

Dynamics of Transphobic Content and Disinformation

GUEST EDITORS

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While the previous decade saw a dramatic increase in both the visibility of transgender and gender minority people and their access to healthcare and legal protections across the globe, recent years have been defined by a deluge of reactionary backlash to these gains. Efforts to heavily restrict, if not outright criminalize, the provision of gender-affirming care have become mainstream corner-stones of political parties across the globe. In the United States of America, each successive year has seen increasing numbers of anti-LGBTQI+ bills filed and passed into law. These bills have focused not only on curtailing trans rights, but also on delegitimizing transgender identities themselves. Across the United Kingdom, Australia, and a number of European Union countries, well-organized and well-funded social movements have successfully pressured national governments to endorse scientifically illiterate claims and adopt medical double standards that restrict care access. These policies are rooted in a mixture of dubious hypotheses, outdated science, and outright conspiracy theories. By combining these claims with asymmetrical standards for medical ethics, and by distributing these claims across the various domains of the media ecosystem, the disinformation underlying anti-trans backlash should rightly be considered mainstream.

Despite the ubiquity of anti-trans disinformation, particularly in digital arenas, relatively little formal scholarly attention has been paid to the flows of transphobic content online or to its effects on audiences. While a robust and growing literature examines how social media dynamics can promote radicalization, extremist violence, susceptibility to disinformation, and endorsement of conspiracy theories, there may be meaningful differences in how these dynamics play out with respect to transphobic content. Given the significance of these dynamics to the material realities of transgender existence, this gap in our knowledge and understanding must be filled.

For this special issue, we invite proposals that investigate dynamics of transphobic content and disinformation in digital media: how they originate, how they spread, how they influence public opinion and policy, how people come to adopt misinformed beliefs, and/or the cultures of online spaces that proliferate anti-trans misinformation. Potential topics may include (but are not limited to):

- the nature, prevalence, and impact of misinformational claims online;
- the narrative contexts in which transphobic misinformation are embedded;
- the origins, strategies, and impacts of anti-transgender disinformation campaigns;
- the roles of pseudoscience and conspiracy theories in online transphobia;
- the moderation of transphobic content and hate speech on social media platforms;
- transphobia in online communities;
- cyberattacks, doxxing, and other digital threats targeting the transgender community;
- legal frameworks, regulations, and ethical dilemmas surrounding online transphobia and disinformation;
- the spread of false information related to transgender healthcare, including gender-affirming care;
- the role of mass media in amplifying online transphobia and disinformation;
- the impacts of anti-transgender misinformation on public opinion, attitudes, and policy decisions related to transgender rights;
- comparative analyses of online transphobia and disinformation in different regions or across different media;
- the global flows of anti-transgender misinformation;
- historical perspectives on the emergence and evolution of anti-transgender misinformation; and
- the effectiveness of interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence and impacts of transphobic content and disinformation; among others.

The Guest Editors are interested in research from all methods of scholarly inquiry and any disciplinary or theoretical background. They are also particularly interested in contributions from scholars belonging to historically excluded groups and the Global South, as well as submissions that explore understudied regions, populations, and platforms.

Authors should submit an extended abstract to bulletin@appliedtransstudies.org with an email subject line “Transphobic Disinformation Special Issue” no later than 1 December 2023 (Anywhere on Earth). Extended abstracts should consist of no more than 1,000 words (excluding tables, figures, appendices, and references).

Special Issue Timeline

Stage	Due/Completion Dates
Extended Abstracts	1 December 2023 (Anywhere on Earth)
Full Draft Invitations and Rejection Notifications	1 January 2024
Full Paper Submissions	1 June 2024 (AoE)
Full Paper Decisions	1 August 2024
Full Paper Revisions	1 September 2024 (AoE)
Final Accept-Reject Decisions	1 December 2024
Special Issue Publication	15 March 2025 (Volume 4, Issue 1)