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### Intersection of Transgenderism and Disinformation

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# Intersection of Transgenderism and Disinformation

William Weiss Jr

Source Project, Disinformation and Naivete

## INTRODUCTION

In the years of 2020-2023, multiple disinformation narratives based on social fear within the United States have targeted the transgender community. For example, inclusion of transgender women in women's bathrooms has been expressed through disinformation as men intruding into women's spaces as sexual predators (Locantore & Wasarhaley 8). As these campaigns continue, many states have passed laws and new legislation is under consideration. One such law is Tennessee's ban on gender affirming care in minors. Passage of these laws relies on public perception of transgender people as an invalid or dangerous group, using disinformation that is perpetuated in mainstream news coverage (Billiard 4194).

## METHODS

- Recognize and analyze patterns of social fear in anti-transgender disinformation narratives, such as the sexual predator myth and the calling cisgender women in power secretly transgender (Jankowicz et al. 20), that use emotional appeal to be effective (Wardle & Derakhshan 7)
- Display the role of news coverage techniques, like deadnaming, that discredit transgender individuals which shapes public view of the transgender community
- Connect general naivete on transgender issues to acceptance of disinformation about transgender people (Jobe 8)
- Analyze law passage of transgender bathroom exclusion, restriction of gender affirming care for minors, and removal of transgender athletes from female sports



Image: Nate Yonamine

***Social fear fuels disinformation narratives that justify anti-transgender legislation.***

## RESULTS

Disinformation narratives against the transgender community offer a unique view of gendered disinformation, seeing it used against a vulnerable minority group. For the transgender community, existing stigma is both used and increased by these narratives to gain acceptance by the naïve public. News coverage often exaggerates stories, especially negative stories, in ways that harm transgender viewers' opinions of the legitimacy of the very transgender identities they could embrace as their own. Using this stigma and narratives from disinformation campaigns, various laws are passed to restrict and harm the transgender community. These laws often do not stop at harming at the transgender community, being vague enough to target anyone not strictly gender-conforming or using the justification of anti-transgender laws in laws against women. This can be seen in the public drag ban in Tennessee, stating it bans "adult-oriented" content (Tennessee General Assembly), transgender people being considered sexual in nature due to narratives such as the bathroom predator. Thus, the law works to enforce strict gender expectations for attire, not just for transgender individuals. Additionally, anti-transgender legislation such as that of Ohio's female sports bill, takes away privacy from a significant number of athletes, including cisgender girls, while being open to exploitation as tests would be done on a reactionary basis.

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