Colloquy

Volume 20 Spring 2026



A Journal of the Department of Communication Studies

California State University Los Angeles

Colloquy

A Journal of the Department of Communication Studies
Volume 20 Spring 2026

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The editorial board is composed of students and supervising faculty members. Typically, board membership changes with each issue. Editors ensure that essays published in the journal are reviewed for consistency of style and clarity of expression. The editorial board is committed to inclusiveness and endeavors to evaluate all submissions with this ethic in mind.

Over the years, a number of essays published in *Colloquy* have been presented at national and regional conferences, including the International Communication Association (ICA), the National Communication Association (NCA), and the Western States

Communication Association (WSCA). *Colloquy* highlights the achievements of students in the Communication Studies Department while providing a forum for scholarly discussion and innovation.

The editorial board wishes to thank all who contributed to this volume, including the authors who submitted essays, the faculty members who solicited materials and mentored students, and the members of the production staff.

Colloquy is permanently funded through a generous endowment made possible by the estate of Daniel Robert (Rob) DeChaine. Dr. DeChaine was a longtime faculty member in the Department of Communication Studies, a dedicated supervising editor of the journal, and a beloved colleague, mentor, and teacher.

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Rhetorics of Rupture: Mark Carney's Davos Speech and the Reimagining of Global Order

Naomi Argueta

Bio:

Naomi Argueta is an undergraduate student in the Department of Communication Studies, with a focus in Mass Communication

Abstract

This essay offers a rhetorical analysis of Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, situating the speech within contemporary debates about shifting global power structures. Drawing on three complementary methodologies—Neo-Aristotelian criticism, Burkean dramatism, and Hall's encoding/decoding model—this study examines how Carney constructs a persuasive call for a reconfigured international order. First, a Neo-Aristotelian analysis evaluates Carney's strategic deployment of ethos, pathos, and logos to establish credibility, evoke urgency, and frame economic interdependence as a shared risk. Second, a Burkean pentadic analysis reveals how Carney assigns motive through a scene–act ratio, positioning geopolitical "rupture" as the condition necessitating collective action among "middle powers." Finally, Hall's framework is used to theorize how diverse audiences may interpret Carney's message through dominant, negotiated, and oppositional readings. Taken together, this multi-method

approach demonstrates how Carney's rhetoric not only critiques U.S. hegemonic decline but also attempts to mobilize international actors toward a more collaborative and multipolar global order.

Introduction

This essay analyzes a speech delivered by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. To examine the rhetorical force of this address, the analysis integrates three distinct but complementary critical frameworks. First, a Neo-Aristotelian approach evaluates how Carney mobilizes ethos, pathos, and logos to persuade a global audience of political and economic elites. Second, Burkean dramatism—specifically pentadic analysis—interrogates how Carney's language constructs motive and frames geopolitical transformation as both necessary and urgent. Third, Hall's encoding/decoding model is employed to consider how different audiences may interpret and respond to the speech, ranging from dominant to oppositional readings. Together, these methodologies provide a layered understanding of how Carney's rhetoric functions not only as critique but also as a call to reimagine the structure of the contemporary world order.

Part I: Neo-Aristotelian Analysis

Context

The speech was held in Davos, Switzerland and was being televised as well as posted extensively on social media, in particular on YouTube. Carney addresses the political situation brought on by American President Donald Trump and critiques the U.S.' hegemonic power.

Given the amount of changes this President has made in his 2nd term when it came to the world's economy, Carney stood at this podium speech and offered a view on it through the lens of a neighboring country, this being Canada.

For the longest time, Canada was considered an ally of the United States, but now with the U.S. prioritizing themselves and severing past alliances for a short term economic gain, this agreement is no longer a thing. It is a significant moment in time for Carney as a representative of Canada to denounce this hegemonic power given the history Canada had with the U.S..

Audience

Carney uses this speech to address global leaders at the WEF. Not only is it just for government officials, those high in power in businesses, academia, and the media are also present. Given this is a televised event that is also spread through social media, Carney's audience also extends to the regular people of different countries who tune in. Carney goes on to explicitly call the attention of "middle powers" saying, "The question for middle powers like Canada is not whether to adapt to the new reality — we must" (Carney, para. 24, 2026). In trying to get this audience's attention from the get-go, Carney opens up with a story of a storekeeper keeping the communist system alive by merely participating quietly. Besides this method, he also employs reasonable logic based on who the audience is and their capabilities in business as well as emotional values and ties a person has to their country.

Source

Carney uses his credibility as a way to be able to speak to the audience at the WEF. He's the Prime Minister of Canada and prior to this was Governor of the Bank of Canada as well as the Governor of the Bank of England. He also has an extensive education, gaining a doctorate in economics, boosting his credibility to speak on the ongoing hegemonic issues the U.S. brings to the international table regarding the Global Economy. With this in mind, Carney heads into his speech being the face of Canada denouncing the broken U.S. capitalistic system that no longer works.

Logos

Carney uses Logos extensively throughout the speech as a way to persuade the audience. He compares the situation of different countries beginning to fend for themselves by bringing it back to economic terms of risk management. He states, “Risk management comes at a price, but that cost of strategic autonomy, of sovereignty, can be shared. Collective investments in resilience are cheaper than everyone building their own fortresses” (Carney, para. 23, 2026). In this way of bringing the global situation to a smaller scale of economic understanding, Carney allows for the audience to shift their thinking and be open to the rest of his speech. These individuals understand economics, and with this comparison, understand that the way to minimize risk is to stay connected through what Carney calls “a rupture”.

Pathos

Carney also builds up courage throughout his speech and in this way is employing the use of Pathos. His deliberate call out of the U.S. is powerful especially as he directly states, “We understand that this rupture calls for more than adaptation. It calls for honesty about the world as it is” (Para. 54, 2026). Honesty is the keyword that Carney uses to build up hope and courage in the audience. If Carney is absolutely honest in his words about the world, his suggestions throughout the speech become especially important to listen to. Near the end of his speech, Carney also goes on to say, “The powerful have their power. But we have something too: the capacity to stop pretending, to name realities, to build our strength at home and to act together” (Para. 57, 2026).

Promoting honesty and strength, Carney allows the audience to feel prideful, if they’re Canadian, and have hope in a newer world order. As Carney shares, “…the old world order is not coming back” (Para. 56, 2026). Admitting to this sincerely, Carney’s speech of pragmatically laying out the steps Canada will

take during this “rupture” allows for courage to be built among listeners. While facing such a huge shift in global affairs, Carney heads into this chaos by acknowledging the changes that need to be made and not sticking to Ad Hominem attacks or using hyperboles to alienate his audience.

Ethos

When it comes to credibility, Carney goes on to prop up Canada’s capabilities as a Middle Power country. He directly shares, “Canada has what the world wants” (Para. 52, 2026). In sharing what Canada does right, Carney builds up rapport with other global leaders and leads them to want to truly listen and remember what he said. Throughout his speech, Carney continuously pointed out how the values and reliability of the world order was a thing of the past. He says, “Stop invoking rules-based international order as though it still functions as advertised. Call it what it is: a system of intensifying great power rivalry where the most powerful pursue their interests using economic integration as coercion” (Para. 47, 2026). There is a notion of moral credibility in this statement by being honest of what the old order really was. Having morals and being honest about what the old system was works in Carney’s favor for his new message of wanting to build a newer global power that is beneficial to more than to a select few.

Organization

The artifact moves from first introducing a story from Havel about a storekeeper keeping the communist system alive. Through this story, Carney creates an extended metaphor which he uses to form his appeals throughout his speech. The main impact of the speech is placed deliberately in both the beginning and the end of the speech, with the beginning showing Carney’s clear callout of this failing system and the ending being his call to action for other powers to step up to take the mantle for a new order. In placing the story at the beginning as well as outright saying the system no longer works, Carney builds his rapport with

the audience to truly listen to what he has to say throughout his speech. The call to action being put at the end makes the last remarks memorable and stand out.

Language

In terms of language, Carney uses higher vocabulary that is fitting for his direct audience members. It's important to remember that a lot of the economic terms stated in this speech might fly over secondary audience members who were not in physical attendance. Nevertheless, Carney speaks with frank clarity about the social and economic changes happening with the world. He also uses the reoccurring theme introduced at the beginning with his short story of a storekeeper putting up a sign to participate in the communist regime. The phrase of putting up the sign is constantly brought back up time and time again throughout the speech to tie it back to the story of how communism sustained itself for so long. This repetition drives home how quiet participation in the old system allowed for it to stay alive even if it didn't work and wasn't beneficial for many.

Evaluation

Carney demonstrates realism in his approach of addressing the issue at hand. He does so by showcasing the accomplishments that Canada has achieved on their own merit and by not relying on the U.S.' power. In this way, Carney shows that a new world system that isn't over reliant on stronger powers isn't necessary in order to participate in global affairs. More so Carney's strongest point in his speech is the poignant honesty. As a representative of Canada, a once close ally of the U.S., Carney demonstrates how honesty can be powerful in persuading the audience by directly addressing the current situation. The historical context makes Carney's arguments, his usage of repeated metaphors, and being logical that much stronger. When it comes to the limitations however, using such higher language can alienate audiences. Moreover, there is more reliance on the pathos of his argument by constantly bringing up the shopkeeper metaphor.

Part II: Dramatism: Pentadic Analysis

Quoted passage:

"Our view is the middle powers must act together because if we're not at the table, we're on the menu. But I'd also say that great powers can afford, for now, to go it alone. They have the market size, the military capacity, and the leverage to dictate terms. Middle powers do not. But when we only negotiate bilaterally with a hegemon, we negotiate from weakness. We accept what's offered. We compete with each other to be the most accommodating. This is not sovereignty. It's the performance of sovereignty while accepting subordination" (Carney, para. 42-44, 2026).

Pentadic Terms:

The quote displays the scene being that the U.S. hegemonic power has failed and is leaving a void in the global system. Carney explains that at the moment these greater powers can afford to continue in isolation without participating in globalization as there is no need for reliance but that the middle powers need to take action soon. Calling on the middle powers to act is clearly shown to be Burke's Act. He brings up the point that in that old system, middle and lower powers were at odds with one another to be the most accommodating ally to these greater powers. Now Carney is calling for these middle powers to work together instead, lest they be in the same situation that held their countries to a disadvantage in comparison to the greater powers.

Ratio

The ratio showcased in this quotation is Scene-Act, in which the setting determines the action. The scene, being the failed old system having a void that needs to be filled, brings in the Act, Canada and other middle powers to step up to the plate. The rupture is what is leading the middle powers to act now. This ratio explains that this new chaotic setting of a global structural failure is what is leading these powers to form a newer system that is

more sustainable. The main course of action is for middle powers to work together and also better shape their own countries like Canada did with its investments in defense and forming political alliances that are more equal in ground.

Consequence

In following the Scene-Act ratio, the blame does not fall onto a specific number of powers but solely continues the idea that the bystander effect is what led to this old system staying for as long as it did. More so the politics now shift towards promoting the resilience of countries who stood quietly by instead of actually taking accountability in acting in such a manner. Carney argues that it is subordination, while not entirely true. This then begs the question of how these middle powers continued to sustain such a system for so long when the same system was a facade for how much power a country truly held. It shifts the blame onto the system instead of all the countries who participated, and will continue to participate, in quiet subordination even in the newer world order that might be proposed.

Part III: Encoding/Decoding

Encoding

Carney's speech hammers in the fact that the old world order has shifted into something new and that taking the time to make a new path is imperative for the future of the different countries of the world. He states, "Nostalgia is not a strategy" (Para. 56, 2026). The intended message is that middle powers, or just any country in general, needs to be aware of the changes and cannot just stay living in the past when the world needs to move forward.

Decoding: From the encoded message of middle powers needing to step into the new age of World Order, there can be 3 different interpretations made by the audience.

I. Dominant Reading

Should the audience accept the message that Carney is

proposing, they will in turn be willing to also do as Carney proposes in his speech. He brings up that middle powers should be "building what we claim to believe in, rather than waiting for the old order to be restored. It means creating institutions and agreements that function as described, and it means reducing leverage that enables coercion" (Para. 49, 2026). In this snippet not only does Carney suggest what the dominant reading should be, he also describes what those in the Negotiated Reading might do. The main focus of those who agree with Carney will interpret his message as a call to action. They do agree that the U.S. hegemonic powers are no longer what they used to be, and understand Carney's extended metaphor about participating in this system with "the sign on the window".

II. Negotiated Reading

There will be other audience members who might feel in conflict with this message that Carney brings up. For instance, these are global leaders who already benefitted from the old order and while they are somewhat open to this new idea, there is not enough ground to truly believe in these ideals, no matter how realistic. There is also the fact that other countries who may not be considered middle powers feel as though they cannot participate to the extent that Carney is suggesting. The interpretation is considered to be that only middle powers can be the ones to step up to the plate to bring about a new global system even if Carney is suggesting globalization that benefits more people instead of the interests of a great few.

III. Oppositional Reading

This portion of the audience would be against what Carney is suggesting. If the system that had stood the test of time for so long had worked in favor of these individuals, why shouldn't they try to bring it back? Carney is suggesting hypotheticals that currently offer no benefits for these individuals that are substantial or tangible at the moment. These members might be those from the greater powers that Carney is rebuking and they'll

be entirely against his message of a global system in which more countries are working together on equal ground.

Reproduction

After forming an interpretation of Carney's message, these audience members might go ahead and try to silence what has been said if they are in opposition. There might be an influx in propaganda against trying to build a new world order. Those in favor might have others interested in actually engaging in policy making to make Carney's pragmatic dream a true reality. Whether a true mobilization towards this new goal will come to fruition is yet to be seen, as Carney had mentioned prior, the bystander effect has led to such systems having a strong staying power.

Conclusion

Through the combined application of Neo-Aristotelian criticism, Burkean dramatism, and Hall's encoding/decoding model, this analysis demonstrates how Mark Carney's Davos address operates as both a critique of an eroding hegemonic order and a strategic call for collective reorientation among global actors. Carney's appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos establish credibility and urgency, while his dramatistic framing positions geopolitical "rupture" as the condition that compels action, particularly among middle powers. At the same time, the encoding/decoding framework reveals that the speech's meaning is not fixed but contingent upon audience positioning, producing a range of potential interpretations from alignment to resistance. Taken together, these approaches underscore the complexity of Carney's rhetoric as an effort to not only name a shifting global reality but also to shape how that reality is understood, negotiated, and acted upon by diverse audiences.

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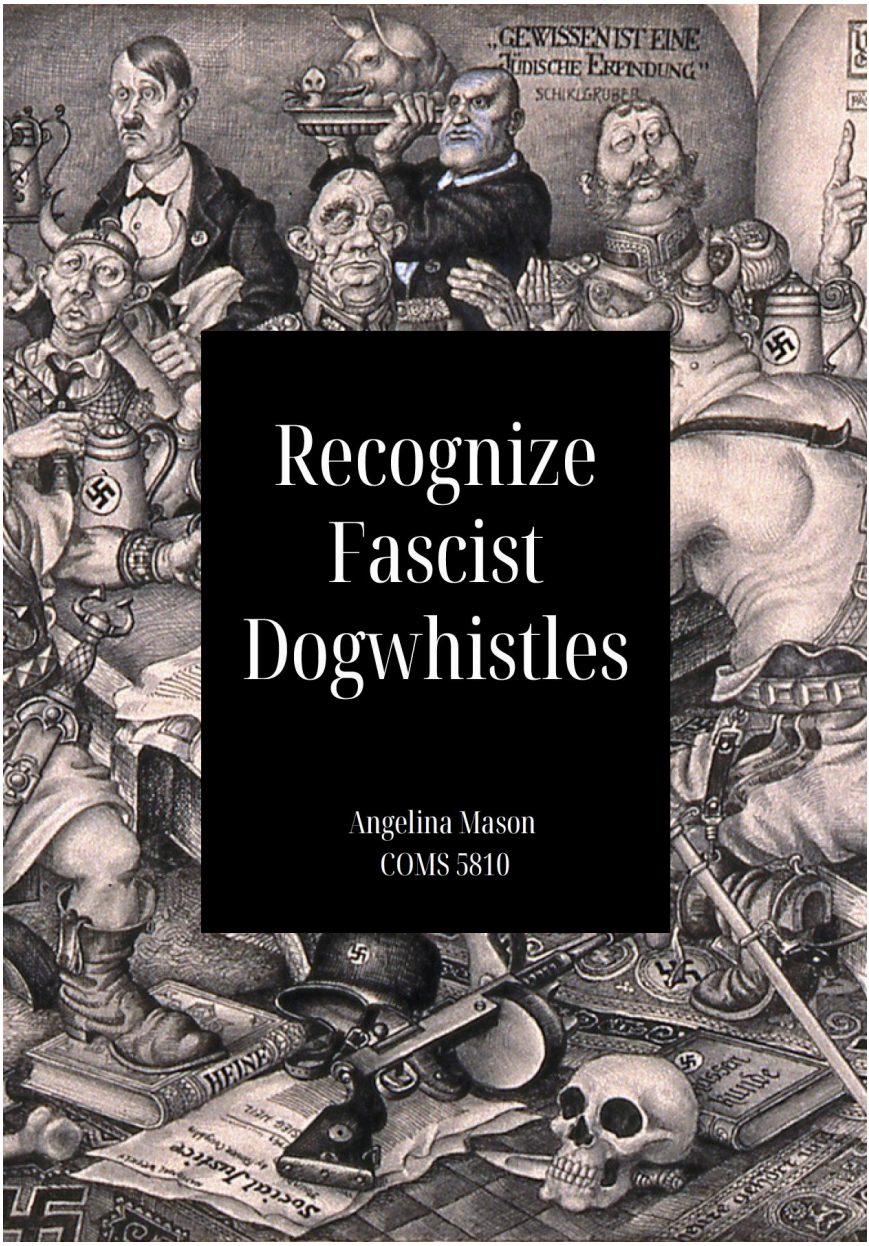
Recognize Fascist Dogwhistles

Angelina Mason

Bio:

Angelina Mason is a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies. Her research focuses on critical/cultural studies and rhetorical criticism within contemporary media.

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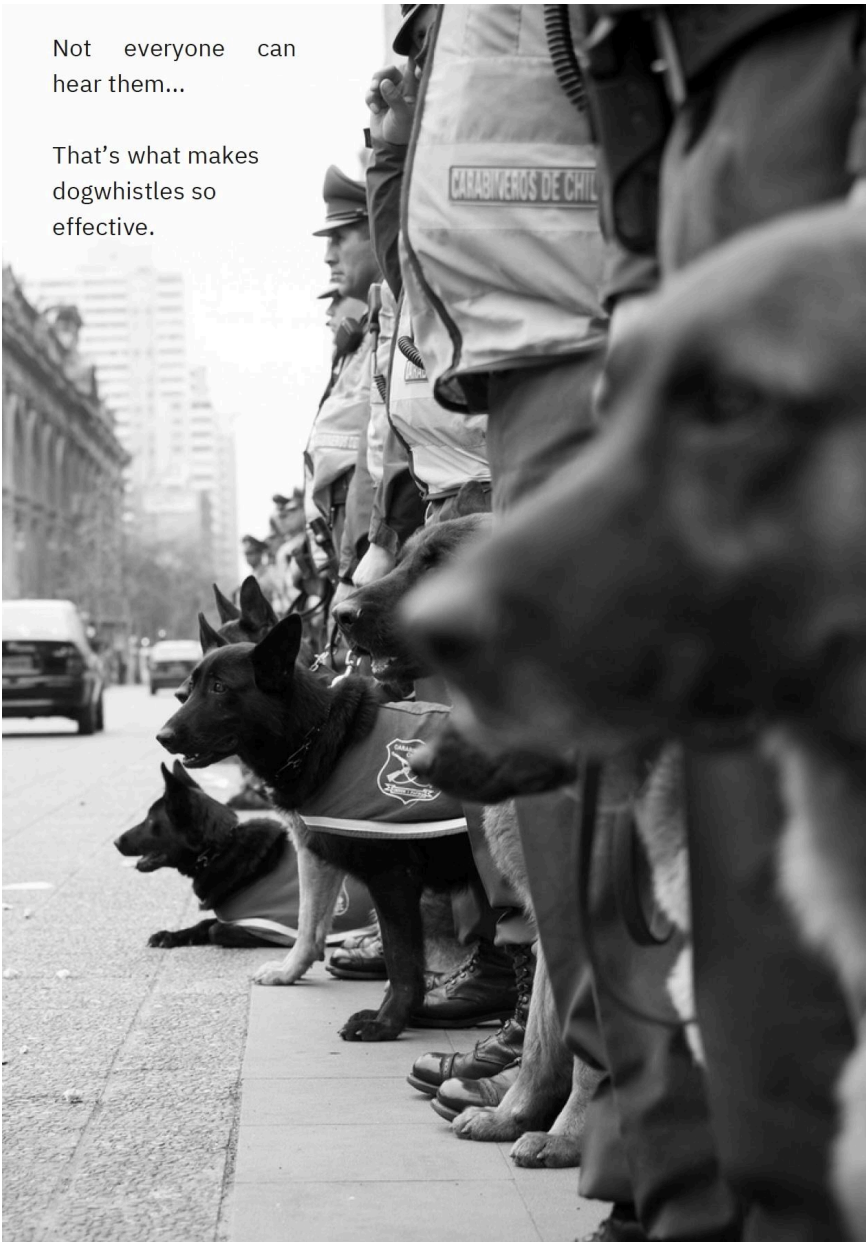


Recognize Fascist Dogwhistles

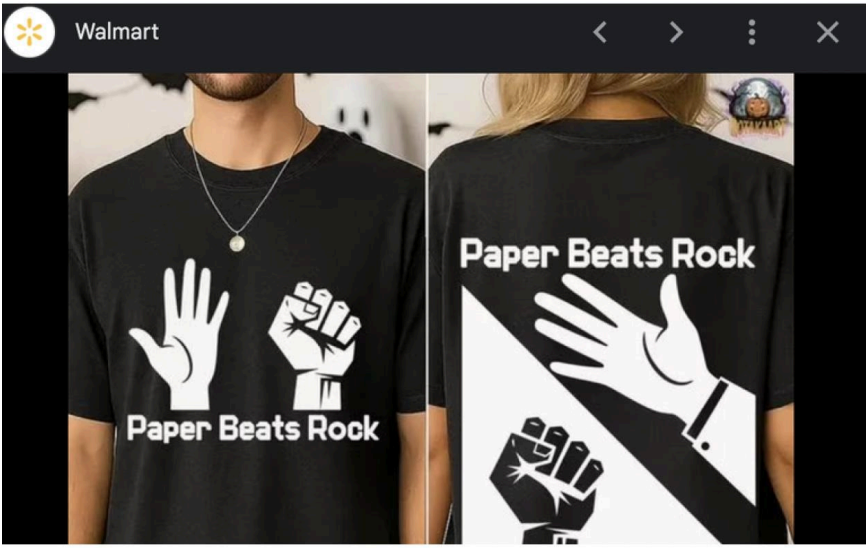
Angelina Mason
COMS 5810

Not everyone can hear them...

That's what makes dogwhistles so effective.



Some are obvious.



Walmart's website selling shirts that alluded to white supremacy (paper/nazi hand signal) beats Black Lives Matter (fist).

Most aren't.

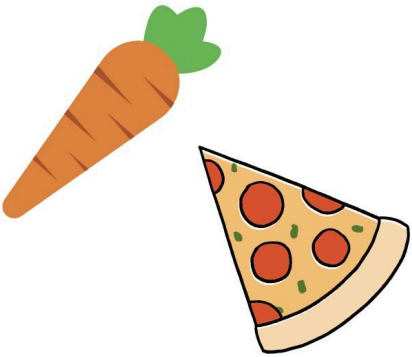
They're coded phrases, words, or images that appear innocuous to a general audience but carry a secondary message to a specific target group.

Online platforms have made it a lot easier for these to spread... and for people to see and be ignorant of.

Austrian egg dumplings are posted on Hitler's birthday by neo-nazis because they were his favorite food.



Anti-vaxxers used emojis of carrots, pizza, and cake to refer to vaccinations so posts wouldn't get flagged.



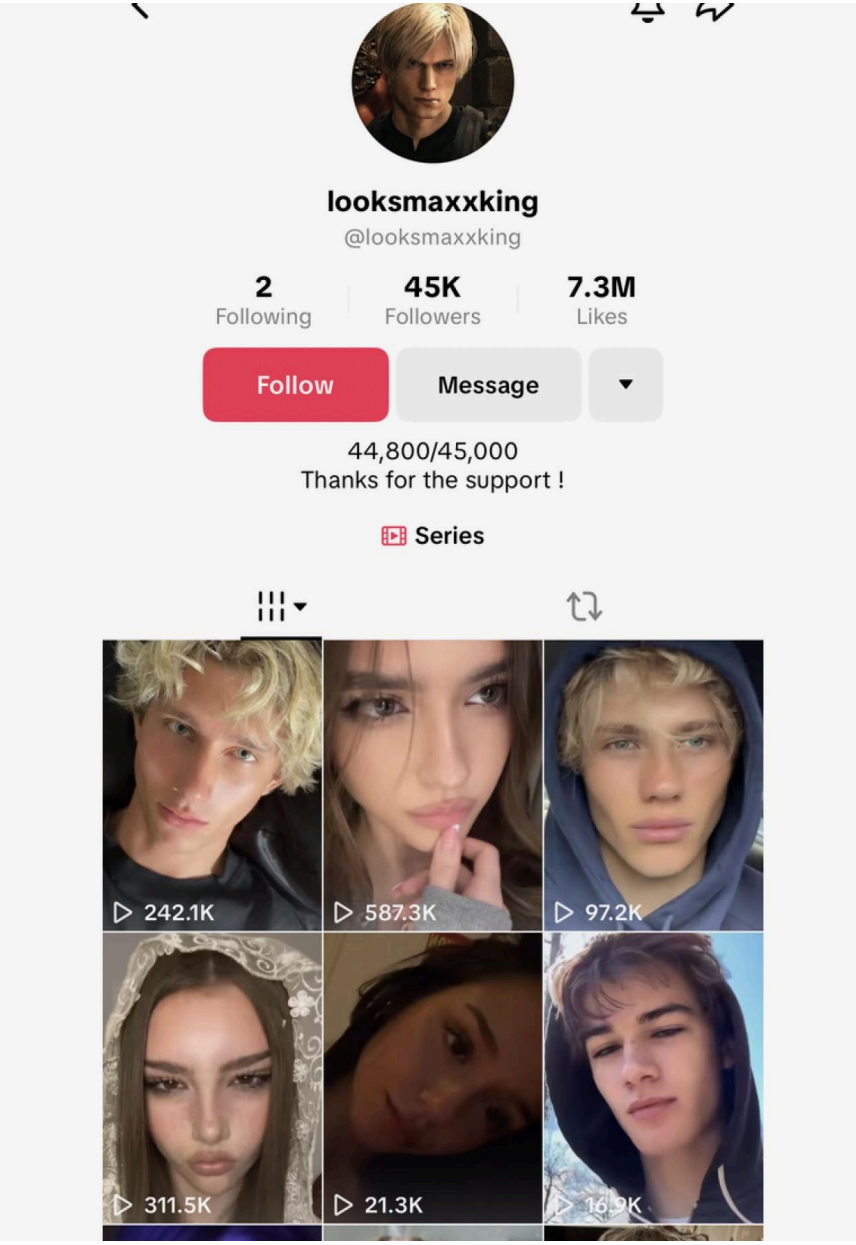
Let's discuss 3 trends/phrases you may have seen online, that you didn't realize were dogwhistles.

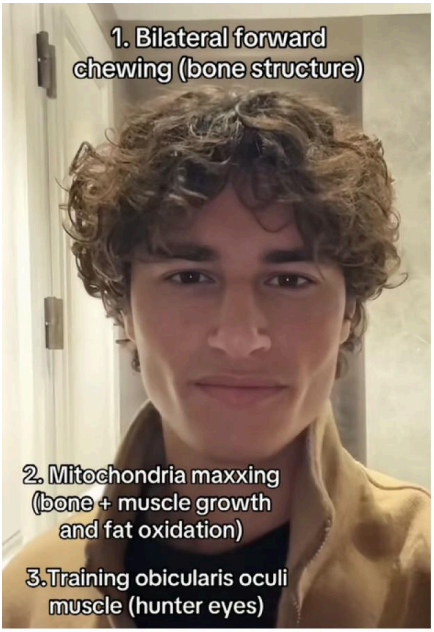
Looksmaxxing



A form of "ascension" (leaving inceldom) first propagated on Lookism forums where incels would provide numbers to rate attractiveness.

There are posts and entire accounts dedicated to giving "looksmaxxing" tips.


looksmaxxking
@looksmaxxking
2
Following
45K
Followers
7.3M
Likes
Follow
Message
44,800/45,000
Thanks for the support !
Series
242.1K
587.3K
97.2K
311.5K
21.3K
16.9K



This trend focuses on hyper specific aspects of the body and is closely tied with the "alpha male" mindset that is also encouraged amongst men in online spaces. Men may get told they are not masculine because they have "prey eyes" and not "hunter eyes" and so on.

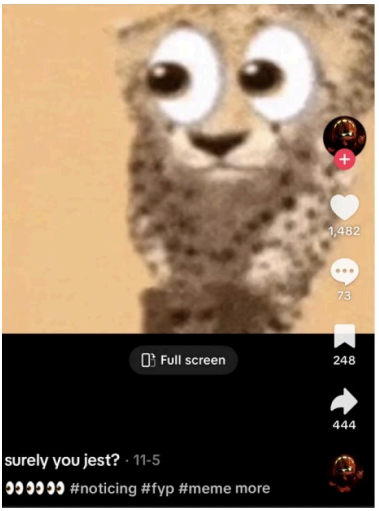


Because beauty standards, especially ones originating from incel spaces, have roots in racism and eugenics, this trend is no different. The men that are looked up to in looksmaxxing spaces are overwhelmingly white, and white supremacists flock to these spaces to claim Whiteness and white masculinity as superior.

#Noticing



In 2022 a 4chan user, spurred by Elon's promise to loosen content moderation policies, called on others to use the hashtag #TheNoticing while posting antisemitic content on Twitter, especially messages harping on the Nazi-inspired idea that Jews control the world through hidden machinations.



This trend recently resurfaced on TikTok, with people using #noticing and the double eye emoji. Whether users knew it was a dogwhistle or not did not matter, since the posts attracted people who recognized it in the comments.

The word “goy” (shortened version of “goyim”) is also seen in these comments. The word itself originated as a Hebrew word that refers to non-Jewish people, but when used online by antisemites it becomes derogatory.

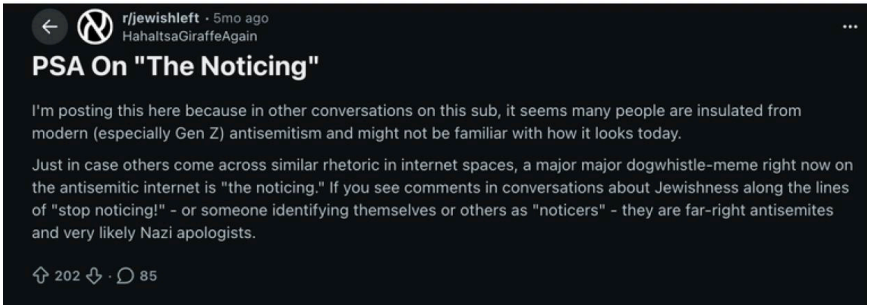
They use it to signal to other antisemites that they view Jewish people in a negative way and are mocking them.





These extremists believe Jewish people are running the world in every position of power. They want people to "notice" that this is the case and expose the great "Jewish conspiracy."

Memes like the one above are mocking how they believe Jewish people react to being "noticed."



Numbers



Numbers are the most common dogwhistle used since they are easily incorporated into usernames, comments, and random phrases. These numbers all refer to various fascist beliefs.

14

Reference to the “14 Words” slogan coined by white supremacist David Lane: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."



88

One of the most common white supremacist symbols. Numerical code for “Heil Hitler.” H is the 8th letter of the alphabet so 88 = HH = Heil Hitler.

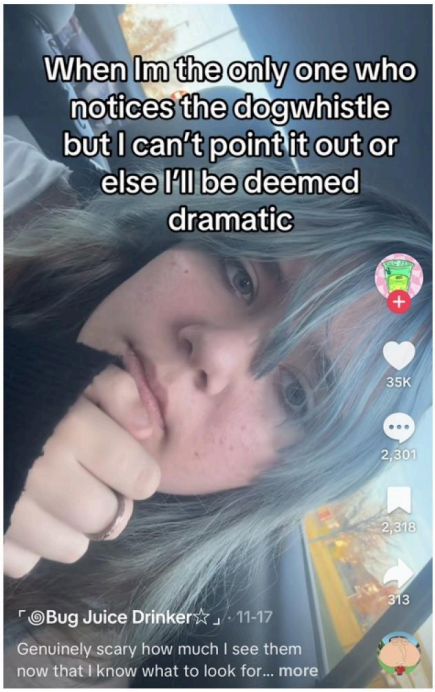
271k

Holocaust denial. Refers to a conspiracy theory that only 271 thousand Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. This figure comes from a genuine document from the Special Registry Office in Bad Arolsen listing death certificates issued in certain concentration camps.

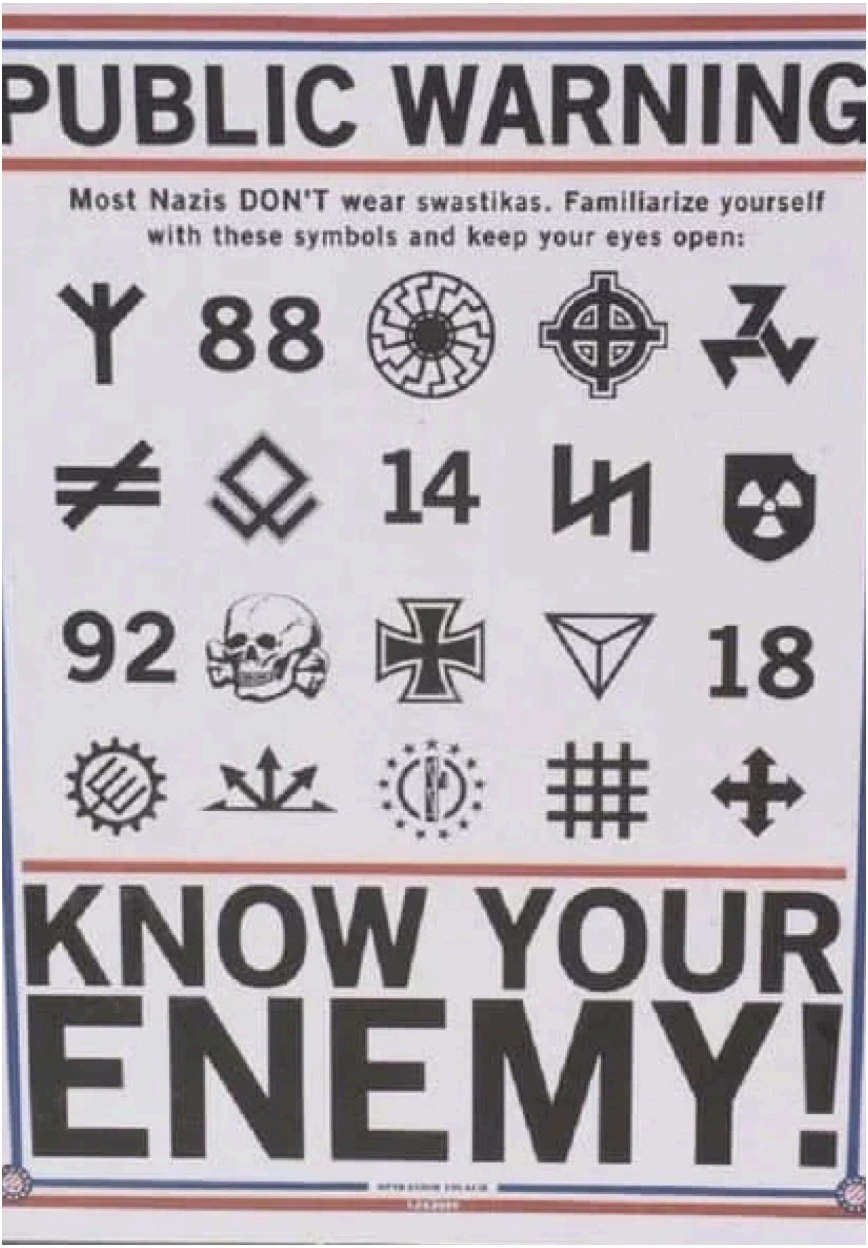


6 million

Refers to the number of Jewish people killed during the Holocaust. Other terms that may be used are 6MWE (6 Million Wasn't Enough), 6 million cookies (cookies referring to Jewish people... you "cook" cookies in an oven), and 6 "gorillion/morbillion" to avoid detection and claim that Jewish people are exaggerating.



Dogwhistles rely on plausible deniability and general ignorance. The more widespread they become, the easier it is for fascists to get away with using them and excusing it as a trend or joke. It is important to be aware of the content you're consuming and the humor you're participating in.


PUBLIC WARNING
Most Nazis DON'T wear swastikas. Familiarize yourself with these symbols and keep your eyes open:
88
14
92
18
KNOW YOUR ENEMY!

A Zine for a Cause



Recognize Fascist Dogwhistles

Created in 2025.
All underlined words contain links to articles that elaborate more on the history of the dogwhistle.

Embedded Links

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“271k” & “6 Million:
https://www.adl.org/resources/article/coded-hate-extremists-weaponize-seemingly-innocuous-content-promote-bigotry

Why Parents Should Not Post Their Children on Social Media

Cecille Lightbourn

Bio:

Cecille Lightbourn is a current Cal State LA student who used their speech platform to advocate against the exploitation of children online. She is a Psychology major and is a captain on the Cal State La Track and field team.

Persuasive Speech
Three Argument Format
Final

I. Introduction

a. **Attention Getter**: According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 50% of the photos shared by child sexual abusers were first posted on social media by parents.

b. **Background & Audience Relevance**: I'm sure we all know someone with a baby, whether it be someone close to you or a celebrity. We see people posting pictures of their children all over social media platforms that EVERYONE in the world could have access to without restriction.

c. **Speaker Credibility**: Now, I am an avid user of social media, and I see my mutuals and others posting their babies all the time! I also have listened to several true crime podcasts describing the ways photos of children are used without anyone suspecting a thing so…

d. **Thesis**: I'd like to share with you all why parents should not be posting their young children on social media

e. **Preview of Main Points**: First I will talk about 'sharenting' and how this can affect the child growing up, then I will talk about the accidental leaking of private information and lastly, I will discuss the link between child predators and AI.

Transition to 1st Main Point: Now lets learn about "sharenting" and digital footprint…

Main Point 1: Sharenting is a mixture of the words "share" and parenting.

Sub-point A: It may seem innocent and even sweet to keep the world updated on the little munchkins saying their first words or taking their first steps. The problem is that the unsuspecting parents just don't know how far these images may go. The concept of "sharenting" can result in a lasting digital footprint from a young age.

According to Carolyn Martin and Nick Feldstern in an article published on Lutzker & Lutzker on August 24, 2020 in a study conducted in 2010,

92% of 2 year olds in the US already had an online presence. This is a scary statistic since most 2 year olds are barely enrolled in mommy and me classes and are fully reliant on adults to maintain their wellbeing.
Sub-point B: Now, the more overlooked aspect of this sharenting concept is the risk of bullying and embarrassment that a child may be exposed to years after some seemingly innocent posts.

According to Haley Keltie, published in a paper in the Indiana law journal in 2020, she explains that in the C.S. Mott study, 52% of parents expressed concern that their child might be upset or embarrassed by what was posted on social media by the time they reach adolescence. So this isn't something that is just a foreign concept! Most parents can admit that what they post could be embarrassing and if it's embarrassing to the parent, what is stopping any bully from using it against their child at some point.

Transition to 2nd Main Point: Now that we know about sharenting and its connection to bullying, let's talk about privacy and accidental sharing of information.

Main Point 2: Lots of parents use their children and their information completely uncensored.

Sub-point A: According to Arooj Ahmed in an article published on Digital information world.org on May 25, 2021 , A survey conducted on 1,000 parents

by SECURITY ORG found that 75% of them posted pictures, stories, and videos of their children and 80% of them use their children's real names. A good cyber criminal can use that bit of information to do what they call "phishing" on the dark web for the missing pieces they'd need to open something like a credit card in a child's name especially since most minors do not have credit attached to their social security numbers.

f. **Sub-point B**: Thieves will often open credit cards with the found information fraudulently and then fail to pay off the credit card and the victims of this fraud would be ignorantly blissful and therefore harm your creditworthiness. There are even reports of parents doing this to their own children without their knowledge! Of course, this is able to be reported, but after all that damage is done, it would be extremely inconvenient to resolve.

Transition to 3rd Main Point: Now that you know about data leaking in social media posts, we're going to discuss the use of AI with children's photos and information.

II. **Main Point 3**: As a society, we would be naïve to believe that there aren't sick people in this world we live in. Technology is becoming more advanced and more available to people to use in nefarious ways.

a. **Sub-point A**: According to researcher Hye Jung Han in her article published on Human Rights Watch.org on June 27,2024, In the absence of strong child data privacy laws,

personal photos of these children are being used to build powerful AI tools without their knowledge or consent. So, these tools are being used to create deepfakes that put children at an even higher risk of exploitation and harm. The models of a specific AI can also reproduce copies of material they were trained on, like medical records and photos of real people.

b. **Sub-point B**: From that same article, one 14-year-old also reported that a stranger sent FAKE explicit images and threatened to share them with a child's friends unless the child paid ransom! The child told the NCMEC that the images looked "SCARY' real and there was even a video of the child doing disgusting things that look scary real. And as a result, the teen sent their debit card information to the predator. Today's AI has become so extremely advanced, there were deepfakes created of a random 14-year-old, so what do you think is being done with photos of newborns and infants!

Transition and Signal to Conclusion: So after that disturbing revelation, we can bring things to a close…

III. Conclusion

a. **Review Main Points**: I explained sharenting and argued why the digital footprint is harmful, then I described how information is just unknowingly posted to the internet, and lastly, I argued that AI is a very dangerous tool that

can be used to exploit the youth.

b. **Restate Thesis**: SO, Parents should NOT be posting distinctive photos of their children on social media.

c. **Memorable Closer**: Children deserve privacy just as much as adults, as the adults in our society, why are we purposefully exposing these innocent kids to an environment in which they know nothing. It is our duty to protect the children who cannot protect themselves, thank you.

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Daniel's Detriment: Causes and Effects of Poor Quality Children's Media

Lyla Medina

Bio:

Lyla Medina is a first-year undergraduate student in the School of Natural and Social Sciences at Cal State LA with an interest in popular children's media.

Transcript from a given speech

Renowned children's author Ursula K. Le Guinn once asserted that it is a universal threat that "forces us to stop fighting among ourselves and combine our weapons against a common foe." Comrade, I am here today to unite you against the greatest threat of our time: Cocomelon. Now if you are unaware, Cocomelon is a Youtube and Netflix series oriented toward young children 2-5 years old. Quick, tantalizing, and easy to consume, Cocomelon has been described as an "animation juggernaut" by the New Yorker due to the sheer chokehold it has on our youth. But I am not here solely to pummel animated toddlers. You see, Cocomelon is merely a representation of the direction that children's media is taking as a whole. As someone who lives and works with kids, I have seen firsthand the rapid negative effects

that content made to nurture views instead of minds has on young children. We are watching in real time as attention spans shrink and developmental delays become the norm. It is pertinent that we acknowledge that the “good old days” of cartoons are fleeting. There is an epidemic of unregulated access to poor quality media, online and through streaming platforms, designed to market to our children and enrich conglomerates, all while having severe negative cognitive impacts on the modern day youth. So what becomes of a generation bombarded with ads before they can put together a sentence? If we continue to accept the exchange of quality children’s media for keeping kids quiet and distracted, what are we really selling?

Children are consuming more media than ever, with documented impacts that are immediate and severe. For example, children with heavy, unregulated access to media have been found to lag behind their supervised peers by entire minutes. In a study done with the International Journal of Contemporary Pediatrics in May 2022, author Fijo Skariah found that “in an evaluation of the attention spans of children 4-6 years old grouped based on Minimal, Moderate, and Severe cartoon viewing habits, children classified as Severe took nearly a minute longer to complete their assessment than even subjects classified as Moderate.” Although this may seem like a minor difference, even small delays during these key formative years can have long lasting impacts on a child’s development. So much so that according to Shamsa Kanwal in 2023 with the Journal of Health and Rehabilitation, only 20.1% of five-year-olds with excessive screentime met their language milestones. But it’s not just about the time spent watching. The quality of kid’s content is rapidly deteriorating as media companies forgo thoughtful, educational programming and instead prioritize fast, flashing colors and continuous scene

changes. For example, a classic study done by Angeline Lillard and Jennifer Peterson in 2011 with the Official Journal with the American Academy of Pediatrics found that many of the negative impacts cartoons have on children depend on the type of media they were exposed to. In the study, two groups of children, Group A & Group B, were exposed to 9 minutes of different shows: a fast paced, non-educational cartoon that changed scenes every 11 seconds and an education oriented cartoon that changed scenes every 34 seconds. This 23 second difference in time gave children different amounts of time to process the information they were receiving. As a result, when given an age appropriate task directly after media exposure, Group A did "significantly worse" than Group B. As we enter a landscape where media exposure is unavoidable, and sometimes necessary to preoccupy a child, it is essential that we not only moderate their time spent on devices, but also the type of content that they are consuming.

But what creates the environment where content that we know is bad for children thrives? Well, let's look at another form of kid's content: Children's YouTube. Unregulated, limitless, and eternally profitable, children's content on the internet is the epitome of quantity over quality, and has revealed just how exploitable our children are. The aforementioned media empires of Cocomelon, Come Play With Me, and those morally forsaken AI cat videos plague platforms meant to make wholesome children's content accessible. One notorious culprit is Ryan's Toy World. This channel that centers one boy opening and playing with his toys has singlehandedly produced a 13 year old millionaire, revealing how profitable media that prioritizes revenue over the enrichment of young minds can be. In 2017, the Washington Post reported CEO, Jim Silver, admitting that "if a product [that Ryan reviews] gets 10 million, 20 millions views, and [the children see that he] loves it, it

has a huge impact at retail." The attention of children is profitable, and corporations know it.

But we can do better. There are solutions to this issue, after all. For example, in 2020 author Rebecca A. Dore with Frontiers Psychology Journal found that the aforementioned delays in literacy and vocabulary can be offset as long as media consumption does not replace book reading or other print-focused activities. The key is moderation and supervision. Children have been documented to benefit from media that is specialized for their age group and made with the help of child development experts and educators. Kid's content that comes from a place of sincerity and care, like Sesame Street and Ms. Rachel, enrich toddler minds while encouraging parent-child interaction, while cartoons such as Bluey and Hilda provide engaging stories with life skill guidance for older children. And the list goes on. The children's media we are all nostalgic for is not lost, just a little harder to find. But we can find it. As beloved TV personality Mr. Rogers once said, "Our society is much more interested in information than wonder, in noise rather than silence…And I feel that we need a lot more wonder and a lot more silence in our lives". Let's not sell childhoods that don't belong to us. Let's work to preserve the wonder in our children for just a little longer. Thank you.

The Disappearance of Queer Spaces: A Study of Closed Bars and Their Replacements in Southern California

Stacey Flores and Travon Green

Bio:

Stacey Flores is currently pursuing a master's degree in the Communication Department and serves as a teaching assistant for COMM 1100.
Travon Green is pursuing a master's degree in communication studies at Cal State LA, with an interest in human resources and a passion for writing books.

The Crown Jewel

754 S Olive St, Los Angeles 90014
The Crown Jewel was a prominent, subterranean gay bar in Downtown Los Angeles, operating roughly from the 1940s into the late 1970s. Located near Eighth and Olive Streets, it was known for being "discreet and elegant," often



imposing a strict dress code on its mostly gay male clientele during a time when homosexuality was illegal (Queer Maps, 2023).
The establishment is infamous due to its owner, lawyer Harry Weiss, who was dubbed "the faggot lawyer" by some judges. Weiss's relationship with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) was corrupt: he allegedly provided tips to the vice squad regarding the identities of his gay patrons. When police arrested men for "lewd conduct," they would pass Weiss's business card to the arrestees, and Weiss would subsequently pay the police half of any legal fees earned from these cases (Queer Maps, 2023).
The bar, sometimes referred to as the Jewel Room, was also mentioned in historical records related to the 1947 Black Dahlia case, as it was one of the downtown locations rumored to cater to a homosexual crowd (Black Dahlia & Blue Dahlia, 2024).
The Crown Jewel represented a profound moment in the queer resistance. Its designation as hidden in the corner of the street was as expected. The structure itself was a constant reminder of external hostility, a material enforcement of rules like the prohibition of same-sex establishments necessary for the community's sheer survival. Walking up to 754 S Olive St., Dunkin' Donuts, and the first thing that hits you is the light. While there is no trace of that darkness because of the bright fluorescent lights from the neon sign. It's not warm light; it's a blinding and dimming glare. It spills out onto the sidewalk at night, sharp and inescapable. It feels like the building is actively pushing the darkness– and the history that lived in the dark– away. This glare is the rhetorical cleansing of gentrification. The corporate brand, the polished snowy windows for the holidays, the screamingly bright lights– it's all designed to replace a dangerous, complex queer history with something generic, safe, and highly commodified.



Now that I'm in the establishment an unwelcoming question surfaces: Should I even participate? The purchase itself feels less like a simple transaction and more like a collaboration with the very force that performed this cultural demolition. The immediate, instinctual resistance is to turn away, to starve this new establishment of my dollar, but the historical gravity of the location, the smell of sugar over the feeling of being inside the Dunkin' Donuts is a total disconnect. This was once a sanctuary; now, it's a quick-stop for profit. The vibe is impersonal, efficient, and standardized. Sobriety and the Weight of the Transaction walking inside, the smell of sugar and coffee is overwhelming, immediately replacing the memory of clandestine conversation and illicit alcohol. There were no cashiers to greet me when ordering a coffee, which is a stark symbol of sobriety replacing the bar's hidden indulgence. Even though it was tempting and cold outside, I didn't purchase a coffee with extra whipcream. That clean, bright space and the generic transaction feels safe– and that safety is the most tragic part. The generic normalcy feels "refreshing" only because the history



was so difficult and dangerous. The building is now silent about its past, forcing me to replace the heavy memory of the Crown Jewel onto the bright, easy reality of a disposable donut. Did I enjoy the donut that was purchased? No, the company Dunkin Donuts' representation precedes to be, "the stale donuts all the way but scent itself was welcoming". The simple act of a purchase here represents capital effortlessly erasing and silencing decades of constrained, elegant, queer life.

3-2-6 Bar

326 S Spring St, Los Angeles, CA 90013

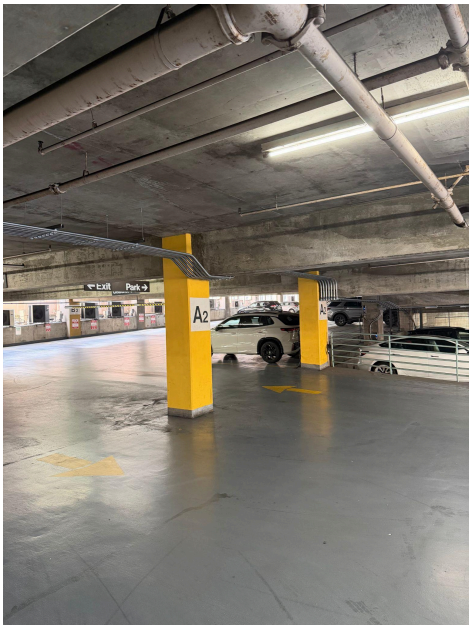


The name of this bar likely corresponds directly to its street address. The location at 326 S.Spring St. has an early-20th-century nightlife venue. During the period of Prohibition (which began locally in L.A. in 1917), the address housed the former Jeffries Bar (owned by boxer Jim Jeffries), which was taken over by bookmaker Zeke Caress and operated as a pool hall and then the "326" club in 1936 (Graham, 2016). While the search results do not explicitly confirm that the 326 Bar was an LGBTQ+ establishment,

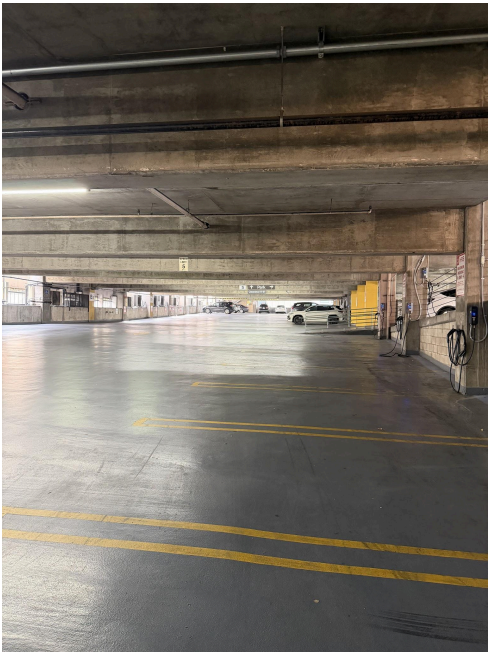
its history as an illegal, underground venue during the Prohibition era places it within the same historical context of secret downtown venues that often provided sanctuary, legal or otherwise, to marginalized groups. The site at 326 S Spring St., now just a massive, empty parking lot, is a powerful, almost tragic study in rhetorical erasure. It's where the city just gave up and paved over potential. You walk up, and the architecture of the parking lot building itself, or at least the buildings framing it, can be absolutely remarkable on the exterior, perhaps with gorgeous old brickwork or moldings, promising that classic downtown grandeur. You think, “Wow, this is a beautiful spot!” But then you walk through the archway, and that instant is the punchline. All that outer beauty is a total lie. That exterior sophistication is abandoned for an interior that is nothing but a stark, undecorative visual of asphalt and faded yellow lines. This shift is the most brutal and final form of statement: the land exists solely for the clunky movement and storage of the private car. They wasted all that potential! The lively, complex culture of the bar, the sophisticated art, the laughter, the social complexity was instantly replaced by this utterly simple, brutalist dedication to utility. The ground that once hosted a vibrant defiance, a celebration of the human body and music, is now coldly dedicated to the efficiency of the Modern Vehicle. The demolition of the 3 2 6 and its paving were a gut wrenching physical statement about urban priorities. That old bar was a prime example of a walkable, community-centered space, and its replacement makes the argument painfully clear: they believe car infrastructure is more valuable than community infrastructure.

Adding to the insult, you notice the financial calculus of the void. While the area is certainly a ticketed area, a clear concession to the profit motive of the land's new function, the price might be

surprisingly low compared to the enclosed parking garages nearby. It's almost as if the lot is offering a strange, utilitarian bribe. The parking spaces seem to be free, or at least significantly cheaper than a premium underground or multi-story structure. This low price is its final rhetorical flourish: "We destroyed history and community, but we offer you cheap convenience."



The cheapness ironically underscores the lack of perceived value in the land itself, reducing it to a disposable holding lot, confirming the aggressive statement that its highest purpose is just to facilitate vehicular commerce, and that function doesn't even warrant a luxury fee. Standing in the middle of that vast lot, the feeling is one of pure, empty void, a Negative Space that screams silence. You look up at the incredible historical shells surrounding you, then down at the dull, cracked asphalt, and it feels aggressive, a massive expanse of nothingness, interrupted only by those soul-crushingly repetitive parking stalls. There's no structure, no shadow, nothing to anchor the vibrant history. It's a literal, physical statement that the land's only acceptable purpose is utilitarian. You have to physically stop and search the ground. Desperately trying to mentally project the memory of a performance or a moment onto the pavement. The asphalt doesn't just cover the past; it rhetorically smooths over the messy

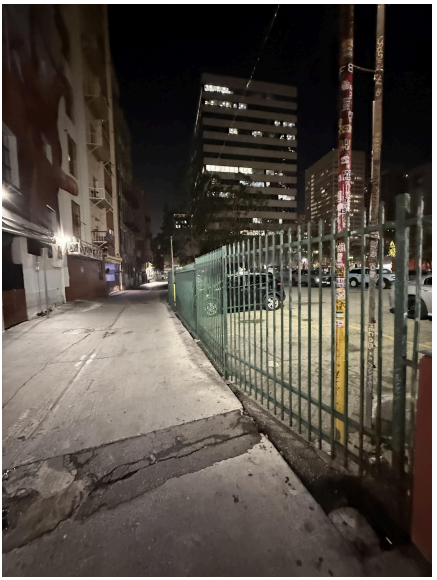


reality of that history, insisting that the highest purpose of this land is merely to facilitate vehicular commerce. The total lack of urban scaled architecture on the site, hidden behind a beautiful facade, becomes a stark monument to the failure to value human-centered urban life.

The Circle Bar

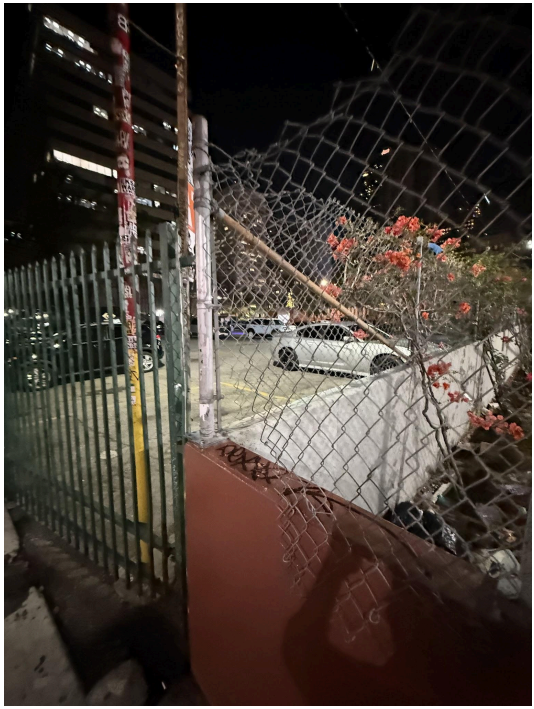
324 W 5 Street 90013

The former Circle Bar site at 324 W 5th St. is a tragic irony. It's right next to a major transit station, which should mean a dense, Walkable City environment. Instead, it's another Parking Lot. This lot is a transactional buffer, a dead zone that keeps the transit hub and the surrounding city at a safe,

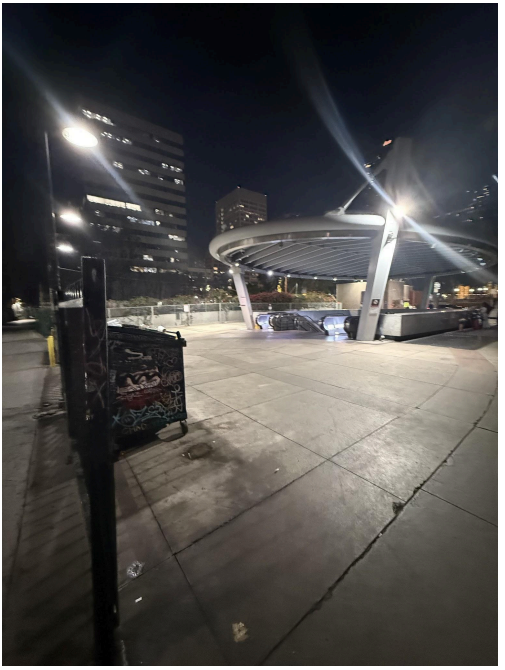


uncrowded distance. This choice confirms that even next to public transport, short-term parking revenue wins over community density. Finding this lost bar at night was an exercise in irony.

The bar itself is gone, the bright light of the nearby transit station was the only thing that helped me find the empty lot. The infrastructure of transit was there to guide me, but the infrastructure of the community had vanished. The Semiotics are clear: the structures that facilitate movement (trains, cars) remain, but the structure that facilitated gathering is gone. I was illuminated by the city's commitment to utility, standing in the space the city deemed only worthy of temporary car storage.

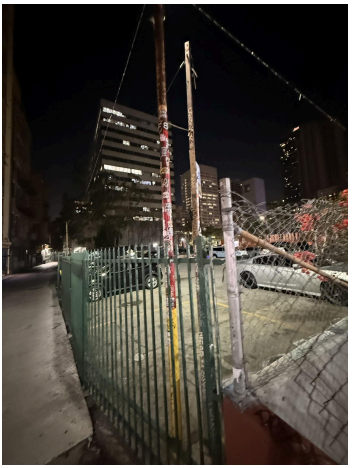


Expectation vs. Reality: In the days of the Circle Bar, the walk to the entrance would have been charged with anticipation: the low hum of conversation, the flash of a cigarette lighter, the distant thump of music promising connection and release. This walk, even in the dark, held the promise of sanctuary. Now, the experience felt inverted. Walking in the dark into a parking lot, guided only by the cold, ambient white glow from the transit hub, is an eerie, almost desolate feeling. There is no music, no laughter, just the hiss of air brakes from passing buses and the click of the parking



meter's timer. The promised fun has been replaced by an unsettling silence, a void where intimacy once thrived. It's not a useful spot for people; it's hyper-efficiently useful for vehicles and for maximizing simple land-lease revenue. The Rhetoric of the Dead Zone: The parking lot here is a rhetorical tool for social control. It functions as a dead zone to prevent the kind of social density that might attract "unwanted" crowds or challenge higher-end neighboring developments.

The Visual Narrative of vibrant nightlife has been replaced by the safe, low-risk visual of cars arranged in neat, predictable rows. A Compromise of Emptiness. The Circle Bar site feels like a compromise: "We'll put the transit station here, but we'll ensure the adjacent land remains simple and easy to control." The space, once alive, is now a blank canvas, valued only for its ability to generate easy capital. This loss is a powerful sign that queer history is constantly being displaced by the lowest common denominator of



urban land use. I felt the city's preference for predictability over community– the space is worth more as a revenue stream for cars than as a sanctuary for people.

The Precinct Bar

357 S Broadway, Los Angeles, CA 90013



Precinct is a modern, large scale, self-described "Rock N Roll Gay Bar" that opened in May 2015 and has been instrumental in the development of a new LGBTQ+ neighborhood in Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA) (Time Out, 2015). The owners, Thor Stephens and Brian McIntire, chose the name as a nod to the building's history as a former Department of Corrections Office (Lucido. 2017).

As DTLA's largest gay venue, it serves as a central hub for the community, hosting popular entertainment, including the weekly "Queen Kong" drag night (Lucido, 2017). However, despite its mission to be a modern, inclusive space, the bar has faced challenges, including reports that it may have been threatened with closure following a 2025 bias lawsuit (Ormseth, 2025). Precinct at 357 S Broadway is a crucial, defiant center whose architecture embodies a powerful Material Rhetoric. The huge, open interior, marked by expansive street level windows and an unobstructed floor plan, acts as a deliberate statement of political visibility and sanctuary. Directly

confronting the historical need for hidden, covert queer spaces. This architectural choice is a non-verbal proclamation: “We are here, and we will be seen." However, this rhetorical strength creates a profound duality in the building's emotional states. During Open Hours, the bar is a living body; the atmosphere is electric, the collective roar of the crowd creates an acoustic envelope of acceptance, and the lights bring palpable energy. Watching friends enjoying a good time, coupled with the spectacle of comedic and welcoming drag queens who host the community, turns the space into a theatrical stage for collective joy and sanctuary in action. Conversely, during Closed Hours, the building looks dead; the large windows show only darkness and stacked furniture. The structure becomes inert, revealing itself as mere material stripped of its social function, instantly introducing the chilling Rhetoric of Precarious Existence.



The Precinct's existence is actively maintained and fortified by a consistent, robust schedule of weekly events, demonstrating its undeniable social and economic viability. This programming structure provides stability against the constant threat of closure, proving the space is not lacking in customer engagement. For example, recurring events like Tendie Tuesday and Happy Hour

Burgers every Wednesday offer accessible, discounted food, ensuring the bar is lively and draws a crowd even on mid-week nights. Furthermore, events like the Boulet Brothers Dragula: Titans S2 Watch Party, which requires tickets and includes options for an 18 to 20-year-old minor add-on, solidify the bar's status as an intergenerational community builder while ensuring a reliable revenue stream beyond bar sales. Similarly. Drag Bingo, hosted by HollyPop, cleverly balances accessibility (it's free to play) with economic strategy (tables can be reserved), securing both a sense of welcoming community and a necessary financial buffer. These structures underscore that the immense social value is backed by sound economic activity.



Despite the successful programming and visible vibrancy, every visit to Precinct is clouded by the terrifying anxiety that the space is "on the verge of closing." This imminent threat highlights the

cruel reality of Gentrification: the community's desperate need for this vital sanctuary is being leveraged as a commodity by landlords prioritizing profit. The building's vast windows, which offer visibility in life, become symbols of vulnerability in its potential death, reflecting the fear of loss. The social rent paid by the community, the cultural capital to historical significance, and the emotional investment is completely discounted by the market rent demanded by capital. When the bar is empty during closed hours. A silent shell of concrete and glass is the physical creep of its potential future as a Negative Space, a state of loss rather than life.

The Precinct is "on the verge of closing" and every visit may be encountered with terrifying anxiety. This pressure underscores the reality of Gentrification: the community's desperate need for this space is being leveraged as a commodity by landlords waiting to sell for high-end use. This constant pressure transforms the act of visiting Precinct into the urgent task of documenting a dying archive. The feeling of urgency is palpable: I am mapping community memory in real time, chronicling a space that the market threatens to destroy. The present joy of the thriving bar is always shadowed by the imminent loss, making the experience a form of
"grief in advance." This entire situation serves as the final, tragic statement: even a space that achieves total visibility and undeniable social value through its architecture and community programming is still fundamentally subject to the indifferent whims of capital. The loss of Precinct would be more than just the closure of a bar, it would be painful, rhetorical proof that in the face of predatory development, social value ultimately cannot compete with capital gains.

The Haas

221 W 7th St, Los Angeles

After a 40-minute drive, I finally found parking. I always say I'm lucky with parking, and today felt like proof. The spot is right in front of Beelman's, a bar I've wanted to try, and across from one of a handful of locations of my favorite ramen. I'm particularly stoked about this because I drove through Skid Row, past two separate people screaming at nothing, dozens of unhoused people, and one person getting arrested shirtless on the sidewalk. I tell people I've lived in LA my whole life, but really, I live in a suburb somewhere LA-adjacent. The houseless people I passed are more LA than I am. They live in the heart of the city, yet they're treated like a nuisance by taxpayers, the public, and apparently by Gavin Newsom, too, as he orders the clearing of encampments (Mazariegos, 2025). Before getting out of my car and walking to Bar Machete, the closed upscale gay bar named after the 1950s Mattachine Society, I saw a few people in work clothes walking by,



and my body relaxed. I walked down the street, crossing at the light, despite some hesitancy. But when I rounded the corner, I stumbled into The Haas, a hotel, instead. That was not on Google Maps…

The man behind the counter buzzed me in. I must've looked visibly confused because his first question was whether I was checking in or needed help. "No, not checking in, but I could use some help… This is 221 West 7th, right? I'm not lost?" After a bit of back and forth, and me finally explaining why I was there, he smiled and launched into the building's history. Then the neighborhood's. He pulled out a map meant for hotel guests, with the kind of excitement only people who truly love a place can have. He pointed out old queer bars, demolished buildings, and spots that once held meaning for someone. "You could say I'm a bit of a local historian," he said.

When I walked back to my car, I saw a text from my partner: "You shared your location? You must be nervous, you never do that." And suddenly I felt silly. Not because I took an extra precaution, but because learning the history of the buildings I walked between shifted my fear into something else. Something more grounded. Almost like knowing a place's story made the literal ground feel steadier.

Later, sitting at Beelman's, finally trying the bar I'd been eyeing for months, I settled in. They had string lights, an entirely vegan menu, and happy hour had just started. I felt happy. And safe. The people staying inside The Haas, whether temporary hotel guests or long-term residents, are, at the very least, safe within four walls and under a roof. Just like I am. Just like I will be once I drive an hour in traffic back home after this is over.

But that is not the case for the people just three blocks away.

And that's where the contrast hits the hardest: A former gay bar, a space that once held queer joy and refuge, is now part hotel, part residential building, part symbol of the "new downtown." Meanwhile, LA County's unhoused population has surpassed 70,000, with over 40,000 in the City of Los Angeles (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2025). Rent has increased by 65% since 2010, and a Google review for The Haas reads, "Homeless people all around, but great hotel and service" (Dolhov, 2025; Flemming, 2019).

Gay bars were never just bars; they were a means of survival. They were safe for people who didn't have it anywhere else. And now, ironically, the Haas is part of a housing landscape where even safety is a luxury. The lobby I stepped into was warm, with trendy neon lights, a hotel mini-bar, and a matching mini-fridge, along with a concierge ready to help. The people outside, the ones I passed on the drive in, will never be buzzed into a lobby like that. Not unless it's to be swept away, moved along, or "cleaned up."

When the man inside The Haas called himself a local historian, I realized how fragile history is in this city. These community centers disappear without ceremony, quietly getting priced out. Buildings that once held queer bodies now hold rooms starting at $145 a night.

Why does this city turn places of queer belonging into luxury living while queer youth are 120% more likely to experience homelessness (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2023)?

How do we justify a housing crisis so severe that we literally step over human beings to enter a building advertising itself as "urban comfort"?

As I left Beelman's that night, gratitude washed over me. I felt lucky and that luck felt unfair. Because I was so close to a part of LA where safety is a privilege, not a guarantee.

Sometimes you can't look at the LA skyline, or at a place like The Haas, without seeing the people outside of it too.

Thursdays

16865 Pacific Coast Hwy



My partner and I took a drive down to Huntington Beach, and somewhere on PCH he starts talking about how his mouth is *watering* for a beer as we pass one of his favorite breweries — Green Cheek. Cute little spot. Great view of the ocean. And literally two blocks down from it is Thursdays, the Sunset Beach Fellowship, an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting place.

As we get closer, I slow down to look at the building. There's a huge sign that reads *"Thursdays: Where Happy Hour Never Ends."* My partner immediately goes, "Wait… did it turn into a bar? Or do we have the wrong location?" Because a happy hour at an AA meeting?

I turn down the side street, confused and curious. There's a group of tattooed men of all ages standing outside, talking and holding cups. I've never been to an AA meeting before. I don't exactly know what the etiquette is. The front entrance sign says to go around back, which is exactly where the men are, and suddenly I feel nervous. With my limited knowledge of AA, it feels almost disrespectful to just wander in. But that sign… *"Where happy hour never ends…"*



We walk through the back entrance into a single room with no windows, just wood-paneled walls covered in framed photos, the 12 steps, and all kinds of AA memorabilia. A man behind a counter, which looks like the remains of the bar, is cleaning up and there's half a pumpkin pie sitting

on the counter. I introduce myself and ask him where that phrase came from. He points us to Rick.

Rick is an older white guy with a long white beard. He looks like the kind of man you'd assume would take offense to anyone calling him or his space "gay." I take a breath. Hope for the best. And surprisingly, he *doesn't* take offense. He's actually excited to tell us the history of Thursdays. He explains how the space used to be a gay bar, then a gay biker bar, before eventually becoming Alcoholics Anonymous. They even have photos on the wall of the original bar, Arkie's Arc, and the owner, Arkie, from the 1940s. On Queer Maps, an online archive of LGBTQ+ spaces, the address is linked to a bar named *Broom Hilda's* from 1973.

The same building, over decades, shifting names and identities, but always carrying a thread of queer, alternative belonging. That's not an accident. That's what queer subcultures have always done: build, rebuild, survive. When official spaces get shut down, new ones are created.

But the question still stands: *Where does the phrase come from?*

Rick points us to John, a man recovering from cancer who just radiates good energy. He doesn't know the exact origin, but he explains what it means.



Thursday's building, known as Arkie's Ark, in the 1940's. Looking from the south. Note the absence of the stores next door.

“When we’re drinking, we go to bed cured and wake up alcoholics. Happy hour never ends because as long as we’re sober, that’s the happy hour.” He speaks for people who sought escape in one drink after the other, only to then wake to the same pain, the same void. Claiming sobriety as resistance. Claiming community as salvation.

He talks about why this place matters to him, weaving in his beliefs about God, spirit, and how it connects to the difference between Western and Eastern medicine. “There’s just some stuff that can’t be cured through injections and pills,” he says. “Some things only happen through spirit, community, and compassion.” All of this while handing Rick a birthday card.

These men, for lack of a better word, look *tough.* Heavily tattooed, pierced, long beards. One guy had his entire shaved head tattooed. The kind of men people see on the street and immediately look away from. And yet… as we’re leaving and thanking them for their time, one of them paused. He looked at me directly and said if I ever needed help, or if someone I knew did, they’d be there. He even points me toward the women-only meetings they host during the week, “in case a room full of men feels uncomfortable.”

That tiny act of caring struck me because queer spaces have always needed that type of care, softness, solidarity. Especially when the world outside preaches toughness, erases difference, punishes visibility.

Every conversation we had in that room was kind and real, but that tiny act of caring struck me. Not just because the sense of community in that room felt strong enough to touch, but because

queer spaces always have that type of care, softness, and solidarity. Despite it no longer being a specifically queer space, that kindness to others lives in the walls.

Walking out of Thursdays, my partner and I felt lighter than when we'd walked in. He laughed, half-joking, and said, "Maybe I shouldn't have worn this shirt," and when I look over, he's wearing a *Budweiser* t-shirt. I remind him that ten minutes earlier his mouth was literally watering for a beer at Green Cheek. Now we'd found this room that defined sobriety not as abstinence but as belonging.

Queer history isn't just in dates or landmark events. It survives, or dies, in buildings like this. Homes, biker bars, recovery halls; in obscure addresses on old queer maps and dusty photo frames and broken neon signs.

There's magic in survival. There's resistance in sobriety. There's power in remembering.

Q Angels Nails & Spa

610 W Pacific Coast Hwy, 90744
Pulling into the strip mall, the first thing I noticed wasn't the history. It was a giant pizza place. I was hungry, the parking spaces were tight, and the sun was hitting my car in that annoying "you should've brought sunglasses" and "I can't see" way. I just wanted a clear photo of the nail salon, but the cars on the right hand side made that basically impossible. Looking back, it was symbolic: queer history blocked by a Honda Civic.

I didn't go inside Q Angels Nails & Spa. I kept asking myself why, but I knew the truth. I assumed there would be a language barrier,



and I didn't want to stumble through explaining that I was here because this used to be *The Patch*, a 1968 gay bar where people once chanted "We are Americans too!" at the police (The Patch, n.d.). Plus, my nails were (and are) chipped, uneven, embarrassing little reminders that I am not a nails-done-every-two-weeks kind of girl. I'll save myself the embarrassment.

So I stayed outside, taking pictures and feeling the weight of everything layered in this one small building.

The Patch was a site of queer resistance where drag queens, gay men, lesbians, and allies fought back against police harassment. It is where Lee Glaze, the owner of The Patch, jumped onstage and told undercover cops "It's not against the law to be homosexual and it's not a crime to be in a gay bar!" (The Patch, n.d.). Where people poured onto Pacific Coast Highway holding flowers at 3 AM in front of Harbor Division Police Station, choosing beauty as protest (The Patch, n.d.).

And now the same building is a nail salon in a strip mall sandwiched between a liquor store and a pizza place.

Except, I kept thinking about who occupies nail salons today. More than half of the workforce is Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian women, but their presence in this industry isn't random (Lieu, 2024). After the fall of Saigon in 1975, thousands of Vietnamese refugees arrived in the U.S. with little to no material support, money, or guarantee of employment, plus a language barrier (Huỳnh-Medrano). Manicuring offered what so many other jobs did not: quick training, low startup costs, and a community network built by other refugees trying to steady themselves in a country that wasn't exactly waiting with open arms (Morris, 2015).

Over time, that survival strategy became an entire ecosystem. In fact, actress Tippi Hedren flew out her nail stylist to teach those interested in learning this trade while offering them job opportunity, giving them an economic foothold for their new life (Huỳnh-Medrano, n.d.) Nail salons acted as a kind of unexpected

sanctuary, a place where immigrant women found self-sufficancy, each other, and a small slice of safety in a country where their existence was political (Lieu, 2024).

And so here we are: a historic queer space that once held one marginalized community resisting state violence is now a different kind of survival story. It is a workspace for another marginalized community navigating *economic survival* in America.

It's not erasure so much as a handoff that was not intentional, not symbolic, but real. Two groups separated by time and circumstance, each shaped by their own version of "survival in America."

And I didn't go inside. Not because I didn't want to, but because I suddenly felt self-conscious. I imagined walking in, trying to explain my project across a language barrier, disrupting women who have been working all day, who don't have time for my academic reflection about queer history and reclaimed spaces. And, honestly, I didn't feel entitled to take up their time. These women already hold emotional labor, the weight of customers' expectations, the pressure of immigrant survival. I just stood outside, took the photo, and left.

But that moment stayed with me. Two communities converged in the same square footage, decades apart. Same building, different era. Same need: safety, community, and a way to live in a world that keeps pushing you to the margins.

From The Patch to Q Angels, this place has always been shaped by people finding ways to exist in a country that doesn't always make room for them.

Alex's Bar

2913 E Anaheim St, Long Beach

When I drove over to Alex's Bar, I had that familiar Long Beach feeling again. The one where the streets seem determined to test your patience with potholes everywhere, people driving either a full ten miles under the speed limit or swerving between cars to get through. Never in-between. It pulled me straight back to the years I spent in this area before I turned 21, when I was a community college student at LBCC.

Back then, I was newly licensed, constantly driving around with my also new boyfriend, a skater with a circle of alternative friends who were nothing like my kind of "alternative." I was into indie rock, psychedelic backyard shows, that softer, artsier edge of counterculture. They were more chaotic: drinking in skate parks, hurling themselves into each other, moshing like their lives depended on it. It probably felt like it did.

I was not tough. Not hardcore. But around that time I started listening to the music, really listening this time, and something shifted. I devoured *Please Kill Me: The Uncensored Oral History of Punk* and anything that even whispered the names Kathleen Hanna or the riot grrrl movement. I was obsessed with the resistance to mainstream culture, the idea that you could wear your pride on your body and signal to the world that you were not someone to be dismissed or fucked with.

As a young woman who constantly felt overlooked, I carried a lot of anger. Punk felt like a lifeline at the time. A declaration that femininity didn't make you weak and rejecting femininity didn't

make you any less worthy. You deserved respect simply because you were human. And anyone who disagreed, especially the systems that created those arbitrary rules, could fuck right off.

Those ideas fundamentally changed my worldview. Nine years later, I still hold onto my own version of that philosophy, shaped by everything I've lived through since. And even though I wouldn't say I *belong* to the scene anymore, I went to backyard shows, saw wild things, and eventually aged out the way most people do, I'm still connected to it in my own way.



So, when I pulled up to Alex's Bar, shockingly for the first time, considering my whole Long Beach and "determination to drink at every bar" era after 21, it felt like a weird, full-circle moment. I got there right before opening. The parking was as terrible as I remembered Long Beach to be, but standing outside, the place looked exactly like the kind of venue where something meaningful had happened, and could still happen. There's a marquee-style board listing show times like an old movie theater, and a big sign with an arrow pointing reading "BAR." All of my favorite places have that sign.

I took my pictures and noticed the writing on the wall telling me to enter through the back. When I walked around the building, I saw the mural.



Thirty different creatures crowded into a bar, chatting, drinking out of juice boxes, existing together. Aliens, vampires, a two-headed being, a punk guy with liberty spikes, an old-timey airplane pilot, a Lone Ranger type, and other ordinary-looking humans. Every figure is totally different from the next, but all sharing the same space, the same energy, the same moment.

Before Alex's Bar, this building was Floyd's, a gay country-western bar in the 1980s that Al Bell and Pat McGrath intentionally built for people who needed somewhere to belong (IGRA Hall of Fame - Al Bel). This is where the Golden State Gay Rodeo Association (GSGRA) was born, founded by Al Bell (IGRA Hall of Fame - Al Bel). In the 1980s, during the AIDS crisis, police harassment, and widespread discrimination, queer people in boots and cowboy

hats gathered here to dance, practice clogging, learn line dancing, and celebrate country-western culture on their own terms.

Al Bell didn't stop at Floyd's. He also took the lead in fighting the city of Long Beach for the right to hold Pride (IGRA Hall of Fame - Al Bel). What started as a struggle for permission became one of the biggest annual events in the entire city. Pride exists in Long Beach the way it does today because people like Al refused to accept invisibility.

This building is an unexpected overlap of punk with rodeo and queerness. People pushed to the margins building community and relying on DIY survival. If the world won't make space for you, you make it yourself. If the rules don't serve you, you write new ones. If authority tries to silence you, you get louder.

Queer rodeo and punk aren't opposites but cousins with the urgent message of, "Be exactly who you are. No apologies."

Standing in front of the mural, all these layers collided with my own experience. The punk I grew up with always felt so individualistic: *I don't need you. I'm resistant. I'm different. I'm strong.*

But Floyd's (and by extension, Alex's) is a reminder that these subcultures aren't just about individuals carving out space for themselves, but rather about people coming together to build a space where everyone belongs.

It made me realize how easy it is to slip into navel-gazing, to focus so much on my own life, my own performance of identity, that I forget the heart of the thing: *community*. Punk was never meant to be gatekeep-y or exclusionary, even though some people try to

twist it that way. It's actually defiantly inclusive. At its core, it's the same ethos queer spaces have always held. Radical acceptance, care, joy, and a deep belief that everyone deserves a place to exist freely.

No, this wasn't some big revelation or newfound empathy. It was a grounding reminder that everything I do should be in service of others. A reminder not to disappear so far into my own head, my own ambitions, anxieties, and self-image, that I forget how important community actually is. To care. To connect. To look up from my own internal world and see everyone else's.

Because at the end of the day, we're all just creatures at the bar, Alex's or Flyod's. Different shapes, different histories, different reasons for needing a place to rest, dance, and drink.

Redondo Beach Brewing Co.



1814 S Catalina Ave

Redondo Beach isn't usually my area, and I'd never been to Riviera Village before. It's cute and walkable, with the beach a block and a half away and small boutiques and restaurants with linen napkins. The kind of place where a real estate office

advertises seven-million-dollar homes next to a fancy baby boutique.

As I walked down the street, I felt like an outsider thanks to that soft, unspoken tightness in the air that lingers in overwhelmingly white, wealthy spaces. Not hostile, not overt, but fragile. A place where you feel hyper-visible and invisible at the same time.

Tucked between the restaurants and cafés sits Redondo Beach Brewing Co. Before it was a brewery, this address belonged to Nardone's Down, one of the few local places in the 1970s where you could dance with someone of the same sex. It's been described as "not strictly, but predominantly" lesbian and "mixed" with straight people. Sometimes the closest thing to safety was a space where you could slow dance with another woman without worrying about harassment or police raids.

This building is part of queer history. But all that survives now is a name, an address, an old phone number, and memories that never made it into archives. Those stories get erased and replaced with the new ones being created inside the brewery.

From the outside, Redondo Beach Brewing Co. looked like any other beach-town brewpub: patio seating, fake grass, heat lamps. Honestly, breweries are comfort spaces for me, and with their Happy Hour, so I was looking forward to crossing another brewery off my list of places I've been.

But the moment I stepped inside, the vibe shifted hard. There were no windows or natural light except for a back door cracked open. Sports blasting. Country music playing. A long table of men yelling at a game. A male bartender and the only women in the

room were servers. No greeting or eye contact. No acknowledgment.

Just me standing there for long minutes while everyone acted like I wasn't there.

As someone who has worked both front and back of house in breweries, I'm overly understanding. I know the rhythm of service, but this wasn't that. This was the particular male-dominated energy women in the beer world know too well. The assumption that you don't belong or that you need to prove knowledge just to be acknowledged.

It felt like the past had been washed out and replaced with sports-bar masculinity. I started backing toward the door before a woman server finally said, "Hey, welcome," but mentally, I was already gone. I won't be returning.

The truth is that this wasn't surprising. Breweries are still overwhelmingly male spaces, usually white male spaces. Even in 2024, the craft beer world has a diversity problem, not just in who drinks beer but in who brews it, owns the taprooms, or gets taken seriously. Yes, groups like Pink Boots Society uplift women and nonbinary brewers, and yes, there are talented people pushing back, but the industry still defaults to a 2014 bro-culture aesthetic that can make anyone outside that demographic feel small or ignored.

So leaving the windowless bar that used to be Nardone's Down, I mourned how completely the queer past had been erased. The women who danced here. The mixed community. The people who felt safe enough to exist. Whether Nardone's Down advertised

itself as a lesbian bar or not doesn't matter. What matters is that it was there for the people who needed it. What does matter is that people were there, predominantly lesbians, and now it is replaced with the stink of Redondo Beach Brewing Company's brand of masculinity.

Today it's replaced with something that feels like the opposite of that spirit. In fact, the contrast is not even subtle.

Queer history disappears easily when the physical spaces disappear, especially spaces that weren't "pure gay bars," or didn't create landmark activism like The Patch or Floyd's. Maybe Nardone's Down seems insignificant from 40 years later, but it mattered to the woman who danced with another woman in public for the first time. To the person who had their first kiss. To the person who circled the name in a 1973 *Guild Guide.* It still matters despite being forgotten because they didn't fit neat categories.

Now, the building is a brewery where I felt invisible. A tiny moment in the grand scheme of things, but symbolic. A place where men felt comfortable and I didn't.

The staff wasn't evil or intentionally rude. It's that the space reflects a different culture now and erases the memory of who came before. Some histories vanish not because they weren't important, but because no one remembers them.

And maybe that's why documenting these places matters, even if all we have are fragments. Queer history is fragile. It survives in memories and in spaces that disappear quietly.

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“One True Way” or No Way: Traditionalist Catholic Rhetoric and Latina Marginalization in Harrison Butker’s 2024 Commencement Speech

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Bio:

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of traditionalist Catholic rhetoric in Harrison Butker’s 2024 commencement speech; and how such religious eloquence can be detrimental to Latina college students. Delivered at a conservative Catholic institution, the speech promoted rigid gender roles, denounced diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, and framed contemporary cultural values as threats to authentic Catholic identity. Using Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis and Antonio Gramsci’s theory of ideological Hegemony, this research identifies three central discursive strategies in Butker’s speech: the construction of in-groups and out-groups, the delegitimization of DEI, and the imposition of patriarchal gender norms. These rhetorical patterns

work in tandem to marginalize Latina students by defining them as culturally or ideologically deviant from the speaker's vision of "true" Catholicism. The findings show that such rhetoric, especially when delivered during a ceremonial event, can undermine students' sense of belonging, invalidate multicultural expressions of faith, and reproduce systems of inequality under the guise of spiritual authority. This analysis contributes to the broader field of communication by demonstrating how public religious discourse wields symbolic power to shape inclusion and exclusion within academic and faith-based communities. Ultimately, the research underscores the necessity for institutions, especially religious colleges, to recognize the rhetorical implications of their chosen representatives and to affirm diverse identities through more inclusive and socially aware forms of communication.

Keywords: Catholic rhetoric, Latina students, exclusion, critical discourse analysis, DEI, ideological hegemony, gender roles, higher education, commencement speech, identity.

Introduction

In May 2024, Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker delivered a commencement speech at Benedictine College, a Catholic liberal arts school in Kansas. In his remarks, Butker invoked a range of culture-war themes: he denounced abortion rights, Pride Month, and "the tyranny of diversity, equity, and inclusion," while urging men to resist "cultural emasculation." Most controversially, he told the graduating women that "homemaker" was among their most important potential titles and warned that career ambition represented "diabolical lies." Although the university may share Butker's conservative views, the rest of the world may not agree entirely. His speech sparked national controversy amongst college students, many of whom

deviate from traditional Catholic values. But the real question arises; who suffers the most from the Harrison Butkers of the world?

This paper uses close reading analysis to examine how Butker's speech constructs an exclusionary model of Catholic belonging. Specifically, it asks: How does Butker's rhetoric define in-groups and out-groups, and in what ways might this discourse marginalize Latina students at a Catholic college? I argue that the speech employs traditionalist Catholic language to naturalize patriarchal, anti-diversity ideals, effectively positioning Latinas who embrace multiculturalism, social equity, or alternative life paths as outsiders to "authentic" Catholicism. Glorifying a singular religious ideal and stigmatizing dissent, the speech operates as a hegemonic tool that undermines pluralism and belonging within Catholic education.

For Latina students, who sit at the intersection of race, gender, culture, and often class, the convergence of institutional approval and regional conservatism compounds the harm. Intersectionality, as defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is crucial here. Latinas experience exclusion not simply as women or as ethnic minorities, but as individuals shaped by multiple, overlapping systems of marginalization. Many bring progressive, multicultural, and intersectional perspectives to their Catholic identity, which Butker's rhetoric positions as deviant. The message is clear: only certain forms of Catholicism, and by extension certain student identities, are welcome and affirmed.

Butker's remarks are a prime example of how public religious rhetoric can marginalize minority identities such as the modern-day Latina. Beliefs diverge from a traditionalist worldview. Within Catholic higher education, an increasingly diverse landscape, the consequences are especially acute. Students from underrepresented communities, particularly Latinas, may find

themselves alienated when speakers suggest that multiculturalism, gender equity, and inclusion are incompatible with Catholic identity. Given that Latinas now represent a significant and growing share of U.S. Catholics, such messages risk framing their identities as deviant or unwelcome within Catholic spaces. Failing to embrace this demographic shift may lead Catholic institutions to marginalize the populations that are shaping the future of the church (Faggella-Luby & Engel, 2020).

Literature Review

2.1 In-Groups and Out-Groups

Hedges (2021), reveals how the formation of in-groups and out-groups is central to how individuals construct meaning and belonging. In-group members are those who share perceived common values, identities, or beliefs, while out-groups are defined in opposition to those norms often marked as inferior, deviant, or threatening. Harrison Butker's speech deploys this dynamic strategically, constructing a morally superior Catholic in-group aligned with traditionalist values and delineating a secular, progressive out-group characterized as degenerate or dangerous. This rhetorical boundary-setting not only polarizes but also wields exclusionary power, particularly against Latina students whose intersectional identities often align with multicultural, inclusive, or justice-driven forms of Catholicism. As Hedges argues, identity is not fixed but fluid and socially constructed, yet Butker's discourse enforces a rigid boundary that defines authenticity through exclusion. The speech's use of in-group/out-group logic thus functions as a tool of hegemonic control, signaling who "belongs" in Catholic spaces and who does not, reinforcing the marginalization the study seeks to expose (Hedges, 2021).

2.2 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

To understand how Butker's speech marginalizes, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which views language as a social practice embedded with power and ideology. As Fairclough (1995),Blommaert & Bulcaen (2000), and Van Dijk (1998) argue, discourse doesn't just reflect social reality, it actively constructs and legitimizes power relations. Speakers strategically use language to advance perspectives and obscure or invalidate alternatives. CDA is particularly useful in analyzing how phrases like "tyranny of DEI" or "diabolical lies" function ideologically. These are not neutral descriptors; they are rhetorical moves that present conservative Catholic values as morally superior while depicting alternative views, such as multiculturalism, feminist ideals, or inclusion, as threats to faith or social order. Van Dijk's contributions are especially relevant here; his work on discourse, racism, ideology, and the cognitive dimensions of language highlights how narratives shape shared mental models and reinforce dominant social representations.

2.3 Hegemony and Consent

Antonio Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony complements this framework. Hegemony describes how dominant groups maintain control not through coercion alone but by securing consent, by promoting their worldview as common sense or morally "natural" (Gramsci, 1971). Through discourse, elite voices construct a cultural narrative that normalizes one way of being while casting others as deviant. In Butker's case, the speech does not argue its ideology explicitly; it presents its values, patriarchal family structures, anti-DEI sentiment, and rigid gender roles, as self-evident truths. This is a hallmark of hegemonic rhetoric: it doesn't appear political, but moral and universal. By drawing on religious authority and sanctifying traditional norms,

the speech attempts to assert control over how Catholic identity is defined and who gets to belong.

2.4 Religious Rhetoric and Othering

Religious discourse often functions to create symbolic boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Small et al. (2022) notes that when faith-based language is used in cultural or political debates, it can enforce a moral hierarchy, defining "the faithful" against the morally suspect "other." In this process, disagreement is not just framed as difference, but as a "sin". It explicitly states in the Catholic Bible, "A house divided against itself is like salt in the hands of Salar and the city of the Devil" (Mark 3:25, New American Bible Revised Edition [NABRE], 2011). By comparing disagreement to the Devil, this invokes fear into the followers of Catholicism to not break away from tradition. Even if this "tradition" condemns women to being homemakers and not career driven.

In higher education, this can have serious consequences. When a speaker denounces inclusion efforts, career-oriented women, or LGBTQ+ identities as incompatible with Catholicism, it positions those who embody or support such values as outsiders to the faith. Butker's speech, in this sense, becomes a form of policing, delineating who counts as a "true" Catholic.

2.5 Latina Students and Catholic Higher Education

This dynamic is especially relevant for Latina students, who now make up a large portion of the U.S. Catholic population. As of 2022, 43% of Latinas in the U.S. identify as Catholic, and many are pursuing higher education in Catholic institutions. However, these colleges often maintain Eurocentric norms and leadership structures, leaving Latina students navigating institutional cultures that may not reflect their lived experiences or values (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015). Latinas bring with them rich cultural traditions, language, music, spirituality, community values, but also face

systemic challenges, including underrepresentation, microaggressions, and pressure to assimilate. Research has shown that microaggressions can significantly undermine Latina students' career development and sense of agency, especially when their ethnic identity is a central part of their self-concept (Bonifacio, Gushue, & Mejia-Smith, 2018). When public rhetoric like Butker's dismisses DEI efforts or feminist aspirations, it threatens the structures meant to support their inclusion. McVickar (2023) reveals that such exclusionary discourse can harm a minority students' sense of belonging, if their ideology does not submit to the university's values. In this context, DEI initiatives are not abstract liberal projects; they are survival strategies for marginalized students. By framing them as "tyrannical," Butker casts suspicion not just on policies, but on the people who benefit from or advocate for them. Latina students, many of whom may be first-generation, career-driven, or supportive of multiculturalism, are thus rhetorically pushed to the periphery of Catholic belonging. As Pineda Soto (2023) illustrates, these students pursue their careers not in contradiction to their faith or cultural identity, but as acts of intergenerational love, resilience, and justice. Her research shows that economically marginalized, first-generation Latinas view their career goals as deeply rooted in familial sacrifice and a desire to uplift their communities, challenging the notion that ambition and Catholic identity are mutually exclusive.

2.6 Defining Traditionalist Catholic Values

Traditionalist Catholicism, often referred to as conservative Catholicism, emphasizes strict adherence to pre-Vatican II teachings, hierarchical authority, and gender complementarity, resisting modern developments in theology, liturgy, and social justice. According to theologian Massimo Faggioli (2021), traditionalists prioritize doctrinal orthodoxy, oppose secular

liberalism, and aim to preserve roles prescribed by natural law, particularly concerning family and gender. Sociologist Steve Bruce (2011) notes that traditionalist movements in religion often emerge in response to perceived cultural decline, positioning themselves as bulwarks against moral relativism and pluralism. Critics, such as theologian Natalia Imperatori-Lee (2020) argue that traditionalist Catholicism selectively invokes historical practices to justify exclusionary or patriarchal norms, often marginalizing those who advocate for social justice, LGBTQ+ inclusion, or intercultural Catholic expressions. Within U.S. Catholic institutions, this traditionalist strain functions both as a theological orientation and a cultural identity, asserting itself through symbolic rituals, moral proclamations, and public discourse as exemplified in Butker's speech. Understanding these values is critical to analyzing how conservative Catholic rhetoric constructs belonging and exclusion in both ecclesial and educational contexts.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Harrison Butker's 2024 commencement speech, using Norman Fairclough's (1995) three-tiered framework to analyze how language constructs ideology and power. The analysis draws from both the official transcript and video recording of the speech, allowing for attention to verbal and nonverbal cues, tone, and audience reaction. The CDA approach proceeds across three levels: (1) textual analysis, examining word choice, framing, and rhetorical devices; (2) discursive practice, considering how the speech was produced and interpreted within institutional and cultural contexts; and (3) sociocultural practice, situating the discourse within broader ideological tensions in Catholic higher education. This framework enables a layered examination of how

Butker's language naturalizes traditionalist Catholic values, delegitimizes diversity-oriented perspectives, and constructs exclusionary norms. The analysis is further guided by Gramsci's theory of hegemony to understand how the speech invites audiences to consent to a narrow vision of Catholic identity. While this study focuses on textual analysis, future work may incorporate interviews or ethnographic data to assess lived impacts more fully.

Analysis and Findings

4.1 Theme 1: Constructing In-Groups and Out-Groups through Traditionalist Rhetoric

One of the clearest patterns in Butker's speech is the rhetorical construction of a morally superior in-group aligned with traditionalist Catholic values, contrasted against a corrupt, secular out-group. His use of "us vs. them" language is evident in phrases like, "the world around us says that we should keep our beliefs to ourselves whenever they go against the tyranny of diversity, equity, and inclusion" (Butker, 2024). The pronouns and framing draw sharp boundaries: "we" are faithful Catholics under siege; "they" are hostile societal forces. This rhetorical division reflects what Fairclough (1995) identifies as discourse enacting social identity and power: moral labeling like "tyranny," "diabolical lies," and "degenerate cultural values" delegitimizes the out-group's beliefs and behaviors while elevating Butker's vision as righteous truth. It is a subtle but powerful hegemonic move, one that frames ultra-traditional Catholicism not as one perspective, but as the only authentic one (Gramsci, 1971). This logic implicitly marginalizes students whose identities don't fit Butker's mold. Latina students, many of whom come from multicultural or socially engaged backgrounds, may support DEI initiatives, LGBTQ+ inclusion, or alternative expressions of Catholicism. By casting

those positions as “dangerous” or “degenerate,” the speech portrays these students not just as different, but as morally suspect.

The criticism of abortion, Pride Month, and modern gender roles are just some examples Butker invokes to condemn the “damned”; not realizing that this dismissal can be detrimental to the core beliefs that many Latinas may have. For example, using harmful language to describe Pride Month as a “deadly sin” is damaging to the mental health of the 2.3 million Latinas who identify as LGBTQ+, especially since 30% of this population is reported to experience depression (Wilson, 2021).

Similarly, his critique of Catholics who support abortion positions them outside the circle of “true faith”. This long list of condemned practices and people, ranging from President Biden to women with careers, draws the in-group boundary by exclusion. The effect is a rhetorical purification of the Catholic identity Butker promotes. For Latina students, this creates a painful tension. Many have intersecting identities that include feminist, progressive, or multicultural values now cast as incompatible with “real” Catholicism. Harrison Butker’s directive to graduating women that their "most important title" is “homemaker” reinforces rigid gender norms that conflict with the aspirations of many Latina students, especially those who are first-generation and career oriented. One Benedictine graduate summarized,“It definitely made graduation feel a little less special, knowing I had to sit through that and get told I’m nothing but a homemaker.” (Leisegang 2024). That sense of exclusion is precisely how hegemonic discourse enforces belonging: by naming what does not belong. This tension is further compounded by familismo, the strong cultural value placed on familial obligation and unity in many Latinx communities. For first-generation Latina students, embracing academic or professional goals can be perceived as a

betrayal of family roles or expectations, heightening their emotional conflict and sense of isolation (Smith-Morris et al., 2012; Moreno, 2019).

4.2 Theme 2: Delegitimizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Efforts

Another central rhetorical strategy in Butker's speech is the framing of DEI values as not only misguided but actively harmful. By labeling diversity, equity, and inclusion as a "tyranny," Butker transforms what is typically understood as a justice-oriented framework into an ideological enemy of faith (Butker, 2024). From a CDA perspective, such word choices are not accidental. Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1998) note that ideological discourse often works by casting dominant group values as "truth" and competing perspectives as threats. By describing DEI in this way, Butker seeks to reassert traditionalist Catholic identity as the only legitimate worldview, reframing pluralism and multicultural engagement as distortions of faith rather than expressions of it.

This discourse has tangible consequences for marginalized students, particularly those whose educational journeys rely on the very structures being denigrated. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in higher education are not abstract bureaucratic programs; they are critical frameworks designed to support first-generation, low-income, and racially diverse students, many of whom are Latinas navigating historically exclusionary institutions. When a prominent speaker at a Catholic college labels DEI as "tyranny," he does more than critique policy, he invalidates the identities, aspirations, and lived experiences of those students. The implication is clear: inclusion efforts are not just unnecessary but spiritually subversive. This framing is not merely rhetorical; it is political, as it functions to uphold systems of dominance under the guise of religious orthodoxy. By

delegitimizing DEI, the speech undermines the institutional scaffolding meant to foster belonging and equity in Catholic higher education. This study contributes to both communication scholarship and public discourse by revealing how language, especially when cloaked in religious authority, can covertly sustain exclusion. In doing so, it makes a broader claim about the role of rhetoric in shaping institutional values and signals the urgent need for critical engagement with the narratives that define who belongs in faith-based academic communities.

Butker's dismissal of Pride Month exemplifies a broader discursive strategy in which secular social movements are reinterpreted through a doctrinal lens. Rather than engaging with the civic and human rights goals of Pride Month, affirming the dignity and visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals, he reframes the event as a celebration of "deadly sin", invoking Catholic theological categories to discredit its meaning.

This act of redefinition aligns with what Fairclough (1995) describes as recontextualization, wherein language from one sociocultural domain is absorbed into another and imbued with new ideological significance. By filtering Pride Month through a doctrinal lens, Butker effectively repositions it as a moral threat rather than a justice-oriented celebration. This rhetorical shift serves to delegitimize not only LGBTQ+ identities but also the broader principle of inclusion, presenting religious doctrine as a corrective to cultural deviance. In doing so, the speaker masks exclusionary politics as moral clarity, reinforcing traditionalist authority while undermining pluralistic expressions of identity within Catholic discourse.

The delegitimization of DEI is not presented as a debate, but as moral correction,leaving little room for alternative Catholic perspectives that embrace multiculturalism, intersectional justice, or reform. For Latina students, who may rely on inclusive language

and policies to navigate predominantly white institutions, this rhetoric signals rejection. Their cultural and ideological experiences are rendered incompatible with the dominant vision of Catholic identity that Butker upholds. In this context, DEI is not just dismissed, it is vilified. The speech calls for ideological conformity by painting inclusion itself as morally dangerous. For Catholic institutions claiming a mission of universal love and community, this message introduces a meaningful contradiction, one that alienates the very students DEI efforts aim to uplift (Benedictine College, n.d.).

4.3 Theme 3: Gender Roles and the Erasure of Latina Intersectionality

Perhaps the most polarizing section of Butker's speech was his commentary on gender. Directly addressing female graduates, he claimed they had been fed "diabolical lies" about career ambition and suggested that their true fulfillment would come through marriage and motherhood. His celebration of the "homemaker" as one of the most important titles a woman can hold reasserts a traditional gender role idealized within conservative Catholic rhetoric (Butker, 2024). Framed as a return to truth, this language functions hegemonically, it presents a singular model of womanhood as both natural and divinely ordained. Fairclough (1995) argues that such discourse constructs "ideological common sense," shaping expectations without appearing coercive.

This rhetoric is especially alienating for Latina students, whose identities are shaped by the intersection of gender, ethnicity, culture, and often class. Many pursue higher education as a means of economic mobility, community leadership, or cultural advancement. Butker's message not only overlooks these motivations, but it also actively undermines them. By implying that professional goals are distractions from women's true

purpose, he invalidates the very achievements being celebrated at the commencement ceremony. The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), reminds us that women of color face layered systems of oppression that can't be understood through a single lens.

Butker's speech flattens these complexities by presenting an essentialist vision of womanhood rooted in domesticity, ignoring the lived realities of Latina students, many of whom balance cultural obligations, financial responsibilities, and academic ambitions. For those who are the first in their families to attend college, hearing that their hard work is less meaningful than future homemaking sends a disheartening message. This essentialist framing of womanhood as fulfilled only through homemaking is especially contradictory when viewed alongside Butker's own family background. Harrison's mother is Elizabeth Keller Butker, an accomplished academic who holds a degree in Chemistry from Smith College as well as a master's degree in medical physics. Her academic and professional achievements stand in stark contrast to the narrow domestic vision Butker advocates (Butker, n.d.). This contradiction reveals how traditionalist rhetoric can be selectively applied, elevating or ignoring women's accomplishments depending on ideological fit. For Latina students, who often see education as a pathway to empowerment and stability, this selective valorization only deepens the erasure of their lived experiences. Moreover, traditionalist gender roles may reinforce existing inequalities in Latina communities. Scholars like Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and Delgado Bernal (2001) have critiqued how Latina women are often expected to shoulder both economic labor and domestic caregiving, with little institutional recognition. Butker's praise of the homemaker role erases this double burden and imposes a

moral frame on what is, for many, a matter of survival and empowerment.

This gendered discourse aligns with Michel Foucault's (1975) concept of disciplinary power, particularly his idea of "the means of correct training." According to Foucault, institutions enforce social norms not only through overt rules but through subtle systems of surveillance, normalization, and examination. Butker's speech operates as a disciplinary text within a religious educational setting establishing what is "normal" and expected for women while subtly punishing deviation by framing it as spiritually dangerous. The speech doesn't just offer an opinion; it teaches and enforces a behavioral ideal. Latina students, who may embody diverse life paths that deviate from the homemaker model, are implicitly instructed to see their aspirations as misguided or morally inferior. This is how disciplinary power functions not by force, but by making individuals internalize and self-regulate according to institutional norms.

In this context, the speech does more than express opinion, it enforces a cultural hierarchy that positions Latina students as outsiders if they do not conform to its narrow ideals. Their pursuit of education and leadership becomes invisible, while their value is reduced to future roles as wives and mothers. By ignoring intersectionality, the speech reasserts patriarchal dominance under the guise of religious truth, leaving many women, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, feeling erased rather than celebrated.

Discussion

The analysis of Harrison Butker's 2024 commencement speech reveals a consistent discursive project: the construction of a rigid, exclusionary vision of Catholic identity that privileges traditionalist values while marginalizing dissenting voices,

particularly those of Latina students. The three themes identified: boundary-making through in-group/out-group rhetoric, delegitimization of DEI efforts, and reinforcement of patriarchal gender roles, are not isolated strategies, but interdependent elements of a broader hegemonic discourse.

At the core of this discourse is a reassertion of cultural authority. By framing diversity, feminism, and inclusion as morally suspect or spiritually misguided, Butker attempts to position traditional Catholicism as the only legitimate framework. Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony offers a compelling lens through which to interpret the rhetorical strategies in Butker's speech. According to Gramsci, dominant ideologies maintain power not simply through coercion, but through the construction of "common sense" socially embedded beliefs that appear natural or morally self-evident (Forlenza, 2019). In this view, religion functions not only as a spiritual or institutional force, but also as an active field of cultural struggle, where meanings are contested and rearticulated. Rosario Forlenza expands on this by emphasizing that Gramsci saw religion, particularly Catholicism, as both a source of cohesion and a vehicle for ideological control. The "religion of the intellectuals," represented by institutional Catholicism, seeks to impose coherence and order, while the "religion of the people" reflects fragmented yet deeply felt expressions of faith rooted in lived experience and local culture.

Butker's rhetoric aligns clearly with the former: it presents a rigid, hierarchically sanctioned Catholic identity that excludes multicultural, feminist, and inclusive interpretations of the faith. In contrast, many Latina students at Catholic institutions embody a "religion of the people", an experiential Catholicism shaped by intersecting identities and grassroots values. Gramsci's insights suggest that these students are not simply passive recipients of elite ideology, but active interpreters and potential re-articulators

of religious meaning. As Forlenza notes, “Religion… possesses a counter-hegemonic, revolutionary, and transformative potential… to bring a social revolution” (Forlenza, 2019). In this sense, Latina students’ pluralistic approaches to Catholicism may function as quiet but powerful forms of resistance to hegemonic discourse reclaiming Catholic identity from exclusionary frameworks.

By framing traditionalist values as moral “truth” while dismissing multicultural and inclusive expressions of faith, Butker’s speech exemplifies the hegemonic strategy of masking ideology as common sense. Yet, as Gramsci reminds us, common sense is not fixed; it is fluid, malleable, and open to contestation. The backlash from students, alumni, and even religious sisters illustrates the ongoing struggle to redefine Catholic identity in ways that are more just, inclusive, and representative. In this struggle, Latina students are not outsiders to Catholicism, but participants in its continual rearticulation asserting that their identities and experiences are not deviations from faith, but integral to it.

What makes this discourse particularly potent is its delivery through a ceremonial platform. Commencement speeches are symbolic moments of institutional endorsement; they celebrate achievement, affirm identity, and set the tone for graduates’ futures. When such a platform is used to promote narrow gender roles and condemn DEI as tyranny, the message extends beyond personal belief, it becomes a public articulation of what the institution endorses. For Latina students, whose educational journeys often involve overcoming structural and cultural barriers, hearing their aspirations reduced or dismissed at such a moment is especially harmful. This rhetorical exclusion has both symbolic and material consequences. It erodes students’ sense of belonging and signals that only certain identities and life paths are recognized as faithful or valid within Catholic educational spaces. As Fairclough (1995) argues, discourse does

not merely describe reality, it shapes it. When religious rhetoric frames Latina identities as peripheral or problematic, it reinforces institutional cultures that devalue difference.

Yet, the backlash to Butker's speech also suggests the presence of counter-hegemonic resistance. Alumni, students, and even members of the religious order who founded the college publicly rejected the message, illustrating that Catholic identity is not monolithic. This tension reflects a broader struggle within Catholic institutions between tradition and inclusivity, a struggle that is far from resolved. For scholars of communication and religion, this case highlights how hegemonic discourse can operate subtly, cloaked in the language of faith and virtue. It calls for deeper institutional reflection about who is given authority to represent shared values, and how those values are communicated. For educators and administrators, the implications are practical: the rhetoric presented at high-profile events can either affirm the diverse realities of the student body or erase them. Ultimately, this discussion underscores the need to critically examine religious rhetoric not only for what it says, but for what it does, whose experiences it validates, whose it denies, and what kind of community it helps construct.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include its dependence on a single speech and institution, which constrains generalizability. However, the cultural dynamics at play, religious traditionalism versus inclusive multiculturalism, are mirrored across many Catholic colleges and other religious educational settings. Thus, while grounded in a specific case, the findings have broader applicability for scholars interested in discourse, identity, and institutional rhetoric.

Future Studies

Future directions may also involve comparative studies that explore how multicultural identities are addressed across a range of educational settings. For example, how do commencement speeches or institutional messages at other religiously affiliated colleges frame issues of diversity or inclusion? How do these rhetorical strategies compare with those found at secular institutions? Moreover, what differences emerge in the emotional and intellectual responses of marginalized students across these contexts? Future research might incorporate interviews, surveys, or ethnographic methods to explore how students from various racial, gender, or religious backgrounds experience and interpret institutional rhetoric. Do students internalize exclusionary messages, resist them, or reinterpret them in ways that affirm their own identities? These questions point toward the importance of studying institutional discourse not as isolated speech acts, but a part of broader cultural narratives that shape students' belonging, agency, and academic engagement. Such comparative research can illuminate both the dangers and messages that genuinely reflect the diversity and complexity of contemporary student populations.

This study reveals how language particularly when infused with faith and ideology can subtly enforce cultural hierarchies and marginalize those who fall outside the speaker's constructed ideal. The interaction of in-group rhetoric, anti-DEI framing, and rigid gender norms not only undermines the belonging of Latina students but also signals the deeper ideological battles occurring within Catholic higher education. As communication scholars, we are called not only to analyze these messages but to highlight the ways in which discourse shapes lived realities, often in ways that demand justice, equity, and inclusion.

Conclusion

This study critically examined Harrison Butker's 2024 commencement speech through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony, revealing how religious rhetoric can function as a subtle tool of exclusion. By constructing a rigid Catholic in-group, delegitimizing diversity and inclusion efforts, and reinforcing patriarchal gender roles, the speech advances a narrow moral vision that marginalizes Latina students and others whose identities diverge from traditionalist norms.

While framed as a defense of faith, the speech employs language that stigmatizes multiculturalism, career ambition for women, and support for LGBTQ+ rights, all of which are integral to many students' lived experiences. This ideological framing sends a powerful message about who belongs in Catholic institutions and who does not. The platform and timing of the address, a commencement ceremony, amplify this exclusion by turning a moment of celebration into a site of symbolic gatekeeping. Yet symbolic exclusion does not remain symbolic, it produces material effects. When institutional rhetoric privileges a narrow vision of Catholic identity, it influences policy decisions, hiring practices, curriculum design, and student support services. It discourages students from seeking institutional help, reduces retention among those who feel unwelcome, and reinforces environments where microaggressions and bias go unchecked. For Latina students, LGBTQ+ students, and others who do not align with traditionalist ideals, such rhetoric can diminish mental well-being, sense of academic agency, and long-term vocational confidence. In this way, language becomes not only a tool of moral persuasion but also a mechanism of institutional power shaping who thrives, who withdraws, and whose contributions are rendered invisible.

The findings underscore the importance of critically analyzing institutional discourse, especially in educational and religious settings where identity, recognition, and belonging are at stake. Language does not merely express belief; it shapes communities and can reinforce power hierarchies under the guise of tradition or moral clarity. Moving forward, Catholic colleges and other religious institutions must consider how public rhetoric reflects or undermines their commitments to inclusion. Giving voice to a broader spectrum of Catholic experiences, particularly those of women, students of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals, is not just a matter of representation, but of justice. Through critical engagement with institutional language, we can help ensure that faith and belonging are not mutually exclusive. In a moment meant to celebrate possibility, Harrison Butker's speech reinscribed exclusion, but by exposing the ideological scaffolding behind such rhetoric, this study insists that Catholic identity need not be monolithic, and that in its truest form, faith is not a boundary, but a bridge.

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Corporeal Technology: How Technology Transforms Our Sense of Self

Nicole Ohanessian

Bio:

Nicole Ohanessian is an M.A. student in Communication Studies whose work explores media literacy, digital culture, and communication technologies.

Image and text begins on following pages


and the essence of the
human condition

Materials

Papier-mâché, drywall compound, aluminum, PLA plastic, latex, acrylic paint, blood gel, DC motor, lithium-ion battery, iPhone

About:

This sculpture uses mixed media with robotics and video collage to explore technology as an extension of the human body. Inspired by the films of David Cronenberg, Corporeal Tech explores the tension between technological determinism and social constructivism. A robotic hand endlessly scrolls through historical and social short-form vertical video as the director's disembodied voice narrates the duality of our digital condition:

"The body, for me, is the essence of the human existence. It is what we are and everything comes from that, including technology..."

Cronenberg creates a world in which technology becomes inseparable from the human form. Humans modify themselves for pleasure, survival, and connection, engaging trans-physically with screens, games, and implants. The body, in turn, mutates in response, producing tumors, growing new organs, and evolving to consume manmade waste. These themes reflect the tension between technological determinism, the idea that tech shapes humanity, and social constructivism, which argues human desire, culture, and imagination shape our technologies in return.

Please see photos and video at this QR code:



There Is No One Timeline

Tiffany Onyeyiriuche

Bio:

Tiffany Onyeyiriuche is a graduating senior at Cal State LA and founder of Tiff Concepts, an experiential event production consultancy.

Transcript from a given speech

Before I begin, I want to take a moment to say — congratulations to every single person in this room. You showed up. You stayed. You did what it took to get here, and that is not a small thing. Whatever your path looked like to get to this moment, I hope you let yourself feel proud today. You've earned it.

Now let me tell you a little bit about my journey.

When I started my senior year of high school, I was absolutely convinced I was going to be the first Black woman President of the United States. That was the level of confidence I had. The sky was not even the limit. It was just the beginning.

Then my younger brother's cancer came back.

He passed away on Christmas Day during winter break of my

senior year. After that, everything shifted. I went from being president of multiple clubs and active in student government to barely making it to class. I still graduated with a 3.6 GPA, but that number doesn't tell the story. I had spent four years holding it together while he was sick, and when he was gone, I just stopped. I somehow got accepted into college, but if I'm being honest, I was just going through the motions.

When I left for college at eighteen, I thought I could push through it. My family was falling apart. Our finances were unstable. I was driving home more often than I was sitting in lectures. I worked as many jobs as I could to help pay bills and cover tuition. I tried to keep my parents' marriage together. I helped take care of my autistic younger sister. I really believed that if I just worked hard enough, I could hold everything in place.

I couldn't.

I failed.

I failed my classes and I got expelled.

Going home felt humiliating. It felt like watching everyone else move forward while I stood still. My friends were posting Snapchat stories from wild parties, weekend hikes, and whatever relationship drama was unfolding that week. Meanwhile, I was unpacking my things back in my childhood bedroom.

For a long time, I thought that was the moment I fell behind.

But looking back, that was the moment I finally stopped pretending.

I stopped trying to live up to some invisible schedule. I worked retail jobs. I performed at Disneyland. I found my calling in events and built real work experience. I enrolled part time at

community college. While my friends were finishing their degrees, I was figuring out who I was without the pressure to be impressive.

Slowly, I started to feel like myself again. Not the version of me that thought she had to be perfect. The version that just wanted to build something meaningful.

When I came back to school, it was different. I earned a 3.8 GPA at community college. I transferred here to Cal State LA. Life did not suddenly become easy along the way. I was still working. I was still helping support my family.

Last year, I lost my father to cancer too.

There were so many moments where quitting would have made sense. But this time, I understood something I didn't at eighteen.

Falling off the traditional path does not mean you are failing at life.

Now I'm in my senior year. I'm on the Dean's List. I'm a recipient of the Nike HSI Scholarship. And none of it happened on the timeline I thought it would.

We put a lot of pressure on ourselves to have everything figured out by twenty-two. Now, I don't know who came up with that timeline, but I have a few choice words for them when I find them!

But some of us have detours. Some of us have responsibilities that don't fit neatly into a planner. Some of us have grief, caregiving, bills, and setbacks that no syllabus prepares you for.

And that does not make us behind.

And for those of you who stayed on the traditional path and earned every bit of this — that is just as real. The point is not how you got here. The point is that you're here.

There is no one timeline for excellence. There is no universal schedule for becoming who you are meant to be.

If your path has pauses in it, that does not disqualify you. If you had to leave and come back, that still counts. If your journey looks different than the person sitting next to you, it is still valid.

Success is not about speed. It is about persistence.

And if you are still here, still trying, still rebuilding when you need to, you are doing better than you think.
There is no one timeline. But today? Today is yours. Congratulations.

Thank you!

Call for Submissions
Colloquy
A Journal of the Department of Communication Studies
Next Deadline: December 1, 2026

Colloquy invites you to submit manuscripts related to student scholarship conducted in the Department of Communication Studies representing a variety of academic approaches. The journal encourages submissions using any appropriate methodology for the question being investigated. Articles focus primarily on communication studies related issues.

Manuscripts submitted to *Colloquy* should subscribe to the National Communication Association (NCA) guidelines for publication: (*https://www.natcom.org/academic-professional-resources/research-and-publishing-resource-center*). These guidelines require that the authors use inclusive and non-defamatory language. Submissions should be original work by the author(s) that meet requirements for informed consent from research participants.

Manuscripts may use any style (APA, MLA, Harvard, Chicago).. Article manuscripts should be under 20 double-spaced pages.

Shorter pieces and multimedia presentations are encouraged. The submission may be an excerpt of a longer work (for example from a capstone paper or an MA thesis), but it should stand alone.

Papers submitted will be reviewed following a blind peer-review protocol. All submissions should be accompanied by a cover letter including a 75 word biographical statement for the author(s) and full contact information including an email address.

Please send manuscript submissions via email to:

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Student Editor Opening:

Colloquy is also looking for student-editor interns for Spring semester of 2027. Interested students are encouraged to send an email to the address above. Please include a paragraph about your qualifications and motivations in editing.

Student editors may receive a stipend.