Haze

Representations of trans women in the Americas through the prism of neoliberal society

a seminar with Gina Gwenffrewi

My PhD thesis deals with the impact of the Americas on our conception in Scotland and the UK regarding trans identity, specifically trans female identity. This is partly the intellectual and activist legacies from mainly North America since the 1990s, but also the terrible rate of violence suffered by trans women in Latin America and African American communities in the North. I'm interested in the narratives that we encounter in the arts and the media, including which narratives get seen by us, and which do not. My work deals with the power structures that decide, within our current neoliberal culture, what is the right kind of trans narrative and which is not. Accordingly, my thesis begins with an analysis of the novel *The Danish Girl*, with its narrow depiction of a white, hyper-feminine, upper-middle-class trans woman with a tragic ending, the perfect narrative for a white, non-trans audience. I then look at narratives including storytelling and biography by trans women of colour which challenge our understanding of society and how it is meant to enrich any hardworking citizen irrespective of class, race/ethnicity, or nation.

Research Seminar: World AIDS Day 2020

In recognition of World Aid's Day 2020 and this year's theme of "Resilience", the University of Edinburgh Staff Pride Network hosted a panel event to address the question: How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Scotland and around the world? and share insights as to how communities and health systems have demonstrated resilience and sought to strengthen HIV prevention services in the context of a global pandemic.

Our Panel members were:

- Robert Pollock from Waverley Care
- Socorro García – Casa de la Sal (Mexico)
- Germán Martínez Blanco – AHF Mexico
- Rocío Sánchez Granillo – preVIHene (Mexico)
- Fraser Serle – HIV Scotland volunteer

Robert Pollock is a Health Improvement Coordinator at Waverley Care, he's based in Edinburgh, currently working from home. He has been part of Waverley Care since 1995, initially as a befriending volunteer and since 2011 as a paid employee. He works in a small team offering outreach support to people

living with HIV and/or HepC. This team has worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, offering a blend of in-person and telephone support and advice.

Socorro García Estrada is a psychologist graduated from the National University of Mexico (UNAM), psychotherapist, and thanatologist. She delivers person-centred awareness training for medical staff on topics of care for people living with HIV. She has 25 years of experience providing psychological orientation to people living with HIV. She is part of the Citizen Council on HIV in Mexico City and is Programme Director at La Casa de La Sal, a Civil Association that provides comprehensive care for people with HIV/AIDS and their families.

Germán Martínez Blanco is an independent actor and psychologist graduated from the National University of Mexico (UNAM). Since 2003 he has worked in NGOs, coordinating community psychological care programs. Since 2010 he has specialised in the HIV field doing prevention, early detection, and accompaniment of people living with HIV. He currently coordinates the Linkage to Medical Care programme in AHF Mexico and promotes the cabaret play entitled "Lights Out" with the Doom Cabaret company.

Rocío Sánchez Granillo López is a Psychologist, Psychotherapist, and PhD candidate in Human Sexuality. In her role as a lecturer at Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, she supervises psychology trainees working with people living with HIV. As a result of this work, she co-founded 'preVIHene Por tu Vida', an organisation dedicated to deliver comprehensive sexual education programmes on primary prevention of STIs, unplanned pregnancies, and sexual health promotion.

Fraser Serle is a member of HIV Scotland's Community Advisory Network and Lothian HIV Patient Forum. He was also vice-chair of Positively UK in London until earlier this month.

Research Seminar: Imagined Futures of Older Same Sex Couples in Scotland

This talk was based on PhD research which explored how older same-sex couples in Scotland imagine their futures. The research looked at how people talk about their past and present, and how their experiences were reflected in the imagination of their future. Based on interviews with 7 older same-sex couples living in Scotland, the talk presented some of the key results, which show that the couples who participated in this research imagine their future in a very similar and specific way. The talk also explored two ways of imagining the future, the short- and long-term one, and how these differ in terms of the concerns and hopes reflected in each. Through the stories presented in this talk and in Dr Jandrić's doctoral research, she hopes to raise awareness of the experiences these couples went through and what these experiences mean for their present and future lives.

Dr Dora Jandrić is a researcher in sociology. She obtained her PhD at the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include the intersection of sexuality, time, and ageing. Her PhD thesis explored how older same-sex couples imagined their future. She worked on a project which investigated experiences of invisibility of bisexual employees in the UK, and currently works as a senior tutor on undergraduate-level sociology at the School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh.