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“It’s Just a Joke, Relax”:

Transphobic Memes’ Metaphorical Connections between Trump’s Political Speeches Using the Blended Metaphor Theory

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Abstract

The field of memetics is constantly expanding, and the wheels of politics are unstoppable, all with the help of metaphors. This thesis will take a close look at the interaction of the field of political linguistics and the field of memetics interact using the tool of the blended metaphor. Metaphors will be based on transphobic memes found on Facebook; these metaphors will be put into themes and further analysed using the blended metaphor theory.

The question of whether the metaphors uncovered in the transphobic memes will be in alignment with Trump's speeches will be answered by analysing the memes and Trump's rhetoric. The metaphors will be further explained by comparing them to some of the memes, but in order not to go into too much detail on specific memes, the analysis will be contained to the metaphor, through the lens of the theme itself.

The findings suggest a strong relation between the transphobic memes and the metaphors Trump utilised in his speeches.

Acknowledgements

Just like life, a lot can and will go wrong writing your thesis. If it had not been for my wonderful wife, my friends, my amazing cat, and an employer that truly believed in me I would never have finished this work. It was often hard to continue writing about hatred, bigotry, and complete disregard of human life. Nevertheless, it is an important subject, that sadly has to be analysed in order to understand why the metaphors of hatred translate from one field to another, seamlessly.

During the writing process of this thesis, I found myself reasoning with the right, seeing myself in their bigoted view. I *sympathised* with them, I understood their fears, their hatred, their view. My emotional struggle quickly changed from being afraid *of* them, to being afraid of being *like* them. It reminded me that the line of right wing and left wing is not a clear line, it is a gradient and understanding one another is the only way we can learn to live together. It is through discovering my own feelings about others that I understood my own feelings towards my gender. It only took me hundreds of transphobic memes and a master's thesis to figure out my own *male* gender.

Without the constant support of my wife, I could never have finished this work, thank you, I love you.

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Introduction

Memes (an online image with or without text that has been shared and altered online)give us an insight of what people's unfiltered opinion are, something that is increasingly interesting for the academic community. This has led to a plethora of papers about the memetic sphere, giving a rich foundation for this work to be based on. Memes give us a particular honest perspective of today's world. Considering the tense political sphere that we are living in right now, it is highly interesting to look into the reasoning behind the memes' existence and popularity.

It was important to me to have a connection to the lens through which the memes would be analysed in to accurately depict a minority, to avoid misrepresenting a minority of which I am not personally part of. A theme that has come up more and more in the last decade has been the blatant transphobia and a lack of academic study thereof, due to the attached stigma against the transgender community. It is furthermore of importance to analyse it as the transgender community is experiencing a tremendous amount of hatred and violence, so giving the metaphors used a closer look, will helps us understand where this hatred is coming from better. It is of the utmost importance to me to speak the quiet parts aloud and analyse them truthfully.

Metaphors give us an insight of the complexity of the human mind, as George Lakoff thoroughly proves in his, and his colleagues work *Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The Critical Metaphor Analysis*, it offers the reader an insight into political speeches, and how to properly analyse visual metaphors in a political context. Finally, we have the Blending Theory, giving the researcher the possibility to combine two, or more aspects of a metaphor to find the root of their existence.

I tumbled down the rabbit hole of transphobic memes solely by joining left wing satire meme groups. Sometimes they share memes from private people and other groups with captions such as 'needs love', 'send heart reacts to their/her/his post'. Upon following the posts, I often unveiled selfies, memes, or posts of trans Facebook users, where transphobic users had hijacked their page, threatening, insulting, bothering, and harassing them. Hundreds upon hundreds of these posts have been shared, when researching upon these individuals I was surprised to find out that they are ordinary people, fathers, mothers, teachers, nurses, who decided to bully teenagers into suicide. It intrigued me tremendously.

Quite enraged, I fell deeper down the rabbit hole and looked at the harassers' Facebook pages for more posts that they shared and where they found them. It quickly led me to extremist's groups. It became clear that some posted memes did extraordinarily well, often achieving over 1000 'likes' and hundreds of shares, while others barely had any. Most of those over-achieving posts were transphobic, which is easily explained by the extensive negative media coverage trans people have received in America. The way those groups operated intrigued me, and unfortunately the Facebook algorithm started spoon-feeding me increasingly extreme content.

But why are those posts so popular? What makes them special? What stereotype are they based on? What linguistic techniques are they based on? What metaphors have been used to convey their message? Is there any structure to them? I was haunted by my morbid curiosity, which developed into an academic curiosity. What metaphors are present in transphobic memes and are they in any way related to the political speeches the American public has been force-fed?

Slowly my collection of transphobic memes had reached an academic level, and I was able to see patterns, one of the most interest aspects were that some imageries were remarkably similar. The usage of metaphors, however unintentional, have shown great parallels to each other, which prompted this work.

Using a handful of memes, which were picked according to certain criteria explained in the methodology section, I will be using the blending theory to display how metaphors are deeply imbedded into the media of the meme. It will also display that most metaphors are constantly being re-used and re-invented and have been recycled from Trump's speeches.

Memes often have multiple interlinked metaphors, this renders the process of analysis more difficult, nevertheless, the most common metaphors and most interesting links will be discussed in the last part of the thesis. Additionally, all the memes, their corresponding categories, the metaphors, and the themes of these metaphors will be added into the appendix.

Most of the memes in this thesis are extremely controversial, racist, sexist, transphobic, homophobic, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, and so, so much more. This is why I want the reader to be aware that the memes might upset them.

Methodology

For this thesis, the mixed-methods approach has been chosen, as it is the most appropriate for the theme at hand. If we were to only utilise a quantitative approach and solely focus on the numerical data, it would only show which metaphors are the most present in the memes. Only using the quantitative approach would be futile, as the memes, and therefore the metaphors, would have to be chosen at random, taking any credibility away from the findings.

In a qualitative examination of transphobic memes found on Facebook, (no other source was used) the metaphors will be dissected using linguistics, historical events (those being events that took place primarily digitally on the internet and world history regardless of user distortion), and the structure of the meme itself. Furthermore, only memes with at least two hundred reactions were used to ensure that the memes used were already in the mainstream and not just in little niche groups. This approach also filtered the results so that only memes 'of a certain quality acceptable' would be used. If less popular memes had been used, the quality of the meme could be questionable as it would not be 'successful' and therefore not representative of what the memers' and their viewers' beliefs are.

The only memes that will be used in this work are Image Macro Memes, memes that have both visual as well as written aspects. Both the word choice as well as a description of the imagery will be used to establish the metaphors used in the meme. All memes only featuring imagery, called Image Memes, will be ignored in this study, as will video memes as they are a completely different meme format. For every theme one or two metaphors were chosen which will be explained using one meme per metaphor. The chosen memes will be analysed using the blending theory; therefore not all metaphors and not all memes will have a blending structure added. The reasoning of choosing the blended theory will be explained the Metaphors in Discourse and Memes chapter.

All the memes presented in this work that fulfil the criteria of being both a Macro Meme and have more than 200 reactions, are taken into consideration. The

memes were found solely on Facebook; this decision will be explained in the Memes and Politics chapter.

Due to how the Facebook's algorithm is constructed, I received a concerning number of memes on my page. Therefore, all the memes were found in either right-wing groups, or public walls of private people, whose memes, showed up on my feed. All memes displayed in this work will be accredited to the groups and individuals who posted them online. This is to prove their credibility and their accountability for the meme. As it is impossible to trace back the original meme maker, the pages and names will be used as the reference.

After every metaphor was taken into account, it became fairly obvious that there were different themes that emerged. The metaphors were then classified within those themes. Both the metaphors, but mainly the themes will be compared to the results of Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko's study who analysed some of Trump speeches. This will be in the Memes and Politics chapter.

All the data, as well as the memes, even without a blended structure are included in the appendix.

Chapter 1: What is a Meme?

1.1. Definition of Meme

The question of what a meme is, is both simple and incredibly hard to reply to. Richard Dawkins defines a meme as “a unit of cultural transmission or a unit of imitation” (Dawkins, 339), which is very vague, yet very fitting. This includes non-internet memes, such as pop culture merchandise or the graffiti “Kilroy was here”, which was spotted as early as 1940. It was a crudely drawn figure peeking over a wall with the caption “Kilroy was here”. They led Hitler to believe that there was a Super-GI somewhere named Kilory (Whipps), showing that memes have always had a prominent position in politics - even if it is just by chance. The vagueness of Dawkin’s definition is why further categorising the memes is so important to this thesis.

As the studies on memes deepen so do the definitions of memes. In Limor Shifman’s *Memes in Digital Culture*, he summarises three different meme natures: “mentalist driven, behaviour driven, and inclusive” (Shifman 39).

The “mentalist-driven memetics” which is supported by Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, and Aaron Lynch argues that the “meme vehicle”, the phenotype, and the idea of the meme are linked in such a way that the message and the phenotype are one and the same thing.

The “behaviour-driven memetics” argue that memes can only exist within the peripheral of its message and not as a distinctively different part. Thus, while both are not the same, yet one cannot see them as separate units as the meme itself would not make sense without the circumstances of the message.

Lastly, as Shifman calls it, the “inclusive memetic approach” is based upon Susan Blackmore’s approach that every construct that can be replicated can be considered a meme. Therefore, it is the vaguest definition and makes an accurate analysis of memes hard, if not impossible (Shifman, 39).

The “behaviour-driven memetics”, is therefore the most obvious direction this thesis will take, due to the political nature of the memes.

Jonathan Charteris-Black, defines political speech as “a coherent stream of spoken language that is usually prepared for delivery by a speaker to an audience for a special purpose on a political occasion.” (xiii). Lezandra Grundlingh has argued that because the internet users share and change the meme it is an act of speech, so although it is not, semantically, a spoken language it is still an act of intentional communication. The imagery and metaphors used in a meme make it a coherent stream if the reader can understand its meaning. The memes were made with an audience in mind that will be opinionated on the subject, therefore both the audience as well as the maker are both approaching the meme from a political perspective. Thus using “behaviour-driven memetics” is the best direction for this work, as politics and the meme are one and cannot be separated. Without its “behaviour” of displaying its political values and opinions, it would not be a political meme, but just a meme.

Shifman defines a (internet) meme as:

“(a) a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and/or stance, which (b) were created with awareness of each other, and (c) were circulated, imitated, and/or transformed via the Internet by many users.” (Shifman 41).

Shifman’s definition is already more definite than Dawkin’s, but it lacks in definition of what exactly an internet user is. This could include companies and “media experts” (professional content creators), including memes for marketing purposes. Milner defines it as “amateur media artifacts, extensively remixed and recirculated by different participants on social media networks” (Milner as in Grundlingh 2), this definition is more specific to its participants and open about where the memes circulate.

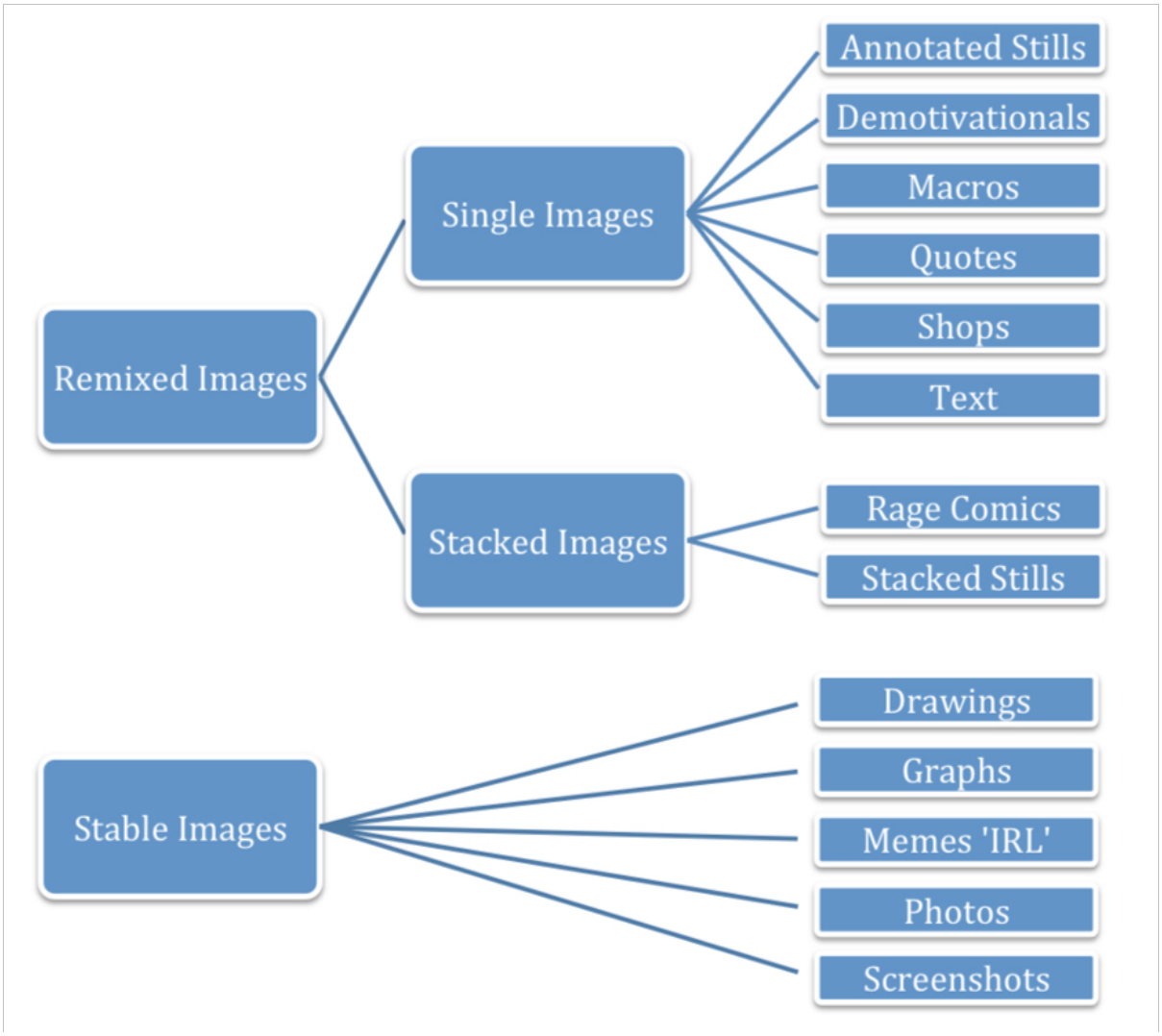


Figure 1.1: Different types of memes, Milner 2012, p.85

It must be noted that this thesis will only take image macro memes, shops, and stacked images into account in consideration for its analysis and not videos.

1.2. Various kinds of memes

Milner defines a macro image as text layered over an image, accompanied by a text on top, with an added text, often a pun, a resolution to the top promise, at the bottom of the image (Milner 85-86).

As Milner's dissertation was written in 2012, it is lacking meme structures that will be used in this dissertation, such as *Chad memes*, *blackboard memes*, *wikihows*, *mosaic*, *slippery slope*, *trad-life*, *Wojak*, and other lesser-known formats. I define the *blackboard memes* template having an empty space in which the memer puts their own writing in. *Mosaic meme*,

is a meme which uses at least six different pictures/drawings of their subject and usually has its punchline in the middle of the mosaic or in the last panel.

Milner's mentioned *Rage Comics*, *Memes IRL*, and *Demotivationals* are no longer a main trend for the meme community, finding them is so seldom and do not have a great interaction, and are thus not considered for this work. They also do not include the latest lingo, something that is essential for this thesis.

Political comics are often shared on extremists' pages, as they are not within the definition of either of the quoted academics, and because they are not imitated and/or transformed, but static and taken as face value without the internet user changing its content or meaning, they do not count as memes and will not be analysed.

1.3. Conclusion

As we have seen there are many definitions of what a meme is in the first place, as this is a fairly new academic subject, a combination of the Shifman and the Milner definition is necessary to define the concept of a meme for this thesis. Only by establishing the limits of this thesis can we analyse the appropriate formats.

In order to set up a coherent structure, it is important to use the right kind of meme format for this research, as there are multiple formats which would be harder to analyse or would not convey metaphors particularly well. Many other researchers have chosen the generic format of Macro-Memes as they offer both a visual aspect as well as a written description. Giving them multiple layers of context and are particularly interesting to analyse.

Chapter 2: Memes and politics

Memes are the display of personal beliefs and are accessible to every user with a smartphone, computer, tablet, or similar smart devices. Therefore, it has been used by political followers as well as political leaders around the globe. The following chapter explains that political memes are not reduced to English speaking countries, but a worldwide phenomenon spreading opinions and (mis-) information with a scary efficiency. Chapter two also shows various kinds of meme formats that will be highlighted in the transphobic meme analysis later and why they are especially common within the right-wing sphere. Furthermore, it is highly interesting on which platform the memes are shared on, and why the poster specifically chose the one they posted it on. Taking a closer look at Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), and 4-Chan will give the reader a better understanding of why people post radical memes on their social media. Lastly there have been multiple studies surrounding how political memes have impacted political votes and voting outcomes, which is fundamental on why this whole thesis is worthwhile.

2.1 Political memes? I thought this was about transphobic memes!

Transphobia is not secluded to the political realm. You do not have to be particularly political in order to be transphobic, but as of 2024, the transgender "issue" has been made part of a political debate. The famous example of children identifying as cats and demanding litter boxes shows this quite well, this was latter discovered to be a hoax (BBC, 2023). It quickly became a dog whistle for LGBTQ issues and a response to unisex bathrooms. Multiple republicans, and right leaning individuals with a strong media standing, have used the litter box students as an example of the incompetence of the school system. To expose queer students on such a big platform and alienate them from their peers (Stanford), is a political approach to discrimination. It is a weapon against the well-being of queer, and in this case, transgender students.

Being transphobic is therefore not necessarily political, but as transgender people are used as pawns in political contexts to critique the political opposition directly, or indirectly (by critiquing the system that they have created), it is a political issue.

Transphobia, just like racism, sexism, ableism, and ageism is created by the society not the individual. In a *Data for Progress* study, the findings show that there is a considerable discrepancy between the democratic party and republican party when questioned about their standing on transgender people. E.g., 71% of democrats think that the government should protect the rights of transgender Americans, even if it means changing traditional family structures and social norms. 70% of republicans think that the government should prioritise traditional family structures and social norms over the rights of transgender Americans (Thomas). The topic of transgender safety and the role of transgender people in society has not just infiltrated the political sphere but the political sphere has infiltrated the safety of transgender individuals.

2.2 What are political memes?

As a lot of this thesis is based upon terminology, we have already seen the complicated definition of what a meme is, we will see the convoluted definition of what political discourse is. Therefore, it is of utmost important that we define what a political meme is, and what is not.

Halversen and Weeks have discussed in their study on why people share political memes. They have determined that the two main reasons why people share memes is to ridicule their opponent and to (dis-)inform their fellow countrymen, this to persuade them into voting for their candidate. They are often associated with anger towards the other candidate (Halversen, Weeks 1-7). Their findings also show that creators or sharers of political memes are often not interested in political matters, it is also not of importance whether the actor has any knowledge of politics, it even has a negative impact on creating memes (Halversen, Weeks 6). Thus, memes are shared with misinformation to endorse one's own candidate, no matter the cost.

Based upon their findings on the intention of creating political memes and include the reasoning behind why transphobic memes are politically motivated a definition of political memes can be formulated.

A political meme contains (dis-)information about the political reality, or the society the political sphere has created, which may contain the political opponent personally or what their party stands for as a whole. This unfortunately renders the definition vague.

2.3 International Memeing

2016 is an extremely specific year for the memetic landscape as the controversial figure of Donald Trump has made his way up the acting ladder to American presidency, just like an other American movie star has before him. With statements like grab “em by the pussy”, or “Make America Great Again”, “I am intelligent. Some people would say I am very, very, very intelligent”, and of course his famous X (formerly known as Twitter) post “Despite the constant negative Press, covfefe”, he was very ‘memeable’. Using those slogans in memes, it is obvious where a lot of metaphors in the extremists' memes find their origin with what Donald Trump has stated. Both against his presidency as well as in favour of it. As a figure of authority, he inspired the memers with ideology and metaphors. Something we will take a closer look at are the metaphors Trump uses and how they are reflected in transphobic memes.

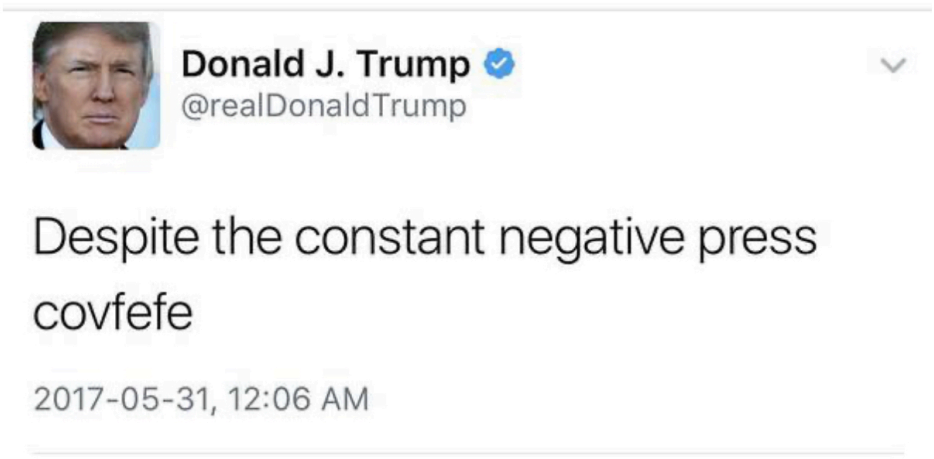


Figure 2: X post, Trump, Source: WSJ

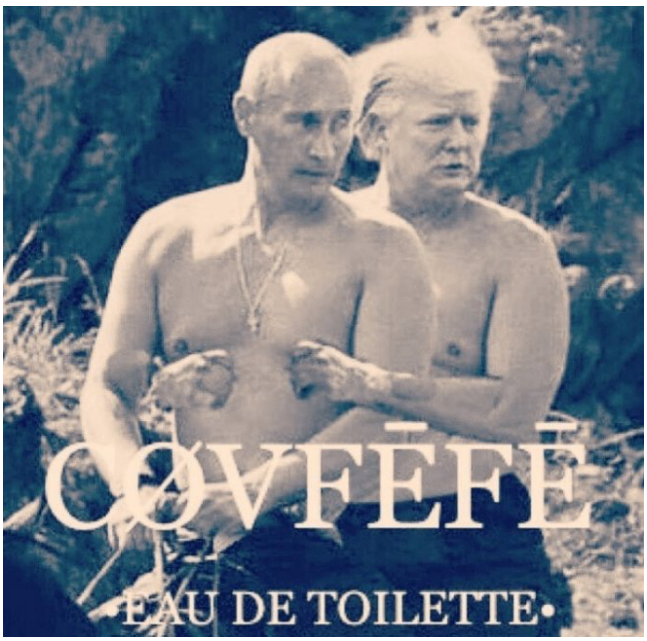


Figure 3: Covfefe meme, source: liberal gun club, Senorgrand

Even the claim that memetics have no actual impact on "the real world" and "actual politics," is objectively wrong. It can change the world, for worse and better. The Chinese meme of "garlic chives" (*Jiucai*) was a popular meme describing "Those ordinary Chinese people who are constantly lured to participate in all kinds of economic activities, but whose investments are destined to be consumed by the establishment" (Pang, 83).

Figure 4, Chives meme, Source: Reddit, user Se_to_NW

Reddituser Se_to_NW

This demonstrates two particularly important points: this is not a phenomenon that is confined to the English-speaking population, and that in countries where free speech is not a given, people will meme to display their critique towards their government. It can be used as

a political tool to critique an oppressing policy. Using both humour as well as bitter seriousness, a politically apt audience can enjoy the meme which may spark a new opinion.

A study conducted by Dr. Anushka Kulkarni, has proven that, while according to the results obtained, political memes did not have a direct impact on the audience's vote, it did agree that the information shared by the meme was accepted by the internet users (Kulkarni 16-17).

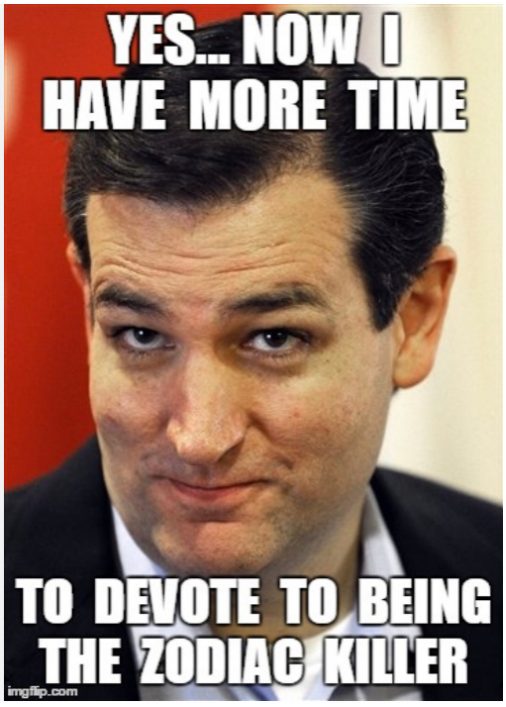


Figure 5: Zodiac killer meme, source: ImgFlip, CharlieHarrel

The misinformation that Ted Cruz is the Zodiac Killer, was mainly spread via memes, was believed by 40% of the Floridan voters (Kulkarni 13). This discrepancy of information being taken at face-value and the memes not having an impact of the votes can be justified when acknowledging that people who have already made up their mind on who to vote for only follow people on social media who agree with them (such as fan-groups, friends, family).

Angela Merkel, Germany's former chancellor, agreed to take in as many refugees as necessary (Bennhold). Which resulted in her being both celebrated and criticised for her approach towards refugees. Internet users have critiqued her policy with the multimedia format of memes. During the New Year's celebration in Cologne, hundreds of women were sexually assaulted, asylum seekers being the perpetrators. In response the meme community, mostly the German alt-right web-surfers, made hundreds of memes, calling refugees

"Rapefugees". This ultimately hindered a successful integration of refugees and contributed to the racism the refugees have already experienced before this.

Figure 6: German Rapefugee meme, Pfefferspray, source: funpot, user Keule56

Figure 7: German Rapefugee meme, Op ist ein Rassist, Source: 9gag, user 9 gagger

A lot of macro memes simply follow the news stories, using the meme format to show their opinion. The left image above says, "German judge when deciding on the penalty for a multiple rapist." The colour sheet beneath states "10 years without parole", and for darker skin shades "two years with parole", the angry woman states that "OP is a racist". The first meme featuring Peter Griffin references, what the OP (Original Poster) declares, the injustice between how people with darker skin, get away easier with crimes, this is in stark contrast to how people with lighter skin get a harsher penalty. The second part of the meme states the obvious, but by using the angry activist meme the message shows that the OP is not a racist but simply tells the truth. The OP over-generalises the complexity of multiple court cases to support a stereotype refugees (most certainly) already had before they made this meme. The addition of the hysterical woman saying that OP is a racist, is added by OP themselves, or by a fellow right-wing memer, as it shows the left as being oblivious to reality.

The second meme, a picture of an asylum seeker badly photoshopped into a meme with a doctor, states that “when he has sex his eyes burn”, to which the doctor replies that “That is normal, it’s because to the pepper spray”, implying that he raped a woman who in self-defence sprayed pepper-spray on him. Here again the OP has most certainly had opinions about this before the incident happened and is overgeneralising the actual situation.

Thus, only the ideas have been carried over from one meme to another.

Figure 9: Fucken Zeit, danke Merkel, source: Know Your Meme, fucken

Figure 8:Fucken, Kinder, source: Know Your Meme, Fucken Kinder

In contrast, these two memes (above) are heavily connected. Around the same time as the rapes occured a note, presumably written by an asylum seeker was found, where the word “ficken” (to fuck), has been mispelled to “Fucken”, it also featured the line “Ich töte sie ficken” (literally: I kill her fucking), which probably means: “I will fuck her until she dies”. This note has been referred to and quoted multiple times in different memes. The man depicted is a police sketch of a man who raped numerous women.

In the first meme (on the left), the man holding a belt in his hand in the meme says, “Es it fucken Zeit” (It is fucking time), to which the person on the floor replies “Danke Merkel” (Thank you Merkel). It blames the former German chancellor Angela Merkel for the rapists' actions. The man holding a belt is meant to be an abusive parental figure and their child. The crudely photoshopped meme displays both that the “enemy is within” and that the Germans see themselves as if they do not only have to quietly accept their inferior position but have to be grateful for their chancellor, who has facilitated it.

The second meme features the sketch of the men over the face of the usual (child) model of the Kinder Riegel chocolate. The logo of Kinder has been replaced by “fucken”, with the subtitle “Ich töte sie ficken”, on the bottom left it states that “Merkel hat mich eingeladen” (Merkel invited me). This again uses a similar metaphor of the enemy is within and that the Germans are helpless. But the symbolism is less obvious than with the previous one.

The two memes are thus closely related, sharing not only ideas, and conclusions, but also linguistic similarities, as well as identical imagery. The second meme is more extreme also taking the murder into account.

Violence in memes is not location-sensitive, nor is it culturally exclusive to any majority or minority. It is an ever-present part of the internet and whether the internet user wants or does not want to see it.

2.4 Memeing in the U.S.A.

In 2016, during the presidential election in the USA, a new level of political memery started. Hillary Clinton, who could have been the first female American president, as well as Donald Trump, who up to that point was only known as the host in “The Apprentice” and a mediocre (criminal) businessman, both entered the presidential race. The internet memers and trolls[1] could barely contain themselves with excitement and birthed a multitude of extraordinarily successful memes.

The election split the American public in half, not just between Democrats and Republicans, but between races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, and often divided friends and families. Everyone, even non-Americans, were highly opinionated about the outcome of the election. Thus, sharing more memes than usual, without fact-checking anything the pro-Trump side was often proud of (see image), spreading misinformation to get attention, share their opinion and more importantly so that their candidate gets more attention, and as they hoped, votes for him.

[1] Trolling: “ Trolling is when someone posts or comments online to deliberately upset others.” (Esafety)

The pro-Trump team started the *Meme-War.* Hundreds of thousands of memers designed and shared pro-Trump memes in an attempt to drown out the pro-Hillary memers. Because of this sheer uncountable number of memes and memers it is impossible to accurately display who voted for Donald Trump and who only shared the memes to "troll" liberals. This issue will be explained further at a later point. Both the Democratic party as well as the Republic party, told their followers to either post in their name or simply reblog their posts, Trump's followers (in comparison to Hillary Clinton) did profoundly better (Dewey).

When I was researching memes in right-wing groups, it became clear that the same memes were posted multiple times in the same group – something that is inevitable if you post over two hundred memes a day. It is also hard to know what satire is and what is serious political commentary, quite a lot of satire left-wing meme groups are posting right-wing memes as they do not realise their message. One aspect that the Trump election promoted is how openly the public was talking about hating minorities - the 'other'. While racism, transphobia, homophobia, sexism, and xenophobia have always been present, people openly admitting that they believe in the Nazi-ideology has been rare, but increasingly prominent. After the Ku-Klux-Klan openly supported Trump, it was clear to the public who voted for Trump (Detrow).To understand the strategy of a group, as well as its followers is essential to correctly understanding their point of view and being able to correctly analyse their content.

2.5. Memes and Votes

It must be noted that according to Anushka Amogh Kulkarni's 2017 study *Internet Meme and Political Discourse: A study on the Impact of Internet Meme as a Tool in Communicating Political Satire*, results found that memes do not actively change the accounts of elections (17). On the other hand, Raja Muhammed Munzir Nur Salikin et al.'s study analysing the influence political memes had on the 2019 presidential election in the Karimun district in Indonesia shows that political memes help people exchange their ideas and beliefs by discussing their memes online. Furthermore, it was suggested that the voter turnout was elevated due to the memes that have been shared, and Salikin et al. determined that novice voters were heavily influenced by those memes (416-417).

2.6. Memes in manifestos

School shooters' manifestos have started to feature memes to explain their difficult feelings before they killed (or tried to kill) students and teachers alike. The Christchurch shooter makes references to multiple right-wing memes in his manifesto. He even mentioned to "subscribe to PewDiePie", which in itself is not right-wing, it still does show his deep involvement in the internet (Romano). Thus, the memes have broken the contagion of the internet and have infiltrated "real life," having a very real impact on life.

2.7. Why certain meme formats are used and the implications for political memeing

2.7.1 In and Out Groups – social identity

Humans strive to have a feeling of belonging within their peer group. The formation of groups based upon gender, age, political affiliation, origin, skin colour, or other aspects that "share an emotional involvement" are natural (Tafjel & Moghaddam, 7) are natural. There may be smaller in-groups within those taller in-groups based on similar criteria. This in-group projection model, according to Mummendey and Wensel (as in Reimer et al.) describes the phenomenon "that the majority-group values and attributes are often treated as the default values and attributes of the common identity" alienating members of the minority (Reimer et al, 17). Stephan and Stephan (as in Reimer et al. 17) argue that "the projection of the majority's groups values […] can represent a symbolic threat to minority-group members" (Reimer et al. 17).

It was Ashmore et al "that concluded that social identification consists of seven theoretically distinguishable components (1) self-categorization, (2) evaluation, (3) importance, (4) attachment and interdependence, (5) social embeddedness, (6) behavioural involvement, and (7) content and meaning" (Reimer et al. 6). It is thus that individuals form all groups find and compare themselves most to members of their own group and distinguish themselves by the out-groups based upon the chosen groups, and to be able to compare one's group with a rival one. Therefore, identifying with a group and differentiating with a different group helps the individual form their own sense of self (9). It has been studied that it is common for the in-group to generalise the out-group, no longer seeing them as individual humans, but as one common enemy. Furthermore, the in-group does not criticise their own

group but overly criticises the out-group this is referred to as the Intergroup bias (8). Falomir and Pichastor and Mugny have noticed that the need to distinguish one-selves from the out-group can be displayed in harming members of the out-group (e.g. straight men harming gay men because ""I'm not gay… I'm a real man!"" (10)." It is thus important to them that they are perceived as 'real' men, and are therefore projecting their own insecurities, or aspects of their personality that are very important to them onto the outgroup. This intergroup conflict is more intense for people who "strongly identify with the threatened group than for those to whom the threatened group is less important" in an effort to "protect […] a valued ingroup […] against the perceived threat from an outgroup" (10).

Categories can be based upon either an Affirmational Categorization (what they identify as), or Negational Categorization (what they are not). A further categorisation is the superordinate groups and subgroups, groups within groups (Reimer et al. 15). There are in-fights within Facebook groups about how far is *too far,* or how left is too left. Members who openly show their opinion in comment sections or in posts are either removed by the admin (if the opinion is too extreme) or humiliated in the comments until they leave on their own volition. This rejection is a Negational Categorization of the individual who was rejected by his former peers, and an Affirmational Categorization for the group whose beliefs have been strengthened by their peers who joined in on their cyberbullying. Often that person then joins a subgroup who has been formed to escape a certain ideology within a group. But both groups still share the same superordinate - the same main goal.

2.7.2. *Soyjak* in In and Out groups

Both republicans and democrats have used the *Soyjak* and *Yes Chad* format for their memes, with the *Yes Chad* being them (in-group) and the *Soyjak* being the other (out-group). Thus, using the dynamic between the *Yes Chad* and the *Soyjaks* correlates with the in and out-groups. The *Yes Chad* stands for the in-group, an ideological representation of their own self-image. He is a strong, white, blonde, bearded character, all in all a representation of the best option posile version of the *Soyjaks*. He gained prominence through 4-Chan and Reddit which both used him predominantly in white supremacy and other bigoted memes (Miles Klee). It has been argued that his usage in non-bigoted memes has redeemed him (Klee), but according to the memes that will be analysed in this thesis, this is hardly the truth. It must be noted that the usual usage of the *Nordic Gamer* is to mock and bully other people based on

their hobbies, interests, personality traits, believes etc., therefore it is essential to acknowledge the inherent wickedness of *Yes Chad*/*Nordic Gamer*.

Figure 10: Yes Chad also known as the Nordic Gamer

The female *Yes Chad* is the *Tradwife*. It is important to notice that she is defined by her marriage and tradition (trad), not by her personality, or even origin (*Nordic Gamer*), or the caption (*Yes Chad*). She is used as a "voice of reason" (this concept will be explained later in the thesis) whenever another *Wojak* character (usually a woman, or in this specific thesis a trans-woman) makes a statement that she does not agree with. The *Yes Chad* and the *Tradwife* generally agree in the conservative memes. They are a united front against everything that goes against their ideals.

The *Wojaks* (overcategory of the Soyjaks) have at this point a strong standing in the memetic community. They are highly versatile and adaptable to the specific situation of the meme (see Appendix 3). The *Wojak*, also known as the *Feels guy*, is a staple in the memetic

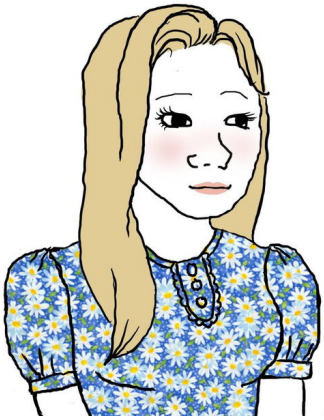


Figure 11: Tradwife

sphere. A variation of the *Wojak* is the *Soyjak*, he is based upon the fake shocked reaction that was a popular meme online. Unlike the strong masculine *Yes Chad*, *Soyjak* is based upon the un-masculine, he is also called *Soylent Grin*, *Nu/Male Face*, *Nu/male Smile*, *Soyface*, and *Cuckface* (Bilbo Swaggins and Owen, know your meme). *Soyjak* is a compound name, made from Soy, as in the meat alternative, and -jak, the end of *Wojak*, therefore an under category the *Wojaks*. Another meme connected to the *Soyjak* is the *Soy Boy Face* (they can also be called *Soyjak*, but for the sake of this paper they will be called *Soy Boy Face*), they are "emasculated men" which the right-wing uses to mock the left. It is based upon the common myth that Soy biologically alters the consumer in becoming more feminine. (Vaughn)

As they are always shown in a negative way, it is clear that the feminine is always negative, and the masculine is always positive. Female submission is the main attractive aspect for republicans and male dominance is the goal to strive for. Whatever goes outside of this norm will be mocked and compared to the ideal.

In Bell et all.'s 2021 research: *Ingroup Projection in American Politics: An Obstacle to Birpartisanship*, it was proven in five studies that the party's own definition of what it means to be American differs too much to establish any connection (Bell 913). Therefore, the structure of *Soyjak* and *Yes Chad* are a suitable meme format for this political structure. It highlights the differences between parties and how both parties perceive each other.

The following table demonstrates just how many different variations one can find within one singular meme format. There are multiple trans *Soyjaks* none of which are represented in a positive or neutral way, it is obvious what right wing memers think of the trans community, especially the transfems. An aspect which will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

Figure 12: Different Wojak variations

[2]

The *Soyjak* Wiki (also called Soycyclopedia) has a specific page concerning Trans people, titled "Tranny". Instead of being informational on the trans related *Soyjaks*, it merely makes fun of trans people. It underlines the running joke that trans people have a disproportionally high suicide rate, are intellectually inept, addicted to the internet, overweight or anorexic, degenerates, mentally ill, groomers, and pedophiles (*Soyjak* Wiki). The reader must remember this description, as it will be reflected in the metaphors as well as the themes. It is more than clear that the *Soyjak* creators are unable to empathise with the lives of trans people. This again is in alignment with the In- and out-groups.

This is merely an example of how meme structures are used per the content of the meme. It is one of the most common memes (as of 2022-2024) and is highly represented in the memes that have been analysed for this thesis.

[2] For a higher resolution of this figure, see Appendix 3

2.7.3. Pepe - from happy frog to right wing icon

The decision to include Pepe in this thesis was made in order to showcase that, unlike we have seen it with the *Nordic Gamer*, *Wojaks, Soyjaks*, that images that do not start out as political can quickly become so. Every single aspect of the memes can be 'politicized' and radicalized.

Another format is Pepe the Frog. He was created Matt Furie for the 2005 comic *Boy's Club*. In that comic he was merely an uplifting character, originally called "Feels Good Man". On Tumblr, and mainly 4-Chan, he quickly gained traction and was adopted by the online community and represented in a variety of different Pepe versions to be used in a variety of circumstances.

Figure 13: Feels good man, pepe

He evolved quickly from a wholesome character the "Feels good man", to being used by the Incel (involuntary celibate) community, to being an open symbol for hatred. The artist who originally drew Pepe the Frog was shocked to see his creation mutating without him being able to interfere before its image would be tarnished. After 4-Chan and Reddit became more "mainstream" (the common internet user is aware of its existence and uses it), Incels felt as if their private space was invaded and tried to keep the mainstream out – by whatever means necessary. When Pepe was used in the mainstream, their "feel good man", who helped them through the tough times, they felt attacked enough to make Pepe as undesirable as possible. So that he may be their symbol, and no one else's. Thus, memes featuring Pepe applauding 9/11, Pepe doing blackface, Pepe being sexist, Pepe being racist… were created.

This had consequently that the mainstream stopped using him, he now belonged to the far right. He became a political meme (Ready Fictions; Wavelength).

He was appropriated by a political party, by an ideology. He is a shocking example of how wholesome media can be used to spread hatred.

Matt Furie has tried different tactics to handle Pepe's controversial role in the internet world. Including Pepe's funeral (Romano), suing Alex Jones and Infowar (Wilmerhale), and forcing the author of the racist children's book "Pepe and Pede" to withdraw it from bookshelves (Flood).

2.7.4. Conclusion meme forms

It is by pointing out differences between one and another that a lot of memes make sense and gain their humour from. The way *Soyjak* and *Yes Chad* are opposing one another, on such a fundamental level that using them, like puppets to show their opinions. They fit especially well within the concept of in-and out-group. The example of Pepe can serve as a cautionary tale, it is easy to be affiliated with hatred, but harder to be freed of that cycle.

2.8. Location, location, location

Different social media platforms foster different environments for their users. This is due to the websites' public image, censorship, user-friendliness, anonymity of the user base, and the structure of the website's post-system (as per the standards used in the work of Conway et al.). Every website has an extremely specific approach to the memetic sphere and political standings, the direct result of the atmosphere the creator/founder has set up for its users.

It would not just be foolish to think that the memes that will be analysed in this thesis have found their origin in the Facebook groups, as memes often "break containment" from a niche social media to a more mainstream one (Conway et al. 11). Yet, the popularity on the distributor website is an indicator of the beliefs of the users.

2.8.1. 4-Chan

4-Chan is the social media website that received the most academic attention in matters of extremist' content. The social media site is based on 8-Chan, a now deleted social media

website that not just promised but also delivered the Wild West of the internet. It had no rules, no censorship, complete anonymity, and threads would expire after a set time. Two manifestos were posted before deadly shootings, and mass shooters were celebrated with memes and threads dedicated to them (Conway et al. 13). In contrast to 8-Chan, 4-Chan is a milder version of this concept, with the main difference being mild interaction of the owner Christopher Poole mainly to put an end to GamerGate (11). At the same time, it is the source of Q-Anon as well as said GamerGate. It was originally meant to be a platform for manga and anime fans, but it quickly became a website where people from all around the world could interact about all kinds of topics. The users need no registration, do not need a username, everything is completely anonymous, and apart from extreme violations (such as GamerGate[3]) no one is blocked, and nothing is deleted (11). Alex Ford Jr., who decided to drive his car into a group of protesters, ultimately killing Heather Heyer and injuring dozens, shared a meme about driving into protesters on his social media profile. This meme originated on 4-Chan and broke containment into mainstream social media (Conway et al. 12).

These aspects all make 4-Chan particularly attractive for extremists, while still protecting their identity. In comparison to Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram, it is a fairly small social media with a disproportionately high number of extremists.

As we do not know where the memes originate from, it is important to describe the different platforms that promote such content. 4-Chan is both notorious for extreme content and for its prominent presence in the political sphere. It is therefore of importance to give context to possible origins of the memes.

2.8.2. Facebook

In comparison to 4-Chan and Twitter/X, Facebook is a private social media where you often have to befriend someone to see their shared content or join a specific group/page to share and see their content. It is also not as anonymous as 4-Chan, as you must generate a profile, most often people decide to include their real name and real date of birth. Furthermore, in case of multiple reports of a particular post/group Facebook will either ban, or more frequently, put a temporary ban on the user (Conway et al. 8). This temporary ban is often

[3] Gamergate was an online hate campaign against women in videogames.

described as “Facebook jail” (which in itself is a metaphor) and is highly memed about, users who have recently “left Facebook jail” often wear the ban as a batch of honour, proudly announcing their “temporary” release in the group/page.

Due to this fairly private social media, it is impossible to know just how much extremist right wing content is on Facebook (8), which makes Facebook an unusually hard social media to analyse. But the algorithm that Facebook uses allows us to look at how it curates potentially extremist content for ordinary users.

Facebook’s algorithm tries to tailor the content to their user. Asking itself four questions, as they explain it on their website: “Inventory: What content has been posted by friends and publishers?”, “Signals: Who posted this story?”, “Predictions: How likely are you to engage with this post?”, and 4 “Score: How interested will people be in this post?” (Meta Business Help Centre). This means the more you and other people interact with a post, the more you will see posts like the post you have seen.[4]

By selecting specific content for their users, it is inevitable that the diversity of the content, and therefore opinions, becomes more and more limited. Meaning that the content that they are consuming will progressively become more extreme versions of their own inerests. Thus, people who are conservative or at least politically centrist can easily be radicalised. While Facebook’s employees have denied these accusations, it has been proven that Facebook does not only permit this kind of extreme content to be distributed, but its entire system is built on it (Lauer).

Exactly these kinds of algorithms used by Meta (Facebook and Instagram), which help the promotion and sharing of progressively more radical and provoking content, particularly transphobic memes, make it so the analysis of such algorithms is of utmost importance.

2.8.3. Twitter/X

Twitter, unlike Facebook is more public; your tweets are available for everyone, except if the user has been blocked by the other person. It is relatively hard to be permanently banned

[4] Meaning that if you are researching transphobic memes for your thesis, Facebook will recommend you increasingly transphobic and right-wing posts until your Facebook account is unusable and you must delete it upon completion of said thesis.

from X since Elon Musk's takeover. A famous example for this is former American president Donald Trump, who received a permanent ban, but it was quickly lifted again after Musk's rebranding (Duffy and LeBlanc). The rebrand of Twitter into X had multiple consequences. Firstly, Musk insists on freedom of speech, meaning that as long as you are not impersonating or personally threatening specific people, you are not supposed to be banned (a couple of left-wing users have been unexpectedly banned, and later again unbanned, without any explanation (Klarenberg 2024)). Therefore, the silence of left-wing voices alongside the relaxed rules creates a good climate for the breeding of extremist views.

J. M. Berger has researched the amount of right-wing X users and has detected a 600% growth between 2012 and 2016, with 25.000 followers, in June 2018 this number has increased to over 100.000 (Conway et al.7). It is not just the laissez-faire attitude that is fostering this environment, it is Elon Musk's very open political views, which include cutting his transgender daughter out of his life and his pathological need to misgender her in interviews, being a very open Trump supporter, and regularly giving speeches and posting tweets promoting his very conservative views (Fields). This all contributes to a particularly explosive social media environment.

2.8.4. Summary

It is only by analysing the reasons behind why certain social media is overrun by right-wing posters that one can understand how an environment cannot just allow these types of content to be posted but the be promoted and distributed with such an alarming efficiency. The reasoning for why Facebook was an obvious choice for this thesis is underlined by how infuriatingly easy it was to organically source transphobic memes. Albeit that this thesis and research would have just been as valid when analysing any other social media, even those not mentioned as the results might differ from the ones obtained from Facebook.

2.9. Conclusion

Considering the standing that memes occupy in society the reader might have not expected memes to have had such an important impact on society and the political standing as a whole. Since are a widespread phenomenon, it was a choice to select the memes surrounding the

USA, this was due to the highly radical political atmosphere in the country and the nearly infinite number of transphobic memes.

Some meme formats are especially well-suited for political memes, they highlight differences between the two parties while still being highly adaptable to a variety of contexts. By establishing that both the left and the right see themselves as right and the only morally correct, they demonise their opponent. The demonisation of the opponent makes the stark contrast between *Yes Chad* and *Soyjak* an ideal meme format. They demonstrated that they could hijack wholesome characters and use them for extremists' memes. Pepe was particularly attractive to hijack due to its standing within the Incel and 4-Chan community.

The platforms which the users use to share their memes have a massive impact on the outcome and popularity of a meme. Every platform has as particularly interesting effect on memes, and therefore their meme consumers. 4-Chan has a particularly intriguing mechanism to actively foster a petri dish for extremist memes, but it is not as mainstream and as popular as other social media platforms such as Facebook and X. X, after the re-branding has become incredibly forgiving of the right of “freedom of speech”, Musk actively promoted right wing politicians on his platform. This is why X has become infamous within the world of political memetics. Facebook has a fascinating way to promote its content which of its own volition, has promoted radicalising content to its users. By actively profiting off misinformation and hateful content, Facebook is a suitable source for memes to analyse and to easily gather transphobic memes in the first place.

Studies conducted on the matter of how political memes have affected outcomes of elections are highly suggesting that they have indeed not just changed the voting outcome, but also the voter outcome. This makes the analyses of political memes of significant importance.

Chapter 3: Metaphors in Discourse and Memes

3.1. Introduction

Before diving into the effects metaphors have on discourse, we must first define what exactly a metaphor is and what exactly discourse is, and why memes are considered as such. Metaphors are essential in political speeches; they embellish a straightforward message to convince their listener/voter to trust them and distrust their counterpart. After establishing what a metaphor and discourse are and how these two aspects interact with each other, I will demonstrate why I chose CMA blended metaphor analysis, and I will end with displaying how Trump has used different (conceptual) metaphors. Only by understanding these basic concepts can we tackle the more advanced application to memes, and thereafter transphobic memes.

3.2. What is discourse?

Before starting on analysing what exactly metaphors do within the discourse, we must know what one can even count as discourse, and why memes can be considered discourse and analysed as such.

Teun A. Van Dijk book *Discourse as Structure and Process Vol. 1* gives a complex and very thorough definition of what discourse is and in which fields it is analysed in. This is giving a very good overview of this often-overlooked aspect of discourse.

He determines that “the three main dimensions are: (a) language use, (b) the communication of beliefs (cognition), and (c) interaction in social situations.” (Van Dijk, 2).

Oftentimes discourse is used in the context of political speech (written or spoken), a proclamation, or any given speech towards the public.

Najma Akhther has determined in her paper *Internet memes as form of culture discourse: a rhetorical analysis on Facebook* that memes (specifically her analysis of Bangladeshi memes) are important pieces of discourse that are through the usage of visual

texts (dimension a) (Akhther, 13), discussed different topics (dimension b) (16-20), and sharing/interaction of memes (dimension c) (15) classify as memes.

3.3. Lakoff and Conceptual Metaphors

George Lakoff has successfully proven that metaphors control the way humans think and act. According to him, metaphors are formed by the brain, e.g. More is up, less is down, as the brain has a more significant association with the vertical than with quantities. As these two concepts are often used together, a connection is formed as the neurons are associated, therefore, they are connected (Lakoff, Mapping the Brain 16). Earlier studies by him and Zoltan Kövecses connect the body's reaction to metaphorical outlets. For example, emotions such as anger provoke the physical reactions of heat and warmth, which have a metaphorical consequence "boiling of rage," or sadness whose physical reaction is coldness and darkness, therefore, the metaphor of "the cold shoulder" is applicable (Lakoff, Kövecses, 196).

Conceptual metaphors connect two groups: the semantic field and the metaphor target. To see "what motivates the cognitive mappings between source and target" (Charteris-Black, 231). E.g., unemployment (metaphor target) is a disease (semantic field), the target domain ("the concept to which the metaphors refer" (Charteris-Black, 213)) is always on first place. The individual metaphor (e.g., the spread of unemployment) is barely still present in the conceptual metaphor. They are often an indicator for what metaphors might be used in the future considering how they have already been used in the past (Charteris-Black, 213).

As memes will be looked at through the lens of linguistics as well as their historical context, it is of the utmost importance to take as many aspects of the analysis into consideration as possible. Charteris-Black's analysis is using Lakoff's conceptual metaphor theory as the base of his analysis strategy. Which allows us to use other conceptual metaphors that have already been established by other researchers.

3.4. How to analyse metaphors the Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) way

In *Analysing Political Speeches*, Jonathan Charteris-Black uses the Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA) and conceptual metaphors. Enabling an easier analysis of political metaphors. Opening a different method of analysing metaphors, depending on their context. He makes the case that "metaphor is effective in public communication because it draws on the unconscious emotional associations of words and assumed values that are rooted in culture, and historical knowledge" (Charteris-Black, 202). The conceptual metaphor which was coined by George Lakoff, and the convention of its usage of it in the analysis strategy is especially suited for critical analysis (Charteris-Black 197).

Before one can deeply analyse any text, one must first identify and classify all metaphors one encounters in said text by following the steps he has outlined:

1. Identify all potential metaphors
2. Confirm or reject initial classification
3. identify novel metaphors
4. identify conventional metaphors
5. identify entrenched metaphors

One must first define what novel, conventional, and entrenched metaphors are, later we will consider what metaphors could be applied to memes, considering their unique structure:

- A novel metaphor, is a metaphor that is an incredibly uncommon metaphor, often pitched during the discourse.
- A conventional metaphor, is a metaphor that is fairly common, but often not yet in the common vernacular.
- An entrenched metaphor is a metaphor that has not just entered the common vernacular, it is often so entrenched that the speakers no longer see it as a metaphor as such. (223-224)

Charteris-Black also coined the term "ideological metaphor" in his 2017 work. An ideological metaphor "legitimates the worldview of a social group" (as Charteris-Black,

2017, in Charteris-Black 2018, 243). It often transforms a simple speech into a coherent narrative (243), this is particularly essential in transphobic metaphors. All transphobic memes are coherent as in their target domain is the same, transgender people.

In order to identify what classification a metaphor is Charteris-Black highly recommends the use of a Corpa, such as the British National Corpa (221), this would indeed be a very good suggestion - if the lingus surrounding transphobic memes were not as recent. Most corpa either only have a very limited word-count or are not as recent (most recent ones are up to 2010). Considering the ever-growing hate crimes against Transgender people, it must be assumed that the language, vocabulary, metaphors, and imagery, have grown with it.

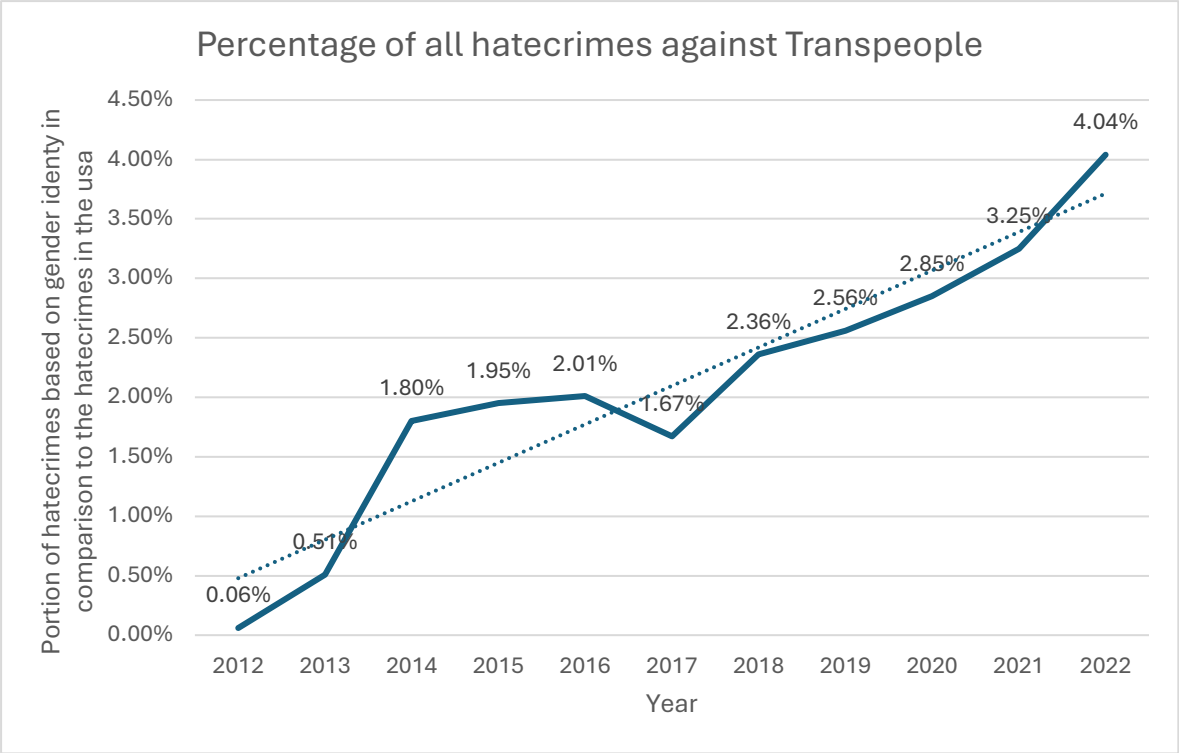


Figure 14: Diagram of hatecrime against Trans people from 2012 to 2022, Source: data from FBI

According to the data on the reported hate crimes to the FBI in the USA, hate crimes against people due to their gender identity are ever-growing. In 2012, barely 0,06% of reported hate crimes were directed towards people outside of the gender norm; in 2022, 4,04% of hate crimes were against them. This is nearly a 100% increase (CDE, FBI Crime data explorer). Therefore, it would be unwise to use linguistic data from 2010, as it would be outdated.

In order to get an accurate and recent image of the linguistic landscape surrounding transphobia one must adjust the database. My decision to solely use the analysis of transphobic memes that have been gathered from 2022 to May 2024 is in order to extract as many accurate and diverse metaphors as possible. The reader will find the datasheets in the appendix. Not all those memes will be analysed in detail as this would be outside of the grasp of this thesis. But I will reference to different linguistic peculiarities of certain memes to demonstrate that the analysed meme is not merely one of its kind, but one of a million.

3.5. How metaphors shape political discourse

According to Charteris-Black, metaphors connect two ideas that are not usually related, this to "stimulate […] some exchange or interaction between them" (201-202). It is metaphors that act upon "unconscious emotional associations" […] "which are rooted in cultural and historical knowledge" and are therefore "a highly persuasive force" (202). Due to the metaphors' highly persuasive nature the narrator uses their audience's emotions to convey their message. Depending on whether the politician has decided to use a long established metaphor that some viewers might not even register anymore as a metaphor, or a novel metaphor that they have inserted into their speech which has not been used before, their metaphor will be either be stored in the short term memory (for newer metaphors) instead of activating the long term memory (for long established metaphors) (202).

Metaphors are also able to generalise a diverse group into a stereotype. Such as saying that all transgender people are pedophiles, mentally ill, demonic, attention-seeking, and un-American. Charteris-Black gives the example of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain, and the Evil Empire, words that were coined by politicians and have since then taken over the media. They are purely negative and based on assumptions directed towards others (202). One can see how politicians who thrive on attention could use metaphors not to calm people but to agitate the public against certain often already vulnerable communities.

3.5.1 Blending theory

The tool of blending the two compared aspects has the benefit of simplifying the analysis, pointing out how two different aspects correlate and how they work as a metaphor. In the below image the metaphor of "This surgeon is a butcher" (Grady et all.), is visually analysed, demonstrating how utilising the blending framework reveals the interaction of the inputs and unveils the core of the metaphor. By comparing a surgeon whose role is to save lives to a butcher who is also using sharp instruments to cut into meat (to cut meat into pieces) is thus a very negative statement, for the doctor in question. Being able to display exactly how a metaphor works will be particularly useful in this thesis as we can understand the meme's maker's motivation better.

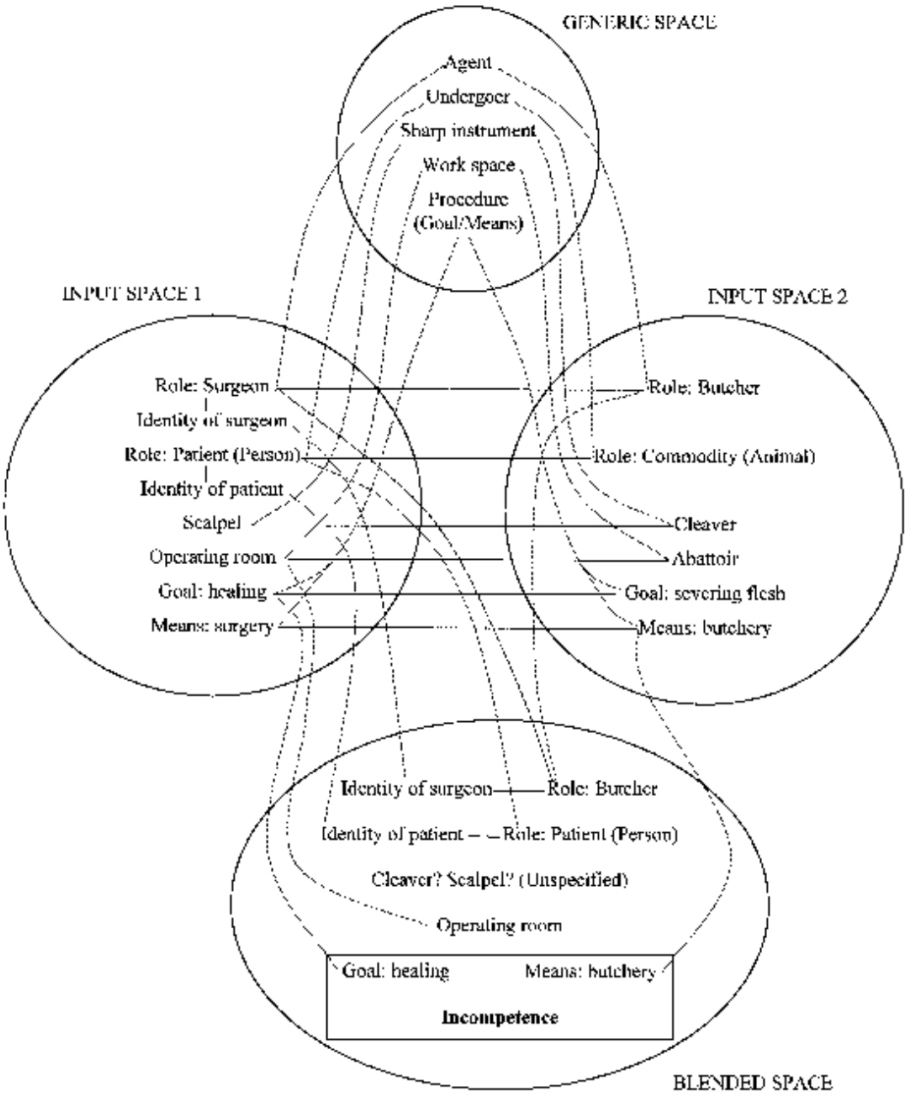


Figure 1. Conceptual integration network: Surgeon as butcher

conceptual integration network structure 1: Surgeon as butcher

This type of metaphorical analysis is particularly suitable for visual metaphors; this signifies that memes (macro-memes in our case) are well suited for this type of analysis. As it does not rely as heavily on previous metaphors (entrenched and conventional metaphors) (Charteris-Black, 236) it is also more suited for more novel metaphors as will be analysed in this thesis.

In order for the metaphor to be especially suitable for the blending theory to be applied at Grady et al. has composed the 5 'optimality principles':

1. "Integration: the scenario in the blended space should be a well- integrated scene.
2. Web: Tight connection between the blend and the inputs should be maintained […].
3. Unpacking: It should be easy to reconstruct the inputs and the network of connections, given the blend.
4. Topology: Elements in the blend should participate in the same sorts of relations as their counterparts in the inputs.
5. Good Reason: If an element appears in the blend, it should have meaning." (Grady et al. 425).

It is furthermore detailed that using the "Metonymic Tightening" rule dictates that the "relationships between elements from the same input should become as close as possible within the blend" (426). This rule applies when the researcher constructs the blended space, as it is essential that the cross-domain relationships are visible to the reader as such. If this is not achieved by the composer of the blend, the blend is void and should be disregarded.

The Conceptual Blending Theory often uses simple conceptual metaphors in order to "[create] more complex conceptual blends. And identifying a metaphorical relationship holding between source and target elements is sometimes only the starting point for analysing a blend" (430). One must therefore finish one's thought process at every step of the analysis to extract the most accurate descriptions.

While researchers often reference conceptual metaphors, their presence in metaphors are not a given. As we have already established, conceptual metaphors are often based on entrenched metaphors and it is therefore hard to use them for novel metaphors. This is why it is especially hard to use conceptual metaphors as the basis of the blending theory in memes.

The author will refer to possible conceptual metaphors in memes if they are both present and applicable for the blended space. But they will not be a main part of the analysis.

3.6. Applying the metaphor analysis theory to memes

In “Metaphors we live by,” Lakoff argues the conceptual metaphor, claiming that every decision, whether that be linguistically or cognitive, is dictated by metaphors. It claims that the way we see the world depends on how we use metaphors to explain it. For example, when arguing with someone we often use metaphors related to wars, such as “His criticism was right on target,” “He shot down all of my arguments” (Lakoff 17). This also translates into the way we can analyse memes. In contrast to discourse or academic essays, memes often translate the author's feelings not just into text, but also into imagery, facilitating an accurate translation from thought into speech, therefore meme. Memes, due to their usage of images fit perfectly into Lakoff’s definition of metaphors as “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” (Lakoff 18)

Forceville has concluded that pictorial metaphors have different characteristics from verbal ones, pictorial ones: have a greater emotional influence on the consumer, more universally understood, are quicker understood, and use their visual aspect to shape the metaphor in a unique way (Younes, Altakhaineh).

Just like the concept of time equals financial value (time is money), society has shaped the way we talk and write about matters close to our heart. As memes often reflect issues that matter to the memer, it reflects the atmosphere they surround themselves in. Thus, the memes of two opposite memers can differentiate in multiple ways, but as they both have access to mainstream meme culture, they often use similar formats, often reacting to what the opponent claimed, mocking imagery, opinion, existence, and format choice. It is of importance to acknowledge any and all irony in memes to avoid missing out on potential commentary.

It is thus that the usage of the blended metaphor analysis is the most suited for this memetic work. The two concepts can easily be connected, and their different idiosyncrasies analysed to therefore explain as to why a specific metaphor in a meme works.

Memetics are often explained using solely the conceptual metaphor (Piata, Younes & Altakaineh, Kirk, Martynyuk & Meleshchenko) which is built on a solid framework. It has therefore a firm metaphoric standing and aligns with the academic convention.

As the blended theory is not limited to textual metaphors but can also be applied to imagery, it is not strictly necessary to fully dissect a meme into text. Solely deriving the metaphor(s) of the meme is enough to establish all four aspects of the blended metaphor.

The following table summarises the different consequences of the theories when applied to memes, it is a simplified list, pointing out the main effects of each theory in respect to the memetic studies:

Table 1: Table of metaphor theories, their studies, strength and weaknesses

	Pro	Con	Study
Conceptual Metaphor Analysis	well established metaphors proven to work rich database Very objective	old database not detailed Less well suited for images No novel applications possible vague lack of interpretation possible	Metaphors and metonymies used in memes to depict COVID-19 in Jordanian social media websites Afakh Said Younes & Abdel rahmen Mitib Altakhaineh Decoding the metaphor of Internet memes Stephen Anurudu & Isioma Maureen Chiluwa
Critical Metaphor Theory	especially suited for political analysis	based on the conceptual metaphor theory	When metaphor becomes a joke: Metaphor journey from political ads to internet memes Anna Piata

	well suited for images	harder to compare	
No Theory	no restrictions	no guideline not redouble unscientific very subjective	Memes as multimedial metaphors: a relevance theory analysis Kate Scott 2021
Blended Metaphor Theory	easier to find the motivation applicable to imagery easy to replicate less subjective	novel application to memes, no research Strict guidelines	/

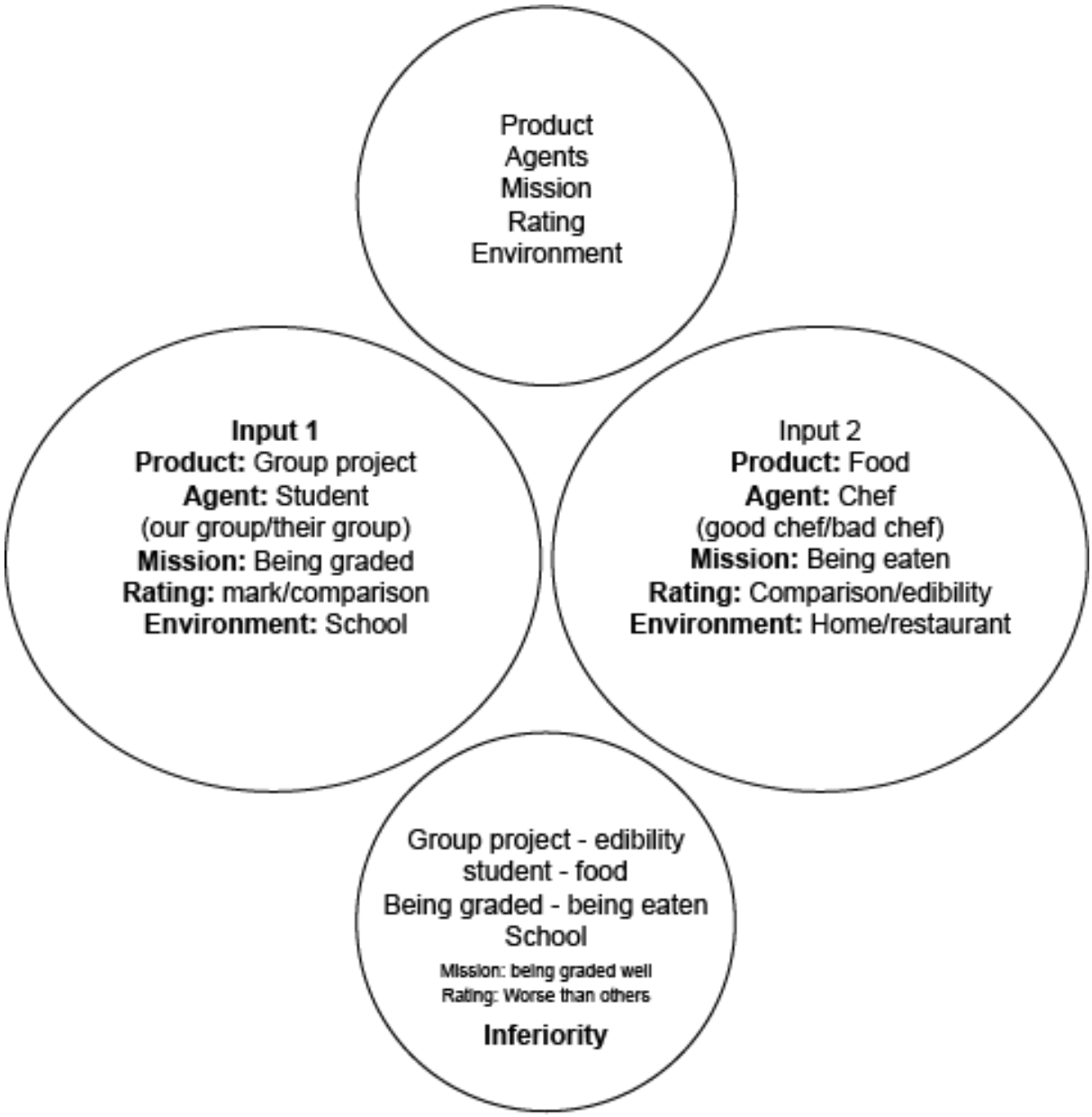
3.7. Example on how to use the blending theory on memes:

As the blending theory has, to my knowledge, not yet been used on memes, I will establish how memes will be analysed. The following meme is not part of the transphobic meme study that this thesis is based on but will give the reader a clear idea on how the blending theory affects visual metaphors.

Let us take PTK4THEWIN's meme on memedroid as an example:

Figure 15: Example meme, school project, source: memedroid, user PTK4THEWIN's

It is a macro (image) meme displaying two burgers, one is visually more appealing while the one on the left looks less appealing, but still edible. The conceptual metaphor being schoolwork is food/hamburgers. We have thus established a basic conceptual metaphor. This comparative meme can, and in my opinion should, be split up in two metaphors: my group's project is a worse hamburger and every other's group project is a better burger.



conceptual integration network structure 2: example meme

3.8. Conceptual metaphors that were often used by Donald Trump

As most of the memes that will be analysed and categorised in this thesis stem from Trump supporters it is important to give the metaphors that he has used in different speeches a closer look.

In Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko's study *Conceptual Metaphors in Donald Trump's Political Speeches* three of Trump's earlier speeches' conceptual metaphors are analysed to determine how his persona and his politics are represented within. Their analysis shows that his usage of metaphors is underlining his public persona as a saviour type that wants to control the masses (Pilyarchuk & Onysko 118-124). In comparison to the more-than holy self-loving metaphor he used for himself, he mainly referred to immigrants as animals (106, 112-113), refugees and drugs as liquids that make the US impure (107), and emphasises physical pain and diseases in his metaphors, with him in the saviour position (113).

When taking a closer look at the metaphors Trump has used to describe people he does not agree with, or who he considers as less worthy than "Americans," it becomes clear what his opinion towards *them* is. Similarly, to the in - and out theory which has been previously mentioned to explain why certain meme formats are especially well suited for political memes, Oliver & Rahn (as in Pilzarchuck & Onysko) explain that "'we' is always strongly emphasised and 'they' are demonised as part of a nationalist agenda (OIiver & Rahn 2016, 191, as in Pilyarchuck & Onysko 110). The memers who create and share transphobic material are often Trump supporters as Trump's political stance is very openly anti-trans (Dallara, 2014). It is therefore not overtly surprising that the metaphors Trump uses in his speeches are also represented in his followers' memes, as will be obvious when analysing the memes later in this thesis. As this would be a whole other thesis, I will not go into detail but identifying metaphors that both Trump used during his speeches, and which have been transferred to transphobic memes will show just how metaphors travel from media to media.

As there have been no studies focusing specifically on transphobic metaphors in Trump, or anyone else's speeches we have to work with the peer reviewed papers that are at our disposal. Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko's paper is both recent enough and concentrates on a very public and memed person, making it an appropriate referential work for this thesis. Future work on this subject will hopefully be able to use a more specific reference work.

Trump has been using a plethora of metaphors, often interchangeably, as he sees everyone who is not in his In-group part of the out-group. Comparing his immigration remarks to transphobic memes, is while not ideal, logically sound.

3.8.1. Me, Me, Me, how Trump sees himself

In this section we will take a closer look at how Trump sees himself and what metaphor he uses on himself, this will later be reflected in the concept Voice of Reason, which will be explained in the findings of this thesis.

He sees himself as an engineer/ repairperson, implying that the nation is broken and in need of repair, something that other politicians are unable to repair - only Trump can fix the nation. (Pilyarchuk & Onysko 117-118)

He also underlines how he will lead the nation as a metaphorical constructor/ controller, with jobs being reintroduced to the nation and bringing peace and safety back (119-120).

Additionally, in his metaphorical usage, he depicts himself as the healer of the nation, the nation therefore being sick, a metaphor that is fundamentally emotional for humans as health is fundamental for living and thriving (120). He describes everything that is subjectively negative in his view, such as taxes, social division, or 'bad' agreements. Only he can save the nation from these ailments (120-121).

Furthermore, he sees himself as a saviour/warrior, protecting America from the enemies outside and within (such as Hillary Clinton), and standing up for the people within (school, workers) (121-122).

As he uses the animal metaphor for immigrants, it is not surprising that he uses the animal tamer metaphor on himself. He states he will control different aspects of the economy and the workforce (Pilyarchuk & Onysko 123).

3.8.2. The Blame Game

Taking a closer look at his views on other groups, the others anyone who has conflicting views with him is described as a danger to his nation (establishing fear in the listener) (Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko, 110). In order to achieve this, he uses the container metaphor as if the USA cannot contain the number of immigrants (110). One example of these containment/liquid metaphors is "Immigration is a flood ("existing massive refugee flows coming into our country"; AS) (111), here refugees are not just overflowing the metaphorical container, but are a natural disaster, a danger to the natives. As stated in Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko's study, Demata has point[ed] out, [that] the

flood metaphor is a frequent figure of speech in populist political discourse (Demata 2017, as in Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko 111).

His clear distinction between Americans (we) and non-American (them) is a reoccurring theme in his speeches. Ferrari, as in Katerzna Pilyarchuk and Alexander Onysko, points out that if the outside, and therefore the people populating it, is dangerous, the inside, i.e., Americans, must be safe (112). This logic of us vs them is transferable to the concept of cis/catholic being good and having a right to be in the container (the society), and people outside of this traditional gender ideology must be on the outside of the container.

Besides the containment metaphor, he utilises the animal metaphor, claiming that immigrants are in fact, not human, but animals. Dehumanising them and putting himself as well as his followers in front of whoever he criticises (113). People who agree with him are superior and more worthy than others. He uses this metaphor specifically for immigrants and refugees, according to Aristotle and Plato's "Great Chain of Being", which "consists of 5 levels: God – humans – animals – plants – inorganic matter" (113), meaning he sees them hierarchy below him. This Chain of Being, and its metaphorical abuse is reminiscing of the Nazi's interpretation of Nietzsches' *Übermensch* and *Untermensch*. According to the Hitler humans can be separated into different categories, their blood (origin) being the deciding factor, Jews (which he describes as serpents), Slavs, being of lower statue, sub-human, then Aryan (or Atlantean), with the ultimate goal having a society of *Übermenschen* (Spielvogel, Redles). The idea of some humans being better than others, or not human at all, is by far not a new idea and to use the metaphor of animals, or simply "inorganic matter", to describe group of people that are "beneath" another group of people is a logical, and de-humanising way to establish dominance over some, if not all.

3.9. Conclusion metaphors in discourse

Metaphors are used in political discourse due to their persuasive nature which stimulates emotion in the listener aka. - the voter. It is particularly easy for the politician to make use of already existing stereotypes and over-generalise groups, oftentimes this being a minority. We have taken a closer look at what discourse is and concluded that memes can be considered such. We established that the hate crimes against transgender people have gained traction in the last decade, which renders old Corpa useless for metaphorical analysis we therefore have to make a database using all of the memes that have been found concerning the topic. After having considered multiple theories to analyse metaphors, the blended metaphor theory has been chosen. It is when taking a closer look at the metaphors Trump

used that we notice patterns, in which he puts himself on a pedestal from where he can suppress everything that he deems against his personal values. Considering the MAGA's campaigns' very open anti-trans stance, it is only natural to assume that a lot of memers take creative inspiration from him, therefore also shaping the transphobic memes studied in this thesis. It has been proven that due to the novelty of transphobic linguistics, and therefore also the metaphors that we cannot rely on established conceptual metaphors, the conceptual blending strategy is more applicable to this subject.

Chapter 4 Transphobic memes and metaphors

4.1. Introduction

It is at this point of the thesis that we can dive into the subject at hand. This will not be an extensive list of what metaphors were found, but a look into some common metaphors within the realm of transphobic memes.

When choosing memes, I followed Grady et al. 5 optimality principles when constructing the blended sphere in order to have accurate results. I decided to only choose memes that have clear metaphors and analysed them in the view of the OC, which is important as one can interpret different metaphors depending on the point of view of the reader. That being said, the memes chosen are highly offensive. This aspect will not be further analysed in order to accurately portray the maker's meaning and not my personal opinion. The divergence of interpretations of memes can be displayed with the following meme:

Figure 16: Trump mugshot t-shirt, source: Zealous Memes

Both, the people favouring Trump and not sympathising with Trump were wearing t-shirts of Donald Trump's mugshot when he was officially arrested. Like a real-life meme, so to say. A piece of pop-culture that has been shared in two vastly different spheres, for vastly different reasons. One group to display that he is a criminal, not suited for such a high position, the other group to show that they are standing with Trump despite/ because he has been arrested. It is thus that one must not let emotions take the reign, but the OC's view. So, for the sake of this thesis: we are on Trump's side and hate transgender people.

The structure of the analyse has been chosen in order to simplify the readers' experience. They will be structured according to the general theme of the metaphor. While researching the metaphors, it became fairly quickly obvious that the metaphors were based upon the OP's subjective opinions about the trans community, but also themselves.

It is in this part of the thesis that the reader will be made aware of why certain psychological phenomena that have been discussed in earlier parts have been underlined as important. The fear and hatred are not without reason.

Due to the limits of this work, I cannot analyse all of the metaphors that have been found; therefore, a complete list of the metaphors will be put at the end of this work, including the frequency of them within the meme pool at hand. This allows the writer of the thesis to take a closer look at very common metaphors and metaphors worthy of research. Leaving room for other researchers to add to the blended metaphors with their own schematics or additional metaphors found. As memes, like society, are always evolving it would be foolish to assume that this is a complete list.

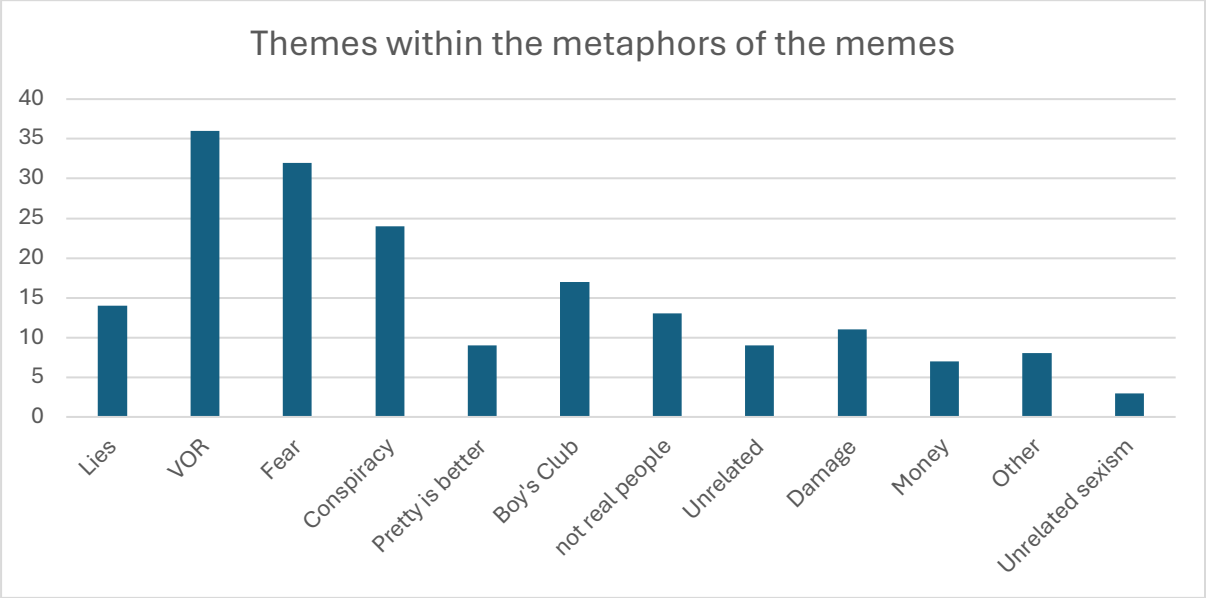
As the blending theory relies on a description of the different inputs of the metaphor, we have to consider what transgender people are from the perspective of the memer. It is impossible to directly contact any of the original memers, and it would well be behind the scope of this thesis. Instead, I decided to use the previously mentioned *Soyjak*Wiki article about "Trannies." Besides being a purposefully offensive website, it also gives multiple references to different articles on the *Soyjak*Wiki, just like Wikipedia. The contributors to the article have put a fair amount of effort into it, outlining the position of trans people (which they also call "commiepaedotroons" (*Soyjak*Wiki)) within the the online meme community. I will refer to that website when stating transphobic concepts for the inputs.

4.2. Findings

It is at this point that it becomes obvious that the metaphors Trump has been using in his speeches are in accordance with the metaphors of the analysed memes. At the core of the

metaphors are both the superiority of themselves, the dehumanisation of trans people, and projected fears.

Table 2: Themes within the metaphors of the



The following chart is taking every single meme's metaphor into consideration; the most interesting and relevant themes will be analysed in this chapter.

Themes such as Boy's Club, Unrelated sexism will not be analysed in this thesis, they are research projects that warrant their own space. Nevertheless, we can draw indicators form these themes.

The theme Boy's Club is referring to memes that use media that are more male-centric (such as Lord of the Rings, or Marvel). Due to the sheer number of memes in this category, it can be assumed that the memers are mostly men.

The theme of unrelated sexism indicates that while most memes are indeed solely transphobic, there are cases where memes are both based on transphobia and sexism. This overlap means that the same people who make the transphobic memes also make sexist memes. It is important to note that while I did not count Pretty is better in this category of sexism, this category would also have appeared if the topic of this thesis would not have been transphobia, but sexism.

4.2.2. The Devil is in the Big Picture

Analysing every single metaphor would not only be outside the scope of this thesis, but it would also compromise the readability of this work. Therefore, I categorised them, as

previously mentioned, to the essence of their blended space. Only focusing on the memes, and not their metaphors, would give us a useless number of details, making a meaningful study impossible. Which is why only general themes and particularly interesting metaphors will be analysed, not every singly meme. Further research may be conducted about specific metaphors and more specific memes.

4.2.3. Liar, Liar, gender on fire

Fifteen of the metaphors are concerning the thematic of deceit and lies. Trans identifying people often change their whole appearance, their hormones, hair colour, and have access to gender specific areas (such as bathrooms, toilets, …), being untrue to their gender assigned at birth (GAaB). It is specifically the access to female only, (not male only) spaces that are the most concerning for the OG artists of the memes.

The debate of banning trans-women from using female-only spaces is based upon the fear of men abusing this "loophole" solely to get access to said spaces and endanger cis-women and children. Famous author Joanne K. Rowling has publicly stated her strong belief that trans women are not equal to cis-women and are in fact dangerous to women. This statement in combination with her being a self-proclaimed feminist, classifies her as a TERF (Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist) (J.k. Rowling on Twitter). The reason therefore why the thematic of Lies and Deceit are very present in the memes is partially due to their makers' assumption that trans women who, from their perspective, are men who lie about their gender, and men are inherently dangerous to women.

There is a clear interplay between transphobia and sexism in this instance. As it would mean that women are unable to defend themselves against men and have to be protected from such danger. The "Young America's Foundation" shared a meme that specifically addresses this fear and the need for men to defend their women and children. The meme states that the trans woman did not just use the bathroom, but that she "identified as a woman" which gives her the right to use the women's bathroom. The father uses the same logic, of "I identify as, therefore I am", and claims that he is the Tooth Fairy, which he is not, therefore accusing the trans woman of lying about her true identity in order to get access to the women's bathroom where she would be a danger to the child.

Figure 17: meme dad of the year, Appendix code 74, source: Young America's Foundation

Trans-women being displayed as liars and deceivers is more than just about the opinion that trans-women are men in dresses, but rather that trans-women are dangerous men who use the costume of womanhood in order to endanger cis women, something exclusively men are able to do, this is according to TERF.

With this logic in mind, the following metaphors have been chosen in order to explain the theme: Trans people are clowns, and Transgender people are people with dyed hair.

Metaphor 1: Transpeople are clowns

The metaphor of trans women, notably not trans men, being clowns is ever present in the memetic sphere. It is often a visual of a trans woman wearing makeup and not passing.

The best-known clown's makeup consists of a deeply red make-up around their mouth, blue make-up around their eyes, and a white foundation. A very commonly used character that is using clowns as its main inspiration is the *Trans-Clown-Wojak*.

Figure 18: trans wojak, clown

Some commonly used trans-*Soyjaks* characters have those features. It is thus that I will use the blending metaphor analysis in order to give a better insight into the clown metaphor.

The criteria of Agent, Appearance, Motion/stillness, Societal Standing, and Role in Society have been selected as they illuminate both the similarities and distinctions between the two subjects. Trans women are often subjected to societal perceptions akin to those of clowns, frequently dismissed and not taken seriously by the broader society.

In terms of Appearance, both trans women and clowns undergo significant alterations that are overtly exaggerated and non-conventional. This distinctiveness becomes a focal point for societal scrutiny and judgment.

Regarding motion/stillness, the comparison becomes more nuanced. Clowns deliberately modify their appearance to entertain others, engaging in a continuous process of transformation to fulfil their role. In contrast, trans women alter their appearance from their assigned gender at birth to align with their gender identity. While both undergo transformations in appearance, the motivations differ: clowns change for the sake of performance, while trans women alter their appearance to express their identity and feel more aligned with their true selves more authentically.

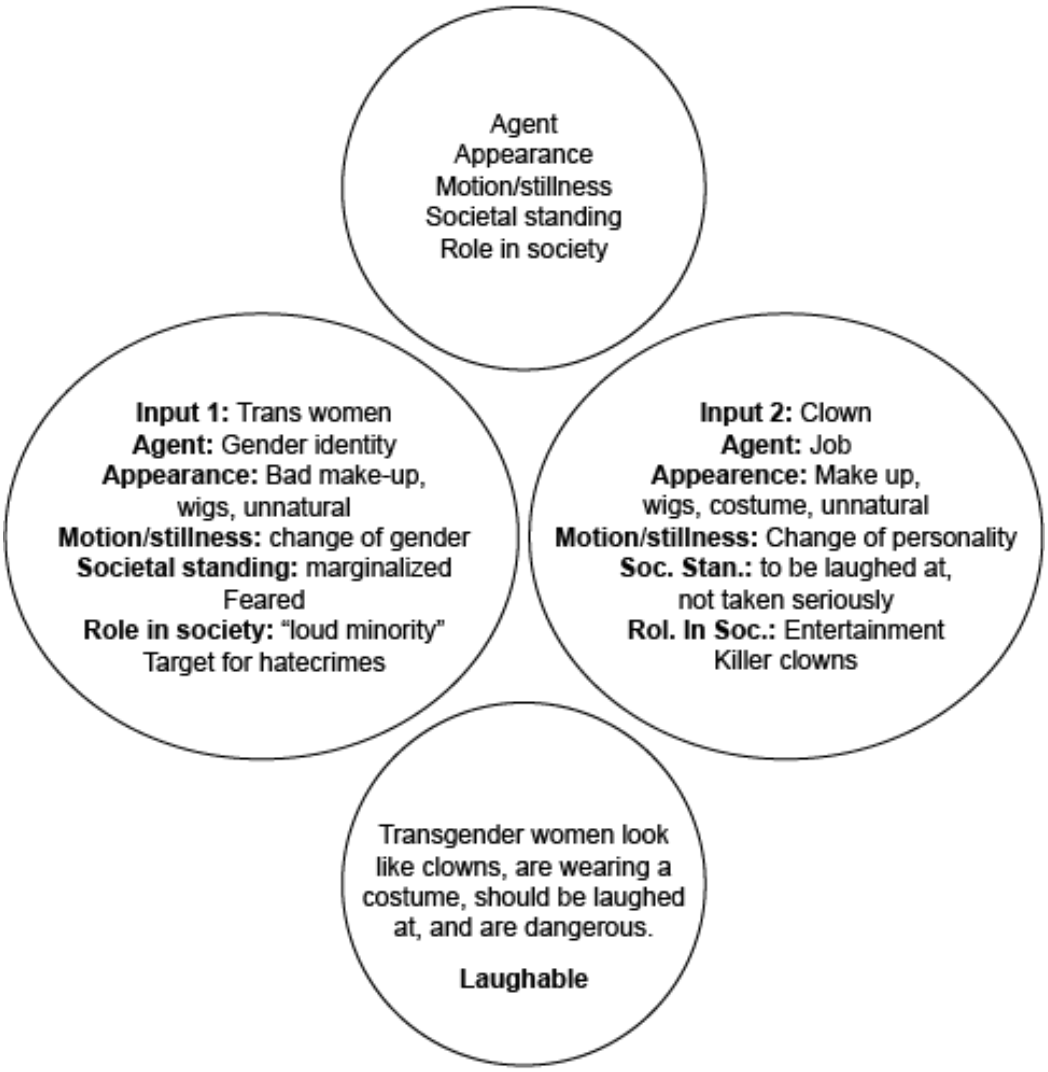
When examining Societal Standing, clowns are often viewed as figures of ridicule, performing for laughter and amusement, thus occupying a status that is inherently linked to being the subject of humour. In a similar vein, trans women frequently experience societal marginalisation and are often treated with derision or as subjects of humour, though the reasons for this societal treatment are rooted in prejudice and a lack of understanding rather than intentional performance.

Through the examination of their Role in society of both the clown and the transgender women, we notice a stark difference. According to the *Soyjak* wikipedia, transgender people are a “loud minority,” taking up a lot of space trying to “spread the troon virus” (Soywiki). Therefore, society chose them as a target for hateful memes, making them an unwilling source of entertainment. Clowns’ main objective is to entertain and to make people laugh, they practice to amuse their clients. The metaphor makes usage of this contrast of intentionally and unintentionally being the “butt of a joke.”

The danger trans women seem to pose to children and women, can be reflected to the danger of the killer clowns of the mid 2010s. While this is not something that is specifically mentioned in the chosen meme, it is a noticeable similarity. The New York Times reported that the killer clowns tried to lure children into the woods with candy (Mele, NYT). It has been theorised that the killer clown sightings were a case of ‘mass hysteria’, and not an actual danger to anyone (Myers as in Mele, NYT).

This comparison highlights the complex interplay between societal perceptions, appearance, and role, emphasising how both groups challenge conventional norms but do so for vastly different reasons.

Metaphor 2: Trans people are people with dyed hair



conceptual integration network structure 3: Trans women are Clowns

Figure 19: What Trans people think they look like, meme,Source: Stephen Lee, Facebook Appendix code AB68,

The most prevalent metaphor is trans people are people with dyed hair. This finding, as basic of a metaphor as it is, shows that when trying to visualise and other trans people in memes

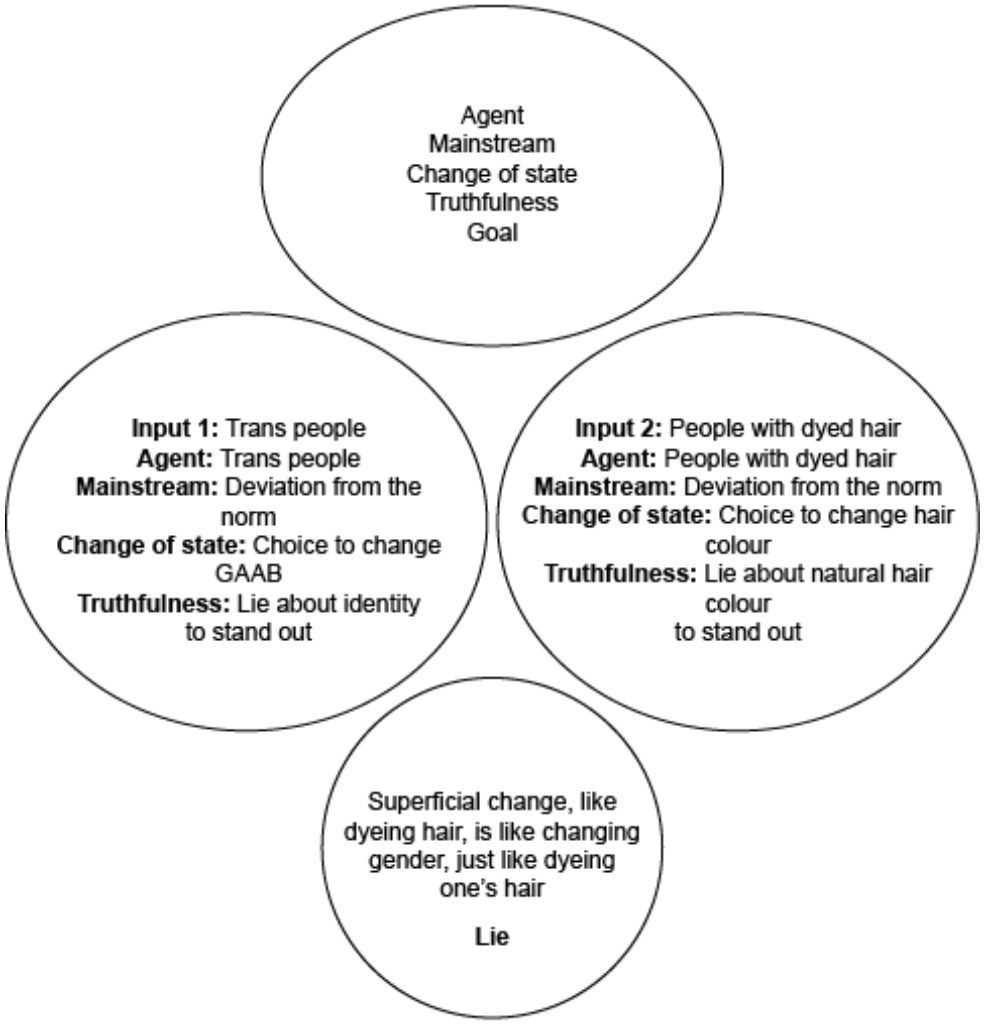
they use brightly coloured hair to easily achieve this. All of the memes featuring dyed hair have unnatural colours of dyed often green, blue, pink, purple, or red. This is a stereotype often associated with trans people and speaking in regard to my personal social circle including a large portion of the Icelandic trans community, there is some accuracy to this. However, when taking a closer look at our blended space, we can see why this is not just a (true) stereotype.

Based upon this example of blended metaphor theory, we can make multiple assumptions both about transgender individuals and people with dyed hair. Based upon the criteria: mainstream, change/constant, truthfulness, and attention, we can draw the conclusion that the OP of the memes which have the metaphor of transgender people are people with dyed hair has an intense mental connection between these two aspects. The superficial change of dying your hair is the same for the OP, as a transgender person changing the way they perceived by other. As transgender people often stand out from cis people due to being gender-nonconforming, so do people who dye their hair unnatural colours, giving the impression that transgender people only change their appearance for the subsequent attention. Furthermore, the change of gender assigned at birth, just like the bright hair colour can be seen as acts against nature. To change one's gender, something most people are born with, just like the hair colour one has to customise the very essence of oneself. Therefore, acting against nature itself. As the underlying hair colour and the assigned gender at birth are still the same and do not change, both groups are untruthful to themselves and others about their appearance.

While on the surface, the metaphor may seem random, when taking a closer look through the lens of the blending metaphor theory, we determined a much more detailed analysis This is not just an (accurate) stereotype of transgender people dying their hair, it is an insight on the OPs perspective on trans people.

We can conclude that, according to the memer, transgender people are not the mainstream, are attention seeking, unnatural, and are ultimately being untruthful. Using the concept of the in and out theory, mentioned in the previous chapter, we can determine how the maker of the meme sees themselves. They are "the norm", "the truther", and they have accepted their body.

This is a good example of how a blended space is interesting even with trivial metaphors, but ultimately does not fit into the conceptual metaphors Trump used during his speeches.



conceptual integration network structure 4: Trans people are people with dyed hair

Figure 20: hobbit meme, dyed hair, source: Lord Of the Rings memes with politically incorrect themes, appendix code AB40

4.2.4. The Voice of Reason, the cis are back at it

In order to properly explain the position cis people, see themselves as, I will use the term: The Voice of Reason, shortened to VoR. Which is in itself a metaphor. As cis people see themselves, much like Trump, as the logical one, the truthful one, the saviour, and the healer of the nation, it is not farfetched to assume that they think that they are right, and the "Woke" are automatically in the wrong.

Often meme characters are place holders for the OP, therefore they identify themselves with whatever the "better"/more morally/logically sound character is. They are therefore the VoR. This metaphor is thus fairly common, considering the high status that cis people see their own group as (see chapter 2).

Like previous categories some memes are in multiple of those metaphors e.g., Mr. Rogers is VoR, but at the same time that meme is also part of the metaphor group of old white man/*Tradwife* is the VoR. This leads to the situation that we will use the over-category to explain the bigger picture, using under-categories to give examples on how they are used in memes. This tends to overgeneralise some white men/*Tradwives*, as it will be shown in the findings.

The concept of VoR is reminiscent of Trump's own self-image as well as the in-and out-group theory that have been discussed earlier in this thesis. This part of the findings acts as a comparison to what trans people are not. Just like Trump's speeches about external "threats" such as immigrants, women, queer people, education, or socialism, often reveal a lot about himself, so do the meme makers when criticising trans people.

Metaphor 1: *Tradwives* represent the ideal society B

To be a *Tradwife* is often considered a personal preference that some women inherently have. This goes back to a simpler life where their husband is the breadwinner, and the wife is at home taking care of raising the children and running the household. After the 1950s, the steady rise of women in the workforce meant that the role of women changed drastically. While it is often speculated that women joined the workforce to add income to the household, as the wages were dropping, women started working before the wages of the single-earner households had dropped. Women did not have to work but wanted to become more independent. (Samuelson, Los Angeles Times) To see a return to women choosing to raise their children full-time instead of choosing a career, constitutes a reason for concern for women's rights.

It is not just a set-back for women, it is, as they are (in this thesis) in judgement towards trans-women. As multiple other metaphors show that transness is perceived as "modern" and a "trend", it goes in direct conflict of *Tradwives*. While a trans woman could choose to be a stay-at-home mother and be reliant on her husband, she would not fit into the image of a traditional (in this case cis) woman. She is unable to give birth, and is, according to what traditional men (according to the metaphor analysis in memes) not a "real woman".

What further sticks out is the importance of children, their safety, their well-being, as well as the importance of them being part of the society. As the example meme exemplifies the need for the child to fit into the traditional society (desire of daughter to be a boy, and the mother denying him his freedom), it is not just about the well-being of the child, it is about the child fitting into a society of yesterday.

When comparing this to Trump speeches, there is a parallel to him "healing" the nation, as if the country once was healthy and is now sick. It is a but a desire to go back to simpler times, reversing the change that has caused the disease. *Tradwives* have the same desire of both reversing the change of modern society by going back to a simpler time and taking out different aspects that they dee as untraditional and unhealthy, such as transness.

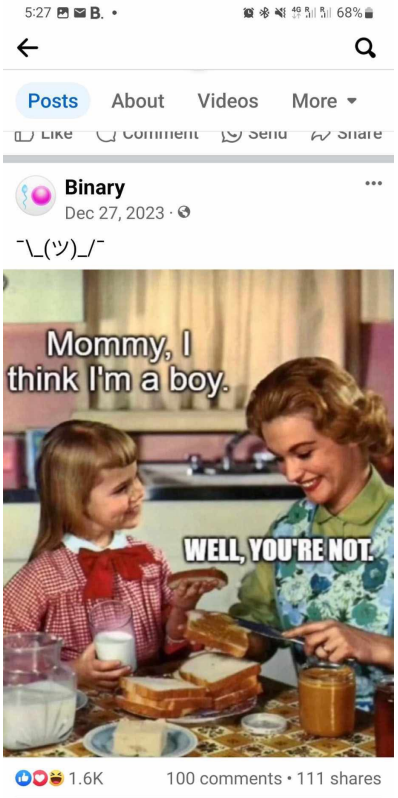
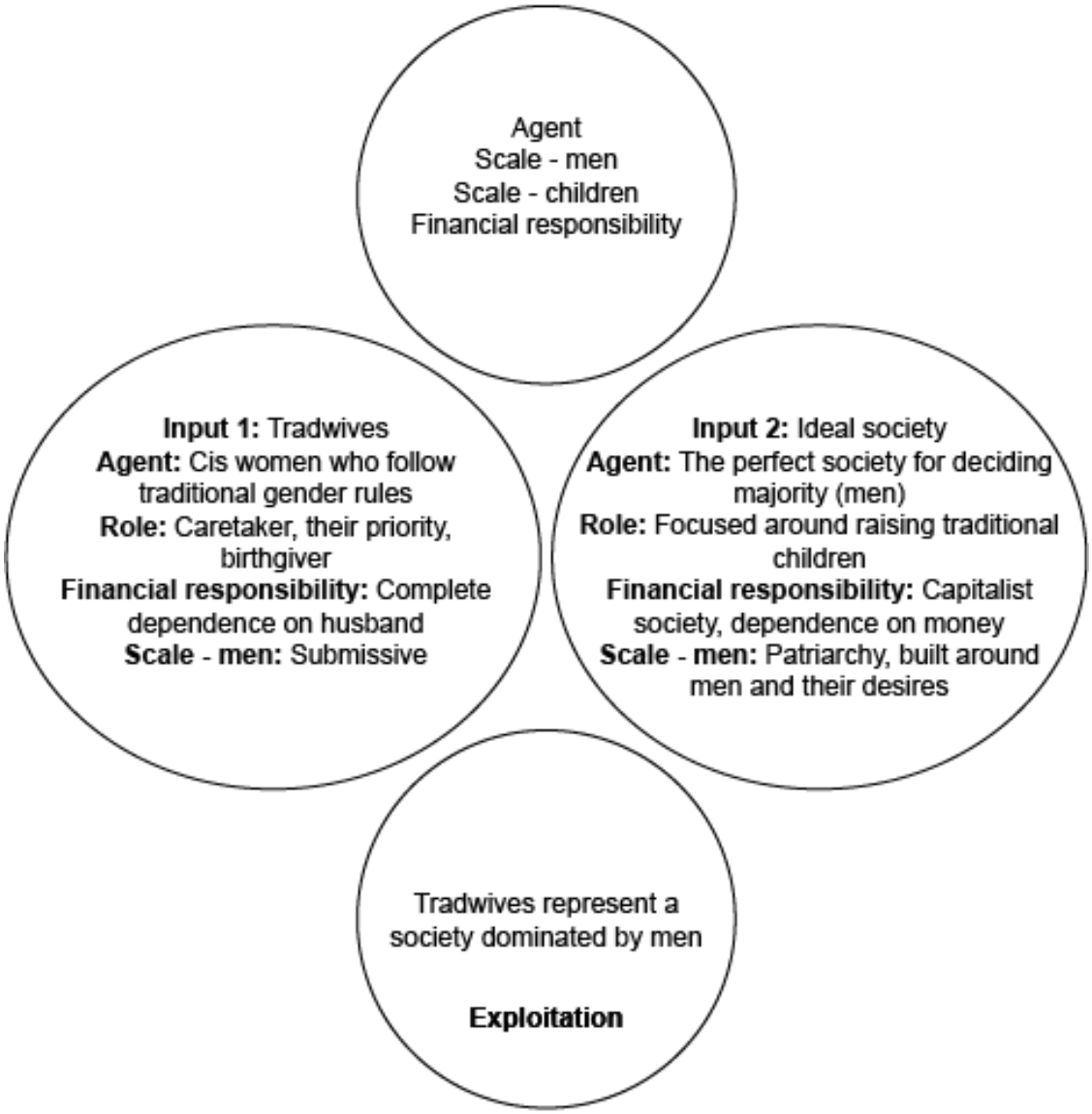


Figure 21: Meme: Mommy, I think I'm a boy, source: Binary, Appendix Code AB46

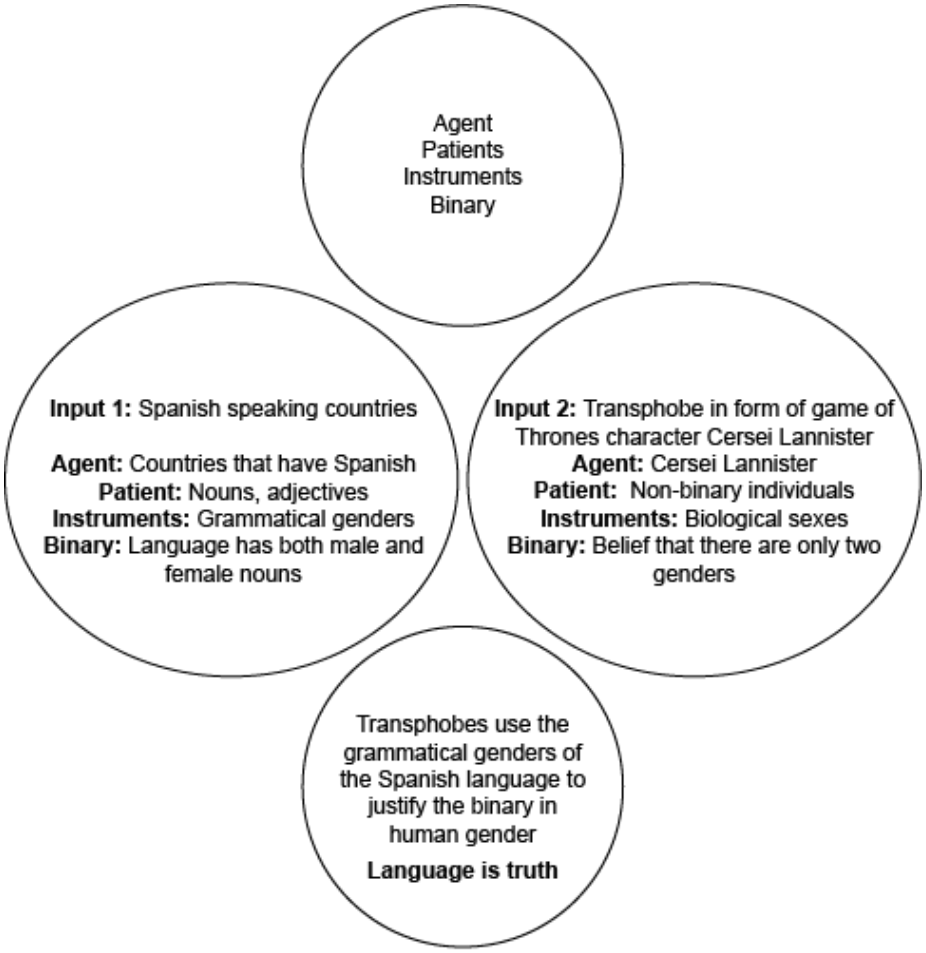


conceptual integration network structure 5: Tradwives are ideal society

Metaphor 2: Transphobes are Spanish speaking countries

The metaphor of Transphobes are Spanish speaking countries is not a well-represented metaphor (in fact it is the sole of its kind), but it exemplifies an important linguistic aspect.

To use an unrelated theme to justify the opinion that there are only two genders is very prominent within the metaphors. To compare linguistics with the concept of gender is a fallacy, going against the logic the OPs often praise themselves on. The binary aspect of the Spanish language and the bigoted view on gender, seem to be the centre point of this.



conceptual integration network structure 6: Spanish Speaking Countries are Transphobe in form of Games of Thrones character Cersei Lannister

Figure 22: Meme Games of Thrones, source: Western Chauvinist Memes Limited Edition, Appendix code: A10

4.2.5. This enormous woman will devour us all!

The theme of fear is once again emerging within this thesis, with the difference that the fear is not projected towards what trans people could do. But what the acceptance of trans people could do. The fear of losing the traditional values, as well as the values not of the meme maker, but the meme makers' parents or even grandparents lived in, is very present within the memes.

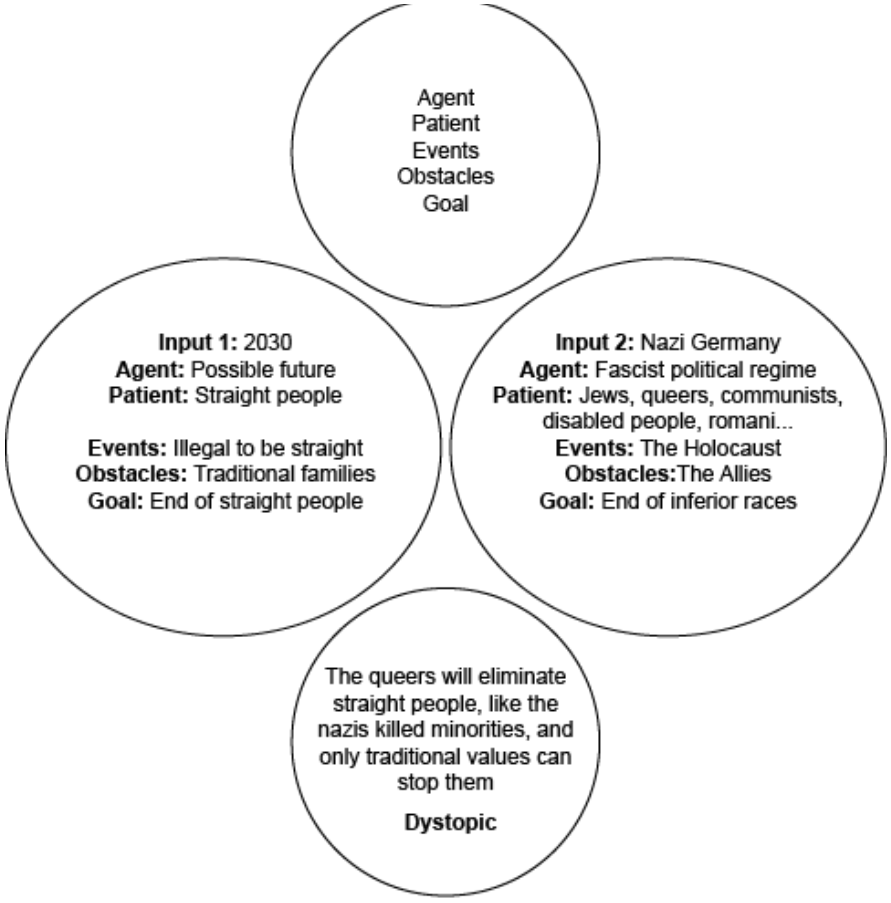
Bart Bonikowksi and Oscar Stuhler have analysed nostalgia during U.S. Presidential elections, they discovered that Trump did not only set a new record in his 2016 presidential run for using references to nostalgia, but he used it as a weapon against minorities. Additionally, they determined that "[…] Donald Trump appears to have adopted nostalgia, populism, and low national pride from mainstream political discourse and bundled them with explicit nationalism […] and authoritarianism […] (Bonikowksi, Stuhler1286).

The weaponization of nostalgia is also one of the main aspects of the memes, as previously discussed with the example of the *Tradwife*, trans people are often seen as incompatible with the past. Therefore, the OPs have to resort to nostalgia in order to feel at ease and superior to minorities, again.

Therefore, the following metaphors are very telling of the OPs fear of reality and refusal to accept change.

Metaphor 1: 2030 is nazi[5] Germany

Figure 23: Nazi Germany, source: politically incorrect millenials, Appendix code: AB22



conceptual integration network structure 7 : 2030 is nazi Germany

[5] I refuse to capitalize nazis, for obvious reasons

The blended space of "The queers will eliminate straight people, like the nazis killed other minorities, and only traditional values can stop them", is, while extensive, a very clear indicator of how inclusivity has been villainised. The usage of Michael Fassbender famous line in the movie Inglorious Bastards, has been changed from "You're sheltering Jew…." To "You're sheltering straight people…", displaying that they see themselves as the victims that are being suppressed under the queer regime, just like the Jews did under the nazi regime. Fearing that they too are a "dying breed" and are prosecuted by the nazi-queers.

While this might seem counterintuitive to the earlier discussed nostalgia, they are experiencing grief for a not achieved anticipated nostalgia (being nostalgic for future experiences) (Cheung et al. 2019).

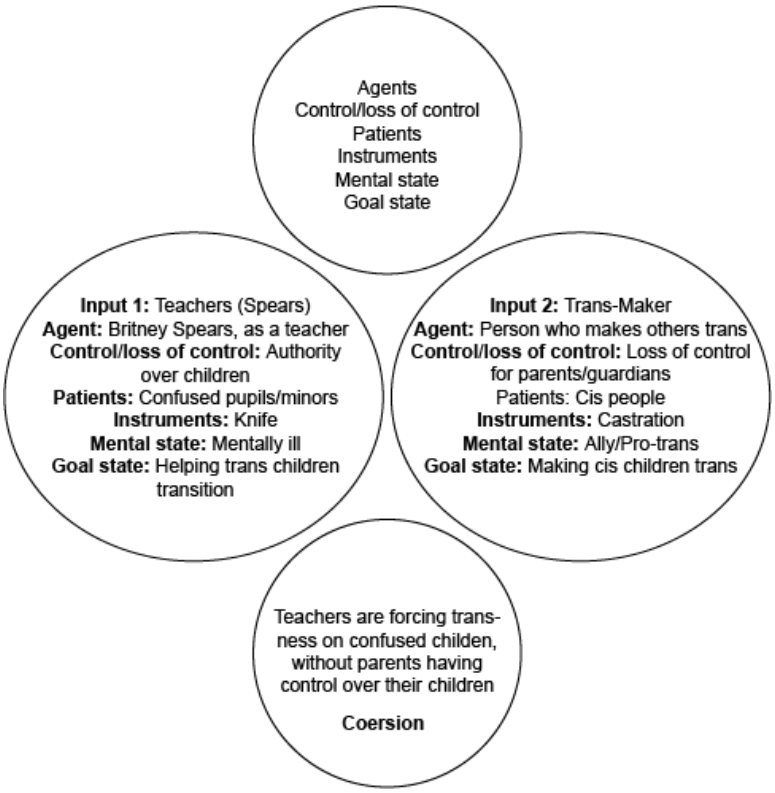
Metaphor 2: Britney Spears is a teacher who wants to chop penises off 102

Britney Spears' very public mental breakdown in 2008 has made her infamous all over the internet. After shaving her hair and being put under conservatorship, she was no longer a popstar; she was insane (Ahmed). Therefore, whatever character she is supposed to represent, she is mentally unwell too. In this meme, she is shown to be a teacher. As the blended metaphor structure has already shown, she would be in direct contact with confused minors, having some form of authority over them, during the absence of their parents. This is, of course, cause for concern for the legal guardians of the children.

The concept of trans-maker has been used during multiple instances, it has been actively chosen instead of saying trans-ally (supporter of transgender individuals), as this is from the perspective of anti-trans memers. The general opinion about trans people in those circles is very negative, therefore any support that trans people receive is seen as radical for trans people.

To have such a teacher (mentally unstable and pro-trans) be responsible for their children will inevitably be seen as a cause for concern by the parents.
According to Trump's perspective, he is the healer, the protector of the American people, he is supposed to prevent harm to them. Teachers are supposed to teach and protect their pupils, very much like Trump likes to be seen. The discrepancy of Trump's metaphor of being a healer of America and another person of authority at school being an active threat, makes this meme especially frightening to transphobes.

The interesting usage of castration will be analysed later in this chapter and is therefore omitted from this analysis.



conceptual integration network structure 8: Teacher (Spears) is Trans-maker

Figure 24: Britney, source: Western Chauvinist Memes Limited Edition, Appendix code: A2

4.2.6. Survival of the prettiest

It is important to notice that every single placeholder for cis and not trans-ally (the memer) is an attractive person. Attractive meaning: clear skin, skinny, gender-specific beauty standards

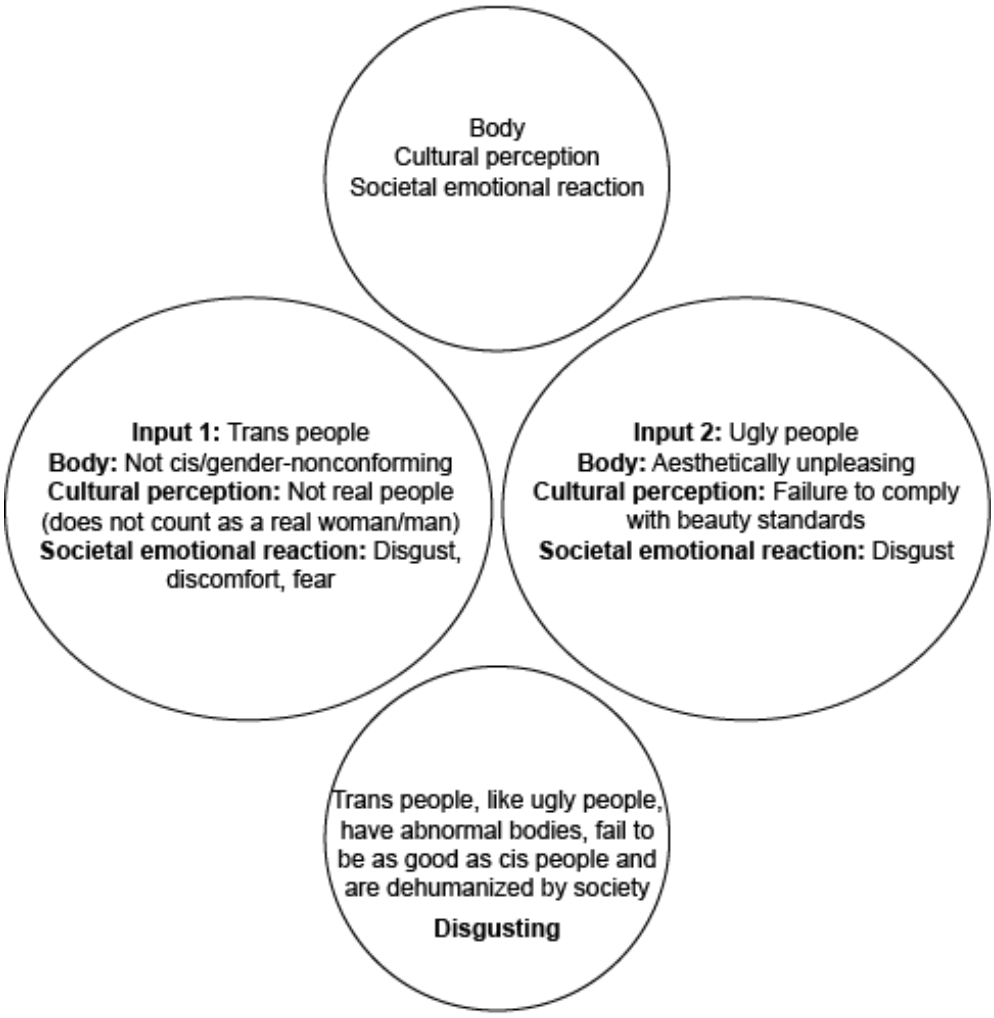
(big breasts, slim waist, long hair for women, broad shoulders, defined cheekbones, short hair for men). Their beauty standard is based on natural beauty and not artificial changes to the body, as the metaphor trans people are people with dyed hair exemplified.

It is based upon the concept of normality and social conformity, combining the concept of transgender people with the concept of ugly people pushes them further out of norm. This category only contains the metaphor trans people are ugly people, simply as all other metaphors of this category have the same aspects as attractiveness is limited to a very specific body type for most memers.

This further highlights the trench between the good and bad, the cis and trans. Referring to the already mentioned in-and-out theory, it furthermore displays how the right try to underline and artificially create differences between the two groups.

The possibility of a human being inferior to someone else, solely based upon how they were born is once again reminiscent of the earlier mentioned Übermensch theory. Hitler justified the murders of Sinti and Romani people (formerly known as *Gypsies*), as they are "racially inferior". They were put in camps where they slowly died of infectious diseases or malnutrition, but the German population complained about them, "Demanding deportation […] of the Roma in order to "safeguard" public morals, public health, and security" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Their separation from society is based upon the fact that they were corrupting the public moral and lowering the living standards of the general population. Their inferiority was therefore spreading and acting like some form of a disease, according to the people in charge. They give more negative attributes to the other group, in order to justify their hatred. Such as claiming that they are corrupting the morale, or that they are ugly.



conceptual integration network structure 9: Trans people are Ugly People

Figure 25: They/them pills, source: Western Chauvinist Memes Limited Edition, Appendix code AB75

4.2.7. Broken and damaged!

The following metaphors are based on the concept that trans people are not just inherently broken, by going starkly against the norm, but their transition itself is making them broken. This theme goes hand in hand with the next part, that trans people are not real humans, but deserve its own analysis.

Broken can be defined by vastly different aspects, this can be morally damaged (immoral behaviour), physically broken (parts missing, unnatural parts added), emotionally damaged (e.g., mental illnesses), or like an object broken.

A very interesting aspect of this is, once again, fear. Such as the castration fear. We have seen this in an early meme featuring Britney Spears, who is threatening to cut off the genitalia of children, a classical example of castration fear. Damaging one's own body.

Metaphor 1: Trans women are castrated men

It is impossible to explain the fragile male ego, and the fears surrounding the loss of their penis without mentioning Sigmund Freud[6]. In his theory of the castration anxiety, he theorises that all men are terrified of being castrated. Their fear stems from the realisation that girls do not have a penis and assume that they must have been castrated, as a punishment for desiring to sleep with their mother, like they do. It was customary to tell young boys not to touch their penises or perform masturbation, with the mother or father threatening to cut off their penis as a punishment, this furthermore installed a deep fear in the boys (Schwartz, 1955).

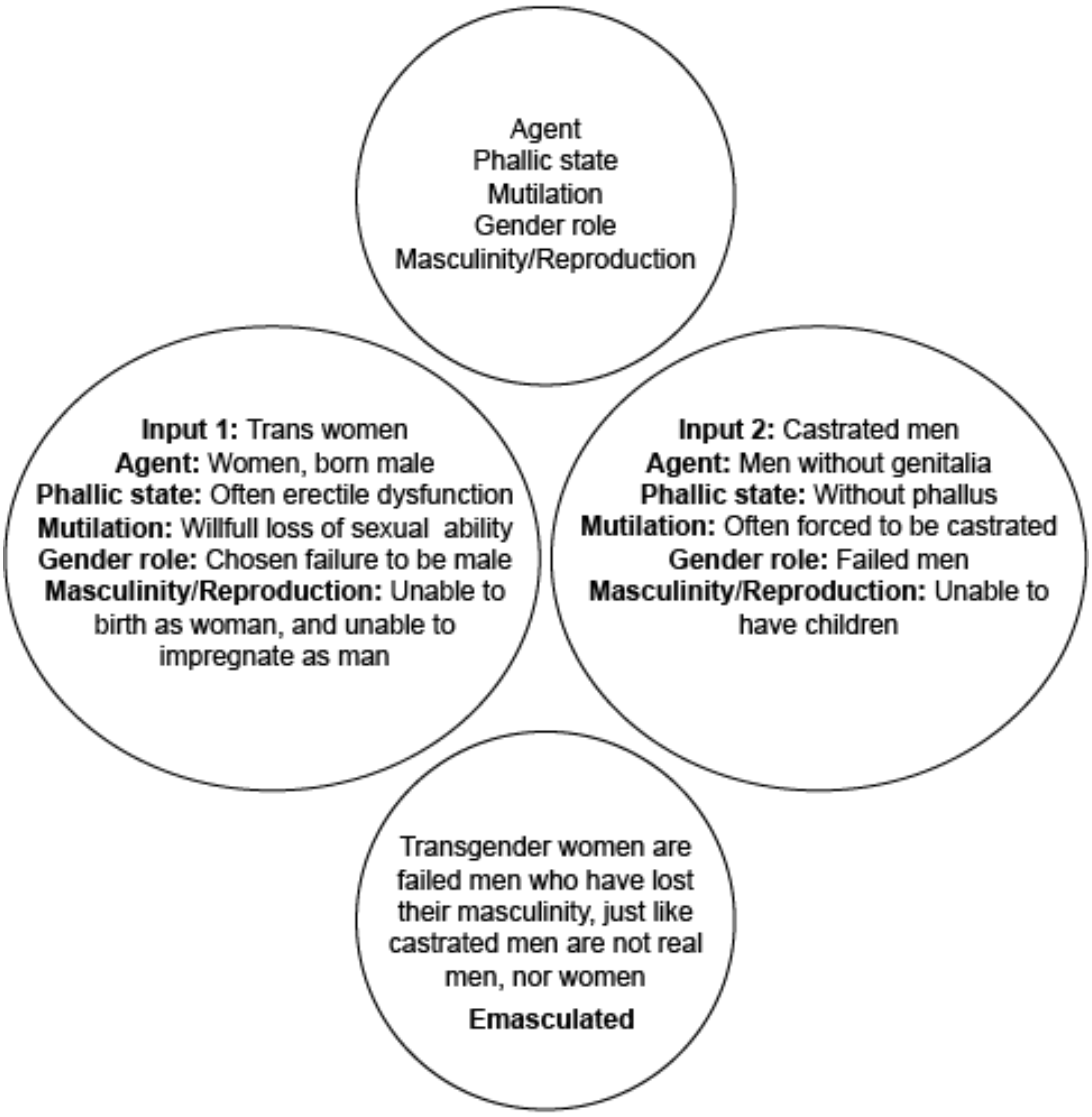
The fear of castration is arguably a deeply imbedded fear, which makes men additionally confused by the desire of trans women to wilfully castrate themselves. Their penis is part of their intrinsic masculinity, which is often a core element of straight men, a castration would thus rob them of their identity.

The concept of body horror is also important to notice for this concept. According to McCann's essay body horror can be broadly defined as "featur[ing] the graphic depiction, destruction or degeneration of the human body" (McCann, 39). He also draws a link between the castration complex, giving the consumer of the body horror genre an additional layer of

[6] I reluctantly mention Freud, most of his theories are held in low regard in the academic (and queer) community.

"horrific imagery" (30). It is therefore only natural for non-transgender individuals to feel fear and disgust when imagine getting one's penis cut off, as a choice.

Figure 26: Dickless Simpson, source: Western Chauvinist memes, Appendix code: A38

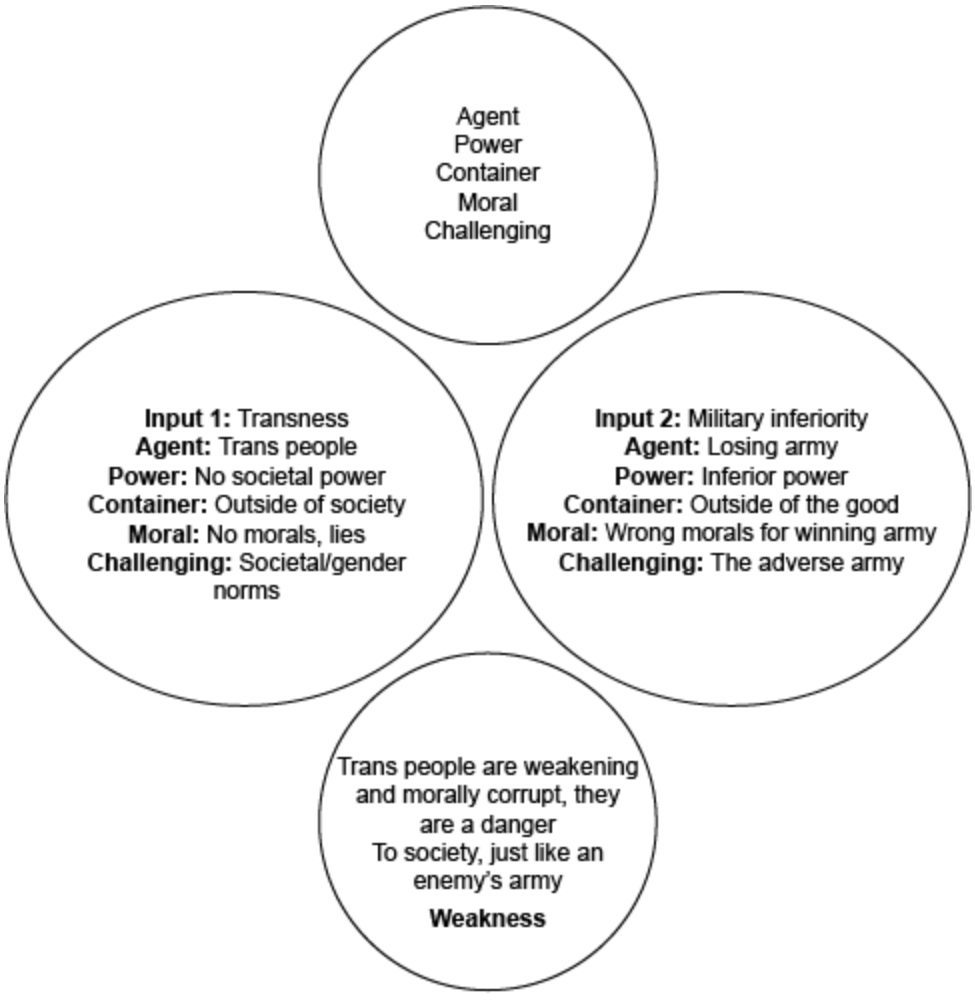


conceptual integration network structure 10: Trans women are Castrated men

Metaphor 2: Transness is military inferior

The theme that transgender people are either weakening the army from the inside or are in opposition with the morally correct army (such as the fellowship of the ring against the Saruman's orc army) is present in the memes. This is reminiscent of Trump's self-image of being a warrior and fighting for a safe nation. The original poster of this meme also identifies as a warrior (Gimli) and accepts Legolas's Muslim identity in order to fight queers and trans people (notice, it is the trans inclusive pride flag, not just the rainbow flag), so that they may protect their country from the moral corruption of trans people.

The corruption and weakening of the army are the logical conclusion of the previously mentioned fear of the weakening of society. Instead of just calling transgender people ugly, they are now actively being a threat to safety. Revealing the fear of living in a society with conflicting moral values.



conceptual integration network structure 11: Transness is Military inferiority

Figure 27: queer army, source: Lord of the Rings memes with politically incorrect themes, Appendix code: A39

4.2.8. Not real People

The metaphor of trans people not being real people is heavily present in the political speeches that have been analysed at the very beginning of this thesis. The dehumanisation of the enemy is a well-used tool for politicians to justify any violence or general injustice against a group of people. They are therefore stripped of their real identity and are instead reduced to something inhuman.

We have touched upon this subject earlier when Trump described himself as an animal trainer and immigrants as animals. A 2019 study conducted by Amanda Warnock and supervised by James A. McCann showed that during the 2016 election, Trump had used an extraordinary number of dehumanising descriptions of (mostly immigrants) other groups than the general population. (See table 3)

Table 3: dehumanizing language used by presidential candidates frm 2008 to 2016

Candidate	Year	Total Dehumanizing Mentions	Immigrant[b]	Dreamer	Gang	Cartel	Refugee	Asylee[c]
Clinton	2008	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Clinton	2016	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Cruz	2016	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Graham	2016	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Huckabee	2008	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Jindal	2016	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Kasich	2016	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Obama	2008	4	0	0	1	1	2	0
Richardson	2008	8	1	0	0	0	7	0
Romney	2012	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
Sanders	2016	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Santorum	2016	4	4	0	0	0	0	0
Thompson	2008	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Trump	2016	464	267	0	47	20	142	6

[a]*These counts include all mentions of the word, including multiple mentions in a single sentence, and all pronouns referring to that word.*

[b]*This category includes related words such as migrant and alien.*

[c]*This category includes related words such as asylum seeker and asylum.*

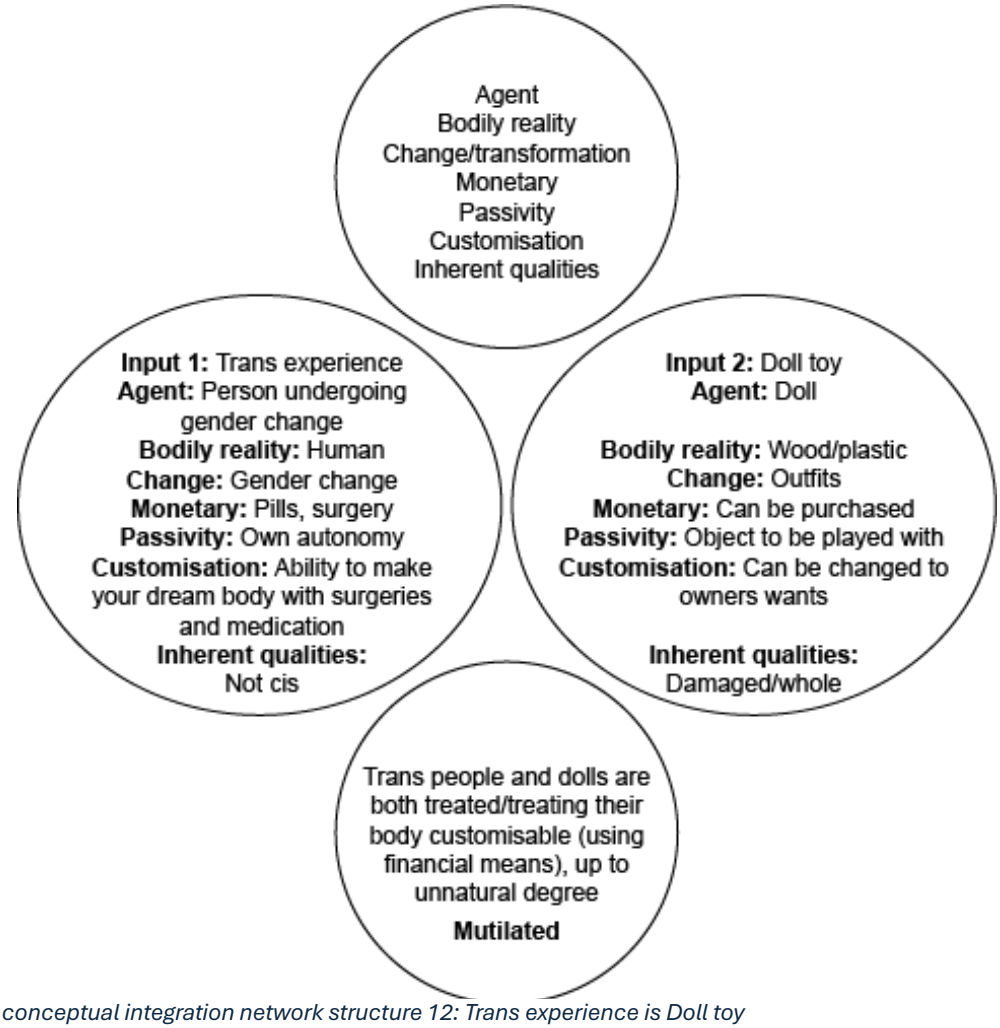
Table 3. Dehumanizing language by group[a].

Metaphor 1: Trans experience is a doll toy

Figure 29: Pincchio, source: Stephen Lee Facebook, Appendix Code: AB61

Figure 28: They/them Doll, Source: The Politically Incorrect Millenial, Appendix code: AB24

While this metaphor is not very common, it does appear twice within the memes that have been found, which, considering how niche the metaphor is, means that it is worthy of further analysis.



conceptual integration network structure 12: Trans experience is Doll toy

It must be noted that a doll (whether that be Pinocchio or an Action-figure like doll) are both not just not human, but also not even alive. This is in with the earlier discussed Great Chain of Being, as Plato and Aristotle put it. No longer human, not an animal, but an inanimate object.

Furthermore, there is a significant aspect of the purchasability of the transformation, more accessories (in the below showed example even with different pronouns) can be bought to change the dolls appearance. It can be argued that the changes that trans people go through are also purchased (the hormones, surgeries, binders/packers/silicone breasts), therefore using financial means to change their own appearance. Just like toy factories often use the means of further accessories to "scam" the consumer to spend more money on things they do not need,

the right-wing often argues (as will be analysed later) that “big pharma” and capitalism in general benefits from purchases made by transgender people.

The Pinocchio meme clearly shows that just like objects can turn out to be damaged and not of the highest quality, trans people are (according to some) born damaged and therefore calls for extermination. In contrast to the chain of being, this is in relation to the *Übermensch* and *Untermensch* classification we discussed earlier. This classification still seems to be a reality for some individuals. After having analysed the destructive role of trans individuals in the military, the “destruction” is another logical consequence, to save the rest of the population from their negative force. The usage of an oven in order to destroy the trans-Pinocchio is a very potent imagery of another genocide, where the corpses of the killed victims were burned in furnaces. This imagery might not be what the meme maker had in mind, as there are two other viable alternative explanations. Pinocchio is, after all, made out of wood and could therefore, like firewood, be burned. It is also reminiscent of the medieval witch-burning ceremonies. But no matter which interpretation is accurate, the original poster’s main aim is to dehumanise as well as metaphorically kill trans people.

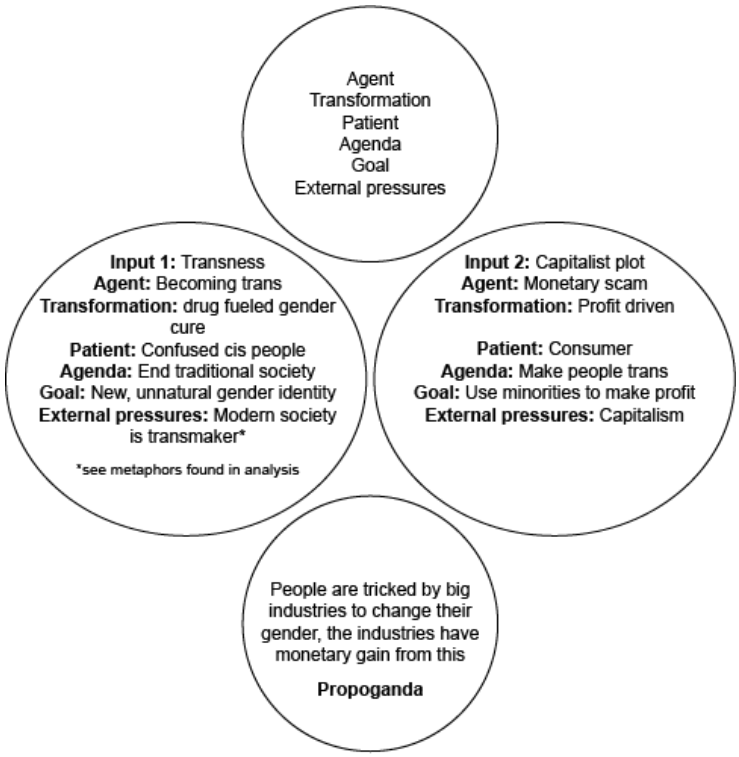
4.2.9. The root of all evil – money

Now to the last theme – money. It became clear that the OPs of the memes are highly concerned with the cost of changing one's gender as well as the movie and the drug industries profiting of the trans-stories. This is, unlike most of the other metaphors not stemmed from fear, it is a conspiracy theory, that the inclusion of trans people, rather than simply them being part of society, is based upon the fact that they are an essential part of the economy.

“Big pharma,” as the drug industry is often referred to has been making profit by selling drugs to people who are in need, may that be cancer treatments, pain medication, anti-depressants, or in our case drugs that help transgender people feel more comfortable in their bodies. This is but a mere fact, the pharmaceutical industry makes money from transgender people. The believe that Big Pharma is actively inventing diseases in order to sell more drugs, is common (Kaczmarek). Other memes in the appendix, which fit under the category trans is a capitalistic plot, also explain this aspect quite well.

The entertainment industry has also been accused of, instead of representing the actual society, showing minority in disproportionally high numbers to maximise profit. This conspiracy theory has been recorded on a reddit question, with over 400 upvoted and over a thousand comments (Reddit, r/television).

This phenomenon will be analysed in the following blended metaphor structure:



conceptual integration network structure 13: Transness is a capitalistic plot

Figure 30: Disney Ukraine, source: The Politically incorrect Millenial, Appendix code: AB21

It is only after having taken a closer look at the blended metaphor structure that we can see that, from a bigoted point of view, trans people seem to be everywhere and are a product of the pharmaceutical and the entertainment industry, even though the trans centred industries are a result of the existence of trans people.

Given that trans adults have a spending power and are able to buy goods and pay for services, there is a niche market available for industries to capitalise on and brand. Just like the fishing market or the crocheting market, everyone is forced to watch/listen/read these ads, even though they might not apply to them. When big brands such as Disney, Netflix, or various pharmaceuticals bring a new product to the market, it will be advertised accordingly. Unlike more niche entertainment platforms, or specialised industries that cater more to trans people, they have the necessary budget to do this efficiently, so that even the mainstream will be aware of their product – whether they want this or not. This might add to the more recent annoyance of the general public.

Within the queer community, this effect is called Pink washing [7]or Rainbow washing. It is also called Rainbow marketing, if brands who usually are either neutral or even transphobic/homophobic are selling/making products/services for trans people, mainly during pride months (Bandera). There very much is a queer market, but the market does not make queer, it becomes queer.

[7] Originally concerning breast cancer, but the queers have taken over the same term (sorry) (breastcancer.org)

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Memes are more than just silly little images with a funny text; they are the heartbeat of the internet. Whether that be a silly cat with a cute message, or a website dedicated to explaining why trans people should either commit suicide or be killed, memes matter. This thesis has taken the reader through the theory of basic memetics and basic metaphors to show how memes can change the world.

Definitions were of utmost importance to this study, as terms such as ‘Meme’, ‘metaphor’, ‘political meme’, ‘political discourse’, are very offhandedly mentioned in everyday life, but have an enormous research area and aspects to them. The definitions have been carefully selected not just to demonstrate what has been researched, but to show what is outside of the scope of this work, or even unrelated to the area.

The blended metaphor theory has allowed us to not just see the metaphor but rather see all the implications that both parts of the metaphor add to an imagery. This approach would not have been possible with neither the conceptual metaphor nor the CMA approach.

Memes are justifiably part of the scope of political discourse, as many before have successfully argued. It is thus, viable to take the metaphors that have resulted from this research as political claims.

The themes that were found resonate with the themes within Trump’s conceptual metaphors as found in previous speeches. Indicating a strong connection between the speeches and the memes, displaying an uncanny resemblance. Whether that be that right wing politics all use a similar vocabulary and imageries or that President Trump’s speeches consciously or unconsciously inspire them to use similar metaphors in their memes.

The theme of fear has repeatedly appeared from the analysed metaphors. It is therefore the most important emotion that the OPs were feeling, and what feelings they were trying to convey to others. Their fears are rooted both in losing their traditional lifestyle and having trans people corrupt their morality. Fear based politics are not a new concept and as shown earlier, it is mainly a strategy applied by the conservative politicians. Saying that immigrants will over-flood the nation, as if the nation is under direct threat of a natural disaster, or that they are wild animals that need to be tamed by Trump, is fear mongering. Describing trans women as pedophiles, a danger to children, to cis women, to society, is just as fear mongering as Trump’s description of foreigners. Thus, utilising the same tactics.

The other unambiguous parallel between the metaphors of memes and Trump’s speeches is the dehumanisation of the ‘other’. Minorities are robbed of their personhood to further alienate the other from themselves. To describe trans people as dolls, broken, or just a capitalistic plot, is akin with Trump’s unparalleled high ration of dehumanising language in his speeches. Therefore, uncovering another strategy both the OPs and Trump use.

Much of the other metaphors have roots in how the OP sees themselves. The constant need to be on top of the hierarchy and better than everyone else, is once again like Trump's high image of himself. The metaphors often revealed quite a substantial amount about the creator.

The concept of natural beauty and the natural way of life, according to the OPs, are of the utmost importance. Dyed hair, surgery, drugs, and other appearance changing aspects are seen as lies. It is not what they were born with, their unnatural changes are seen as ugly, and therefore not worthy of respect. The concept of beauty seems to have had a deep impact on their ideal of a perfect society.

This field offers many areas of further study as the theme of transphobia is but part of the hatred. The aspect of racism and sexism have emerged frequently even when purely analysing transphobic memes. In general, the blended metaphor analysis should be further used in the field of memetics.

This thesis has proven that the blended metaphor theory is applicable to the memetic sphere. It has also proven that there is a direct link between Trump's linguistic approaches and the linguistic approaches of the memers. Politicians are directly influencing the online community who spread their message dangerously efficient, this partially due to the algorithm and partially due to the humour of the memes. Memes are so much more than just silly little pictures to laugh at, they influence the world, but more importantly they influence of friends, family, and those close to us, understanding the metaphors used against minorities, such as trans people help us to avoid misguided hatred. Only by understanding one another, can we accept ourselves, and those that disagree with us.

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Appendix:

Appendix 1: Memes and meme codes, and their relevant metaphor code

AB1

7, 22

E, G, H, M

A2

28, 65, 102

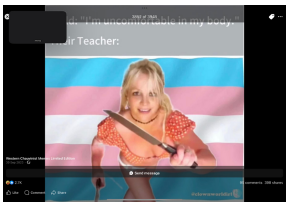
C, D, O

A3

17, 27, 33, 92

I

B2



B3

A4

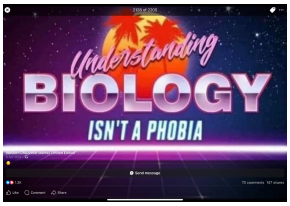
24, 25, 34, 99

H

A5

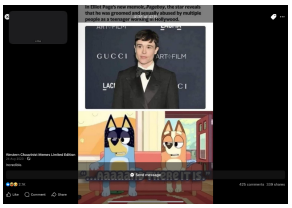
9, 21, 25, 35

AB6

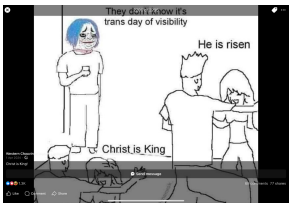


33

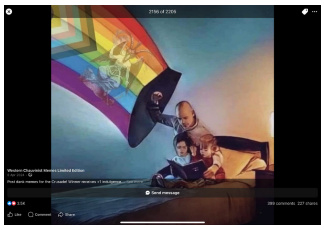
B4



B5



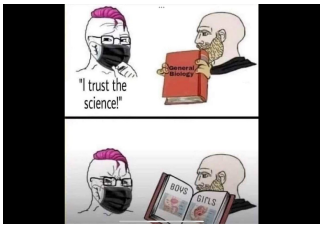
AB7



14, 15, 30, 31, 37, 38, 63, 76

I

A8

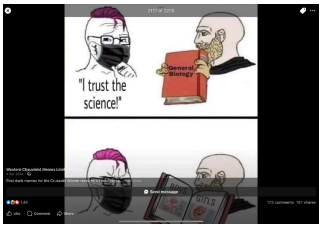


3,9,33,79

A9

9,11,12,28,41,42,63

B8



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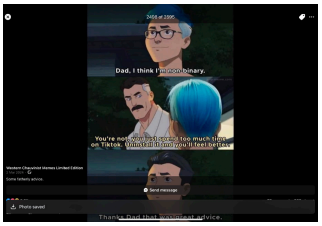
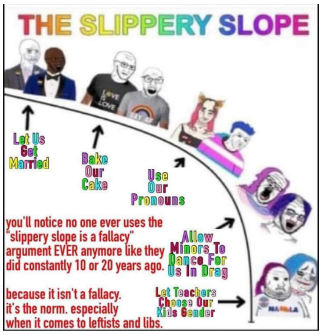


A10

33,42,98

H

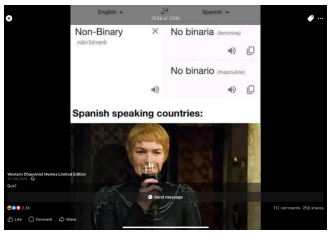
A11



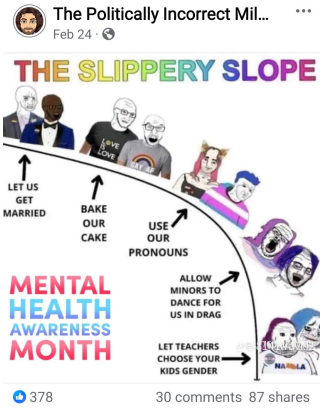
9, 11 12, 30, 32

D, C, J, L, M

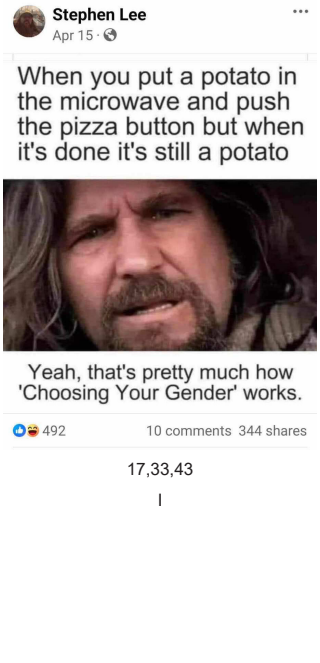
B10



B11



AB12



17,33,43

I

A13

B13

AB14

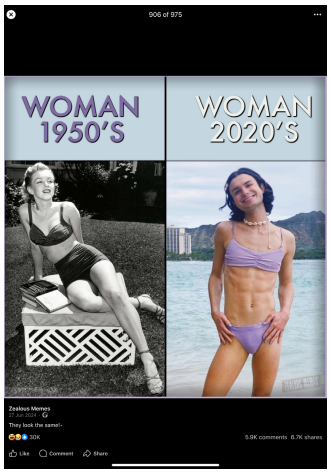
C

AB15

7,11,12,20,22,28,30,39

G,M,R,Q,L

AB16



11,12,22,30

L,M,Q

AB17

39,40

E

AB18

44,45

E,I

AB19

9,10,22,30,46

L,M,H

AB20

2,17,33,37,63

E,L

AB21

39

AB22

9,18,19,30,39,46,47,63,76

I,J

AB23

7,20,22,39,48

E,M

AB24

9,39,49

G,I,S

AB25

9,22,3,101

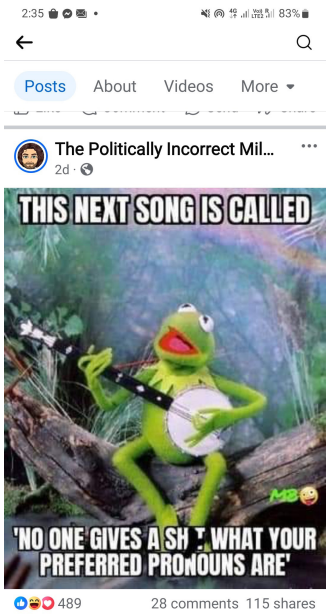
E,G

AB26

2,16,33,51,63

H

AB27



33,52

H

AB28

9,24,33,42,51

I,T

AB29

31,36,37,43,53

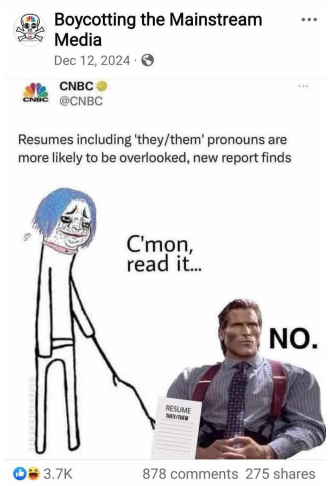
G,H,I,J,U

AB30

2,9,13,22,33

B,E,L

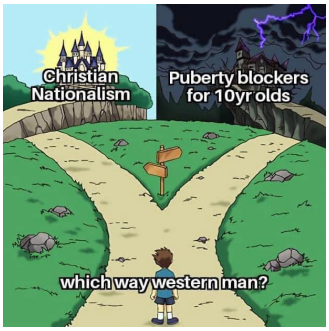
AB31



3,921,33,54,55,56,57,63,64

H,M

A32



14,15,30,58,59,60,61,62,63,68

H,L

B32

A33

21,39

M

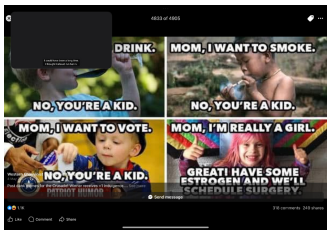
B33

A34

9,28,46,65,66

P

B34

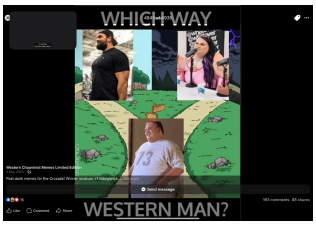


A35

58,61,63,67,68

H,L,M,U,R

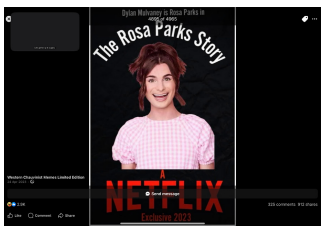
B35



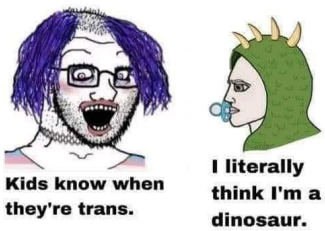
A36

39,69,70

B36



A37



7,9,33,65,71

M

A38

5,9,25,28,72

M

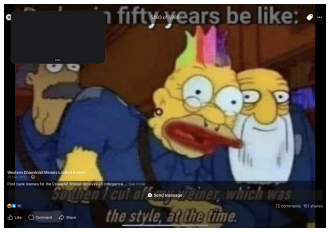
AB39

10,14,15,30,37,63,73,74,75,76

H,I,L,F

B37

B38



AB40

3,11,12,25,33,77,78,79

H

AB41

5,65,80,81,82,83

AB42

9,84,86

F,N

AB43

10,20,85

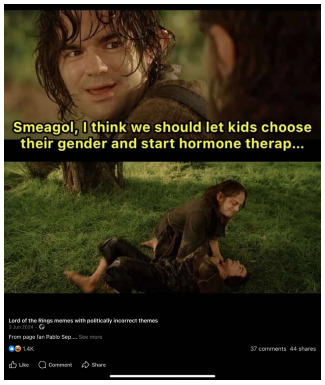
H

AB44

42,87

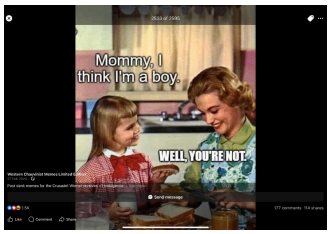
G

AB45



88,89

AB46



2,11,12,65

AB47

17,28,33,43,92

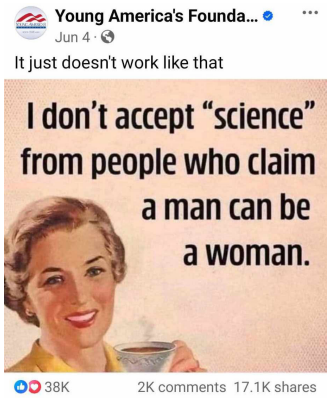
I

AB48

7,18,20,22

I,K,J,Q

AB49



2

E

AB50

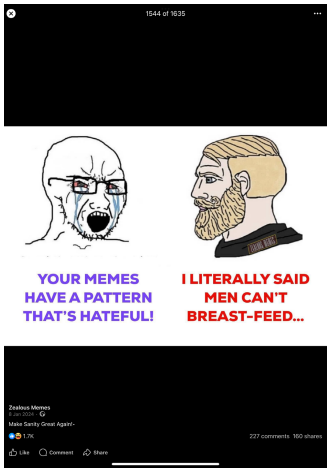
10,18,43,63,64,76,93

F

AB51

33,40

AB52



3,22,33,43,95,96

E

AB53

33,113

AB54

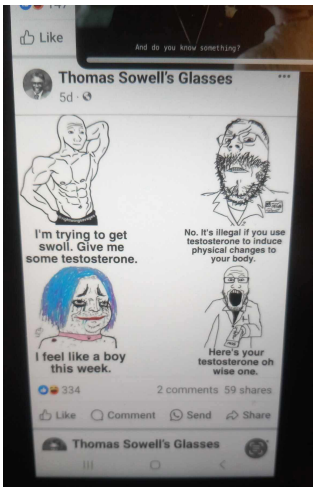
7,22,43,95

AB55

9,33,41,79

E

AB56



7,9,21,39,46,95

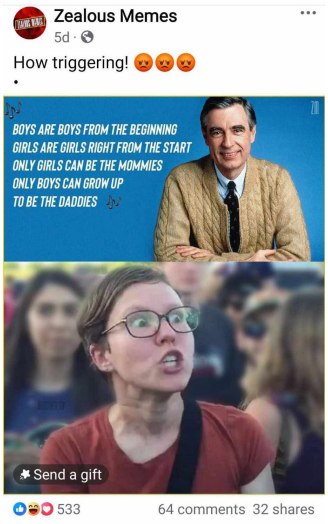
M

AB57

6,22

E

AB58



2,11,97

AB59

33,113

AB60

20,24,25,30,46

L

AB61

Stephen Lee
Apr 26 ·

18K 818 comments 4.4K shares

2,11,12,25,63,69,104

H,I

AB62

Stephen Lee
Apr 28 ·

think there's a lot of transwomen now, wait till the draft starts

1.8K 250 comments 696 shares

7,10

H

AB63

Stephen Lee
Apr 21 ·

758 90 comments 319 shares

57,105

M

AB64

Stephen Lee
Apr 26 ·

2.4K 230 comments 497 shares

9,11,12,20,32,63,76,106,107

E,F,J

AB65

Boricuas Be Like
Apr 1 ·

751 46 comments 278 shares

7,43,108

B,G,Q

AB66

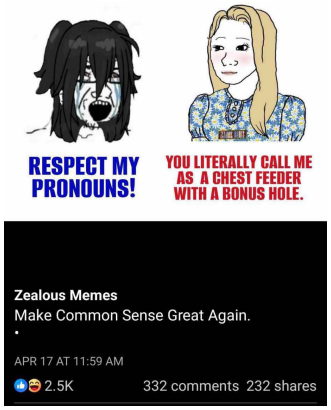
Stephen Lee
6d ·

5.8K 1.2K comments 1.5K shares

20,22

F,G,J,N

AB67



2,13,96

B

AB68

21

M,H,Q

AB69

2,11,12,28,65,66

P

AB70

2,42,14,15,37

M,L

AB71

9,18,21,30,76,109

F,L

AB72

5,25,258

P

AB73

H,M,Q,R

AB74

38,43

F,G,J,N

AB75

H

AB76

22

K

AB77

23

M,G

AB78

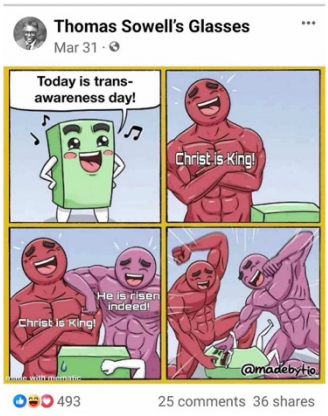
5

G

AB79

11,12,33,65,79

AB80



14,15,37

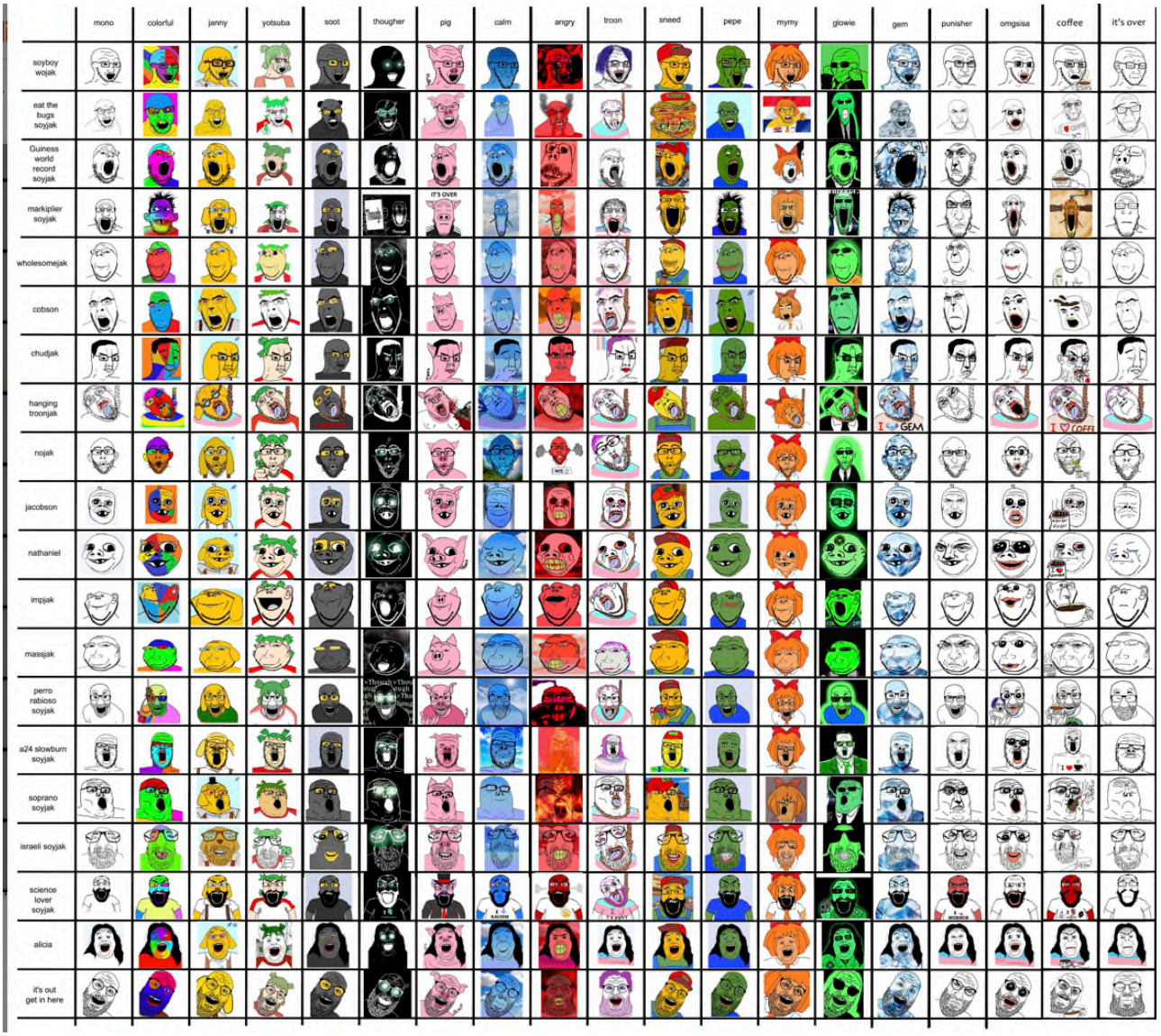
H

AB81

Appendix 2: Code of metaphors, metaphor, and themes

Code	Key	Amount of memes with metaphor												
			Lies	VOR	Fear	Conspiracy	Pretty is better	Boy's Club	not real people	Unrelated	Damage	Money	Other	Unrelated feminism
9	Transpeople are people with dyed hair	18	L				P						O	
33	Transpeople are logically flawed	14		V							D			
22	Transwomen are Fakewomen	14	L											
H	Transness is weakness	12		V	V									
E	Transgender is misinformation	9	L			C							O	
39	Transness is capitalistic plot	9										M		
63	Western man is deciding force	8		V										
11	Old times is Cis	8			F	C								
I	Trans is not human	7							N					
G	Trans is Deception/trick	7	L											
F	Trans is danger	7			F									
43	I identify as is I pretend to be	7	L						N					
30	Trans is destruction of traditionalism	7			F	C								
12	Young/Modern is trans	7			F	C							O	
7	Trans is costume	7	L											
M	Trans is ugly	5					P				D			
76	Queer is villain	4			F				N					
65	Child's opinion is immature/premature	5			F									
46	Government is trans enabler	5				C								
28	Trans is trend	5							N				O	
25	Trans is damaged	5		V							D			
10	Trans is Military inferiority	5			F									
2	Tradwife/old white men is voice of reason	5		V										
37	Queer is unholy	4			F				N					
21	Trans is Clowns	4	L				P							
20	Trans(women) are repressors	4			F									
17	Gender is food	4							N				O	
Q	Cis women are superior	3					P							
C	School is Transmaker	3			F	C								
95	Soyjak is left wing with hurt feelings	3		V										
64	Western man is leader of the world	3		V										
42	Straight is villain	3		V										
18	Cis/Straight is Victims	3			F									
15	Christians are Vor	3		V										
14	Christians are strength	3		V										
5	Transwomen are castrated men	3			F						D			
3	Chad is VoR	3		V										
N	Transness is pedophilia	2			F									
L	Queer acceptance is excluding tradition	2			F	C								
92	Cis is right wing	2				C								
79	Transness is stupidity	2		V							D			
66	Strict parents is cis children	2		V	F	C								
62	Christian nationalism is opposite of puberty blockers....	2		V										
61	Weather is prosperity	2								U				
58	Life is path	2								U				
57	NB is weak	2		V							D			
51	Trans is financial deficits	2										M		
41	Social media is transmaker	2			F	C								
36	Queer is satanist	2			F	C								
32	Equal rights is slippery slope	2			F	C								
31	Down is bad / Up is good	2								U				
27	Democrats are Trans	2				C								
24	Transness is Mental Illness	2									D			
13	Inclusive language is swearwords	2				C							O	
U	Transwomen are fat	1					P							
T	Fat man is Nb	1	L				P							
S	Fat women are NB	1	L				P							
R	Fat man is Trans woman	1	L				P							
P	Modern parents are trans maker	1			F	C								
O	Teacher is dangerous trans maker	1			F	C								
K	Transwomen is bad lesbian	1								U				UF
J	trans is ciminal/danger	1			F									
D	Teacher is transmaker	1			F	C								
B	Tradwife is right society	1		V										
103	Skeletor is Steven Crowder	1		V										
102	Teacher Britney Spears is transmaker	1			F	C					D			
101	Archeologue is VoR	1		V										
100	Dean Winchester is VoR	1		V				B						
99	Bluey is VOR	1		V										
98	Transphobes is Spanish speaking countries	1		V										
97	Mr rogers is VOR	1		V										
96	Cis reductionism is swearwords	1			F	C								
93	Captain america is Transphobe	1		V				B						
89	Smeagol is hero	1		V				B						
88	Deagol is pro genderaffirming care for children	1						B					O	
87	Transwomen are Eowyn	1	L					B						
86	Trans is wizard is unholy	1			F			B	N					
85	Terf is legolas	1		V				B						UF
84	Gandalf is transdalf	1						B	N					
83	Children is hobbit	1						B		U				
82	Transgender surgeon is child endangerment	1			F			B			D			
81	Transgender surgeon is villain	1			F	C		B			D			
80	Orc is trans surgeon	1			F	C		B						
78	Ent is cis	1		V				B						
77	Hobbits is trans	1						B	N					
75	Queers orc orcs	1			F			B	N					
74	legolas is muslims	1						B		U				
73	Gimli is christian	1		V				B						
72	Abe Simpson is trans woman	1	L											
71	Being a dinosaur is being trans	1	L											
70	Netflix is misrepresentation for financial gain	1										M		
69	Rosa parks is dylan mulvaney	1	L											
68	Transness is wrong path	1		V										
67	Muscular man is correct path	1		V										
60	Christian nationalism is good right way	1		V										
59	Puberty blockers for 10 year old is bad/wrong way	1			F									
56	Gender identity is employability	1		V								M		
55	NB job seeker is unworthy	1		V								M		
54	Yonked bateman is Vor	1		V										
53	Gender identity is game	1											O	
52	Kermit is Vor	1		V										
50	Life is legacy	1								U				
49	Trans experience is doll toy	1							N			M		
48	Facebook community is adult diaper/men in trans	1				C								
47	2030 is nazi germany	1			F	C								
45	Gender is toilets	1							N					
44	Kitchen is woman	1								U				UF
40	Big tech is liar	1								U		M		
38	Parents is protector from queerness	1		V										
35	Gender is feces	1							N					
34	Trans is result of childabuse	1									D			
23	Transwomen is Ugly Cis Women	1					P							
19	Queer is Nazis	1			F	C								
16	Ken is VoR	1		V										
			Lies	VOR	Fear	Conspiracy	Pretty is better	Boy's Club	not real people	Unrelated	Damage	Money	Other	Unrelated sexism
			14	36	32	24	9	17	13	9	11	7	8	3

Appendix 3:


mono
colorful
janny
yotsuba
soot
thougher
pig
calm
angry
troon
sneed
pepe
mymy
glowie
gem
punisher
omgsisa
coffee
it's over
soyboy wojak
eat the bugs soyjak
Guiness world record soyjak
markiplier soyjak
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chudjak
hanging troonjak
nojak
jacobson
nathaniel
impjak
massjak
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soprano soyjak
israeli soyjak
science lover soyjak
alicia
it's out get in here