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LGBTIQ+, conspiracy theories and narratives of support and hate online: from streets to screens

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Introduction

- In this communication, we are going to explore different case studies on how **LGBTIQ+ people** are sometimes **supported** in the contexts of various events, demonstrations or mobilisations in the streets (as is the case of International LGBT+ Pride Day or Women's International Day).
- Other times LGBTIQ+ people are recipients of **online hate speech** or different **conspiracy theories** in other scenarios, for example, in films, series, videogames, etc.
- It is possible to find online **narratives** about LGTB+ people in different social networks that go **from the more positive pole** (support, solidarity, or even outrage when LGTBI people are rejected or recipients of hate crime) **to the more negative one** (disseminating hate, fake news or conspiracy theories).
- These narratives take place in different contexts: **from street to screens.**



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Solidarity on social media

The most powerful form of online support is **Online civic intervention (OCI)**: They comprise actions taken by ordinary cyber-users to fight disruptive and hate online behaviour (Porten-Cheé et al., 2021).

Types:

Low-threshold OCI: through **media platform tools** (e.g., **social buttons flagging**).
[Crawford & Gillespie, 2016: “flags”]

High-threshold OCI: the verbal and discursive form of user involvement commonly referred to as **counterspeech or counternarrative**. For example, the hashtags **#jagärhär** [**#iamhere**] in Sweden and **#ichbinhierin** in Germany attempts to fight hate speech through **polite counterspeech**.

Porten-Cheé et al. (2021) Do “Good Citizens” fight hate speech online? Effects of solidarity citizenship norms on user responses to hate comments, *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 18:3, 258-273, DOI: 10.1080/19331681.2020.1871149

Crawford, K., & Gillespie, T. (2016). What is a flag for? Social media reporting tools and the vocabulary of complaint. *New Media & Society*, 18(3), 410–428. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814543163>



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Outrage on social media

Feelings of **rage, irritation, anger**, etc., expressed on networks through **reactive emotions** of moral disapproval of an action or actions perceived as **undeserved and unjust**, generating **displeasure, hostility, exasperation or desire for revenge** or retaliation (Rodríguez, 2004).

Sometimes the protest or outrage is organised through **hashtags** that project the voices of oppressed groups and help to develop political movements and social demands (Rebollo, 2021).

Rodríguez Genovés, F. (2004). "La indignación: la contrariedad de una emoción". *El Catoblepas*, 34:7.
<https://www.nodulo.org/ec/2004/n034p07.htm>

Rebollo Díaz, C. (2021). *Tuiteando sobre refugiados : una comparación internacional de discursos, imaginarios y representaciones sociales*. [Tesis de doctorado, Universidad de Huelva].



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Hate Speech Online

According to the **European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights (FRA)**:

Hate speech: refers to the incitement and encouragement of hatred, discrimination or hostility towards an individual motivated by prejudice against that person **because of a particular characteristic, for example, their sexual orientation or gender identity**.

Homophobia: is irrational fear towards a person because that person is lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Transphobia: is irrational fear towards a person because they express themselves to be of a gender different to the one assigned at birth, through, e.g. hormone treatment, surgery, clothing or cosmetics.

European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2009): "Hate Speech and Hate Crimes against LGBT Persons". https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1226-Factsheet-homophobia-hate-speech-crime_EN.pdf



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Conspiracy theories (I)

According to the European Commission (2022), conspiracy theories are: "**The belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent".**

Also, "Conspiracy theories have these six things in common:

1. An alleged secret plot
2. A group of conspirators.
3. 'Evidence' that seems to support the conspiracy theory.
4. They falsely suggest that nothing happens by accident and that there are no coincidences; nothing is as it appears, and everything is connected.
5. They divide the world into good or bad.
6. They scapegoat people and groups."

LGBTQI+



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Conspiracy theories, gender, diversity & grooming (II)

Delegitimization of credibility based on sexual orientation or gender, or defence of gender identities

Criminalizes or suggests criminal conduct of LGTBQ+ people targeted to children [paedophilia]

The association of sexual orientation with negative aspects, such as vices, child abuse, and others.

People and institutions accused of grooming, developing hate and fear: conspiracy theory of grooming, e.g. **#irenemonteropedera** - **#boycottdisney** - **#budlight**

Conspiracy theory on the threats that diversity or "gender ideology" pose to children and family classic model.

Conspiracy theory on the threats that "trans" [LGTBQ+ people] pose to children through "mutilation", "hormones", etc.



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Objectives

- **To explore** different [viral, highly spread] **case studies where LGBTIQ+ people are recipients of support and rejection in form of hate speech online or conspiracy theories**
- **To compare cases** of support, solidarity, hate or conspiracy theories in different contexts:
 - from streets**, with the offline context of demonstrations or mobilizations
 - to screens**, with a focus on cultural products and debates around them
- **To identify main discourses, networks and communities**, looking for patterns in communication at disseminating hate or conspiracy theories
- Approach to **users & personal or institutional actors** that disseminate these messages



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LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE

| | | |
|--|----------|-----------------------------|
| | L | Lesbian |
| | G | Gay |
| | B | Bisexual |
| | T | Transgender |
| | I | Intersex |
| | Q | Queer or Questioning |
| | + | Others |

Different person's sexual orientations and Gender identities

... describes people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of ... same/different/more than one gender

[Gay Center NYC (2023). <https://gaycenter.org/about/lgbtq/>]

There is no international consensus on a nomenclature representing all non-heteronormative affective-sexual diversities. The most widely used are LGBTQI+ (United Nations, for instance), which encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual, non-binary and pansexual, and other sexual orientations and gender identities that acronyms cannot fully describe.

United Nations (2023). Vulnerable groups. LGBTQI+. United Nations. <https://www.un.org/es/fight-racism/vulnerable-groups/lgbtqi-plus>



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Methods, Techniques and Sources

Computational & Mixed methods

- Quantitative:
 - Descriptive, Content Analysis, Social & Semantic Network Analysis
- Qualitative:
 - Critical Discourse Analysis & Visual – Sociosemiotics
 - Narratives and Discourse Analysis

Sources

- Primary data main source: Twitter
- Secondary data used to frame the cases [especially news & legislation]



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Case studies, sources & samples

| Case studies datasets | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| | Streets: Mobilizations offline - online | | | Screens: videogames, series, film, memes & ads | | |
| Name | 8M | LGTBIQ+ | Samuel | Gaysper | Lightyear | BudLight |
| Description | 8M - Women's International Day | LGTB - International LGBT+ Pride Day & Trans Law debates | Samuel Luiz homophobic crime and #justiciaparasamuel | Gaysper & Vox Meme | Lightyear & Lesbian kiss | Budlight & Dylan Mulvaney |
| Dates | 2018 | 2020-2022 | 03/07/2021 | 2019 | 2021 | 2023 |
| Size dataset (total, organic) | 1.515.715 total & 287.216 organic tuits | 410015 organic tweets | 343.780 total & 30.081 organic tuits | 53.520 total & 12.914 organic tuits | 1.521.759 total & 471.041 organic tuits | 70878 total & 20926 organic tweets |
| Main language | Spanish | Spanish | Spanish | English-Spanish | English | English |
| Platform | Twitter | Twitter | Twitter | Twitter | Twitter | Twitter |
| Collected through | t-hoarder_kit | Twarc2, Python | rtweet, R | academictwitteR, R | academictwitteR, R | Twarc2, Python |
| Collected by | Estrella Gualda | Jacinto Mata | Estrella Gualda | Estrella Gualda | Estrella Gualda | Estrella Gualda |
| Project | ESEIS (SEJ-216) | NonConspiraHate Project | NonConspiraHate Project | NonConspiraHate Project | NonConspiraHate Project | NonConspiraHate Project |



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Software and Programming Languages for the collection and analysis of different cases and contexts

- **Collection of data**
 - T-hoarder_kit, rtweet, academictwitterR & twarc2
 - Api Twitter v1 & v2
- **Preprocessing and Quantitative, Qualitative and Network Analysis**
 - Combining different strategies especially with the support of **R**, Python, Atlas ti and Excel
 - Different packages and libraries, for specific tasks, e.g. quanteda - quanteda.textstats - quanteda.textplots - stopwords - openxlsx - data.table - readr - stringr - tidytext - tidyverse - dplyr - ggplot2 - others



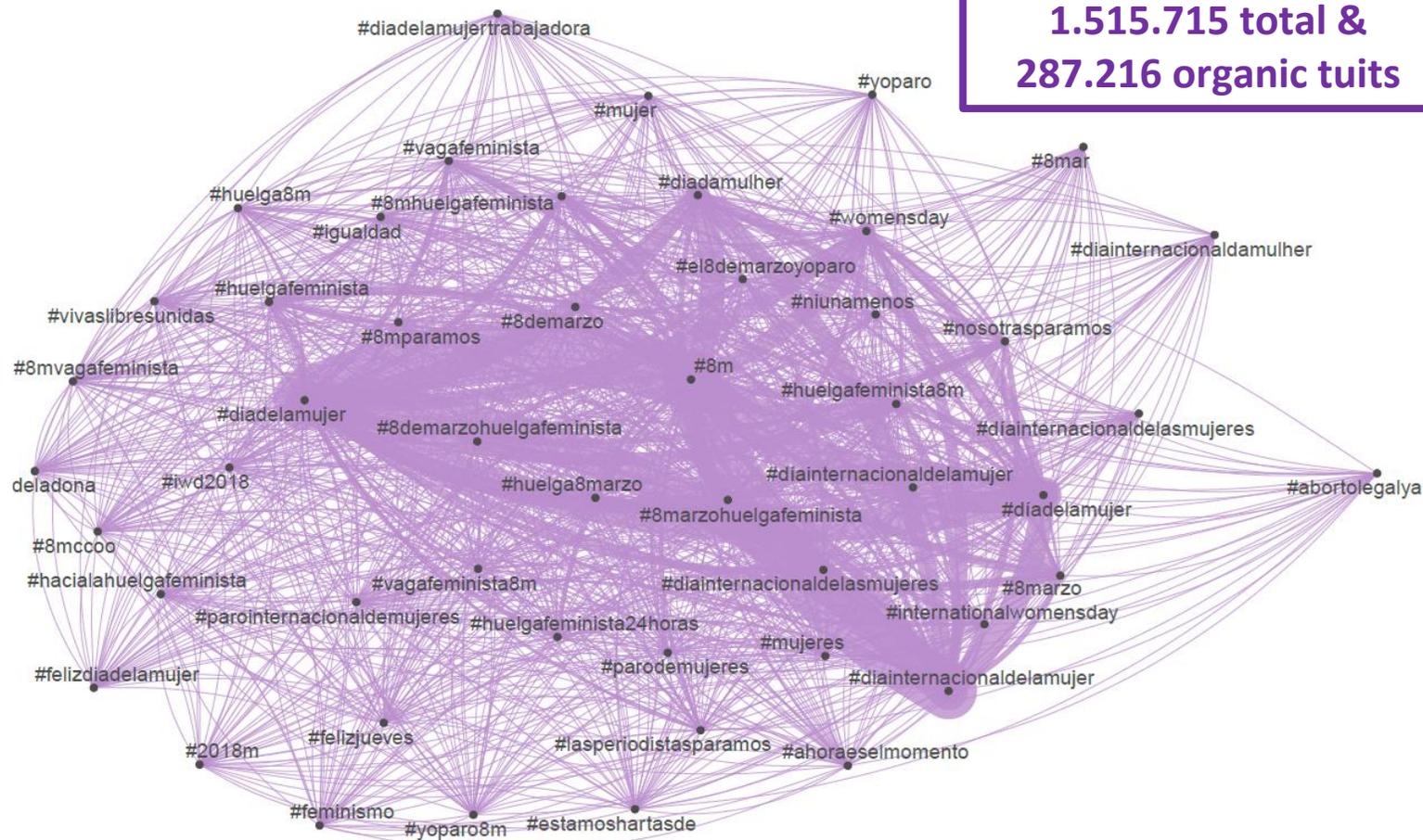
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Support and solidarity: (I) Women's International Day (Spain, 2018)

- Very “dense” network
- Strong connections between communities
- International network [even when search criteria were in Spanish]: Spanish – English – Portuguese – French

LGBTQI+ people and connected organizations participate online on this day together with the global feminist and labour movement [March 8, 2018]





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A **strong union** is appreciated in Spain's common claim of rights **this year**.

An **alliance** between different social movements that articulate a narrative on Twitter **denouncing an oppressive system**, patriarchy

In the Women's International Day [Spanish 2018 Dataset], we found, for instance, how **both women and LGTBIQ+ people identify themselves as vulnerable groups** & how it is a **strong narrative defending their rights, identities and equality**.



Kifkif @Kifkif_iguales · 8 mar. 2018

#8M | Let's make noise, migrants in barricades, together we will make the change. Lesbians, bisexuals and trans people demand rights yesterday, today and ALWAYS. #SomosDiversas #MigrantasLBTSM #KifkifConLasMujeres #huelgafeminista #huelgafeminista8M #YoParo8M #ALaHuelgaVamos





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International LGBT+ Pride Day & Transgender Law debates

Apart from a diversity of discourses of support, identity or claiming sexual affective freedom, **at the most negative pole**, in this big dataset, we detect a **multiplicity of narratives**:

- Some **conspiracy theories** associate **paedophilia and paederasta with LGTBIQ+ people and relevant people or organizations [grooming]**.
- Connected narratives argue that **gender ideology indoctrinates and sexualizes minors [grooming]**.
- A strong **religious discourse** that condemns LGTBIQ+ people [**satanic agenda**], or accuses them from diseases [monkeypox, Covid]
- **Biologist narratives** that condemn LGTBIQ+ people [sex vs gender].
- An intense debate and discourse **against the transgender law** accusing it of promoting transsexuality, **mutilating minors, being misogynistic and patriarchal**, with potential effects on the fragmentation of feminism

Qanon similarities in Spain: grooming

410.015 organic tweets



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International LGBTIQ+ Pride Day & Transgender Law



Señor Q @SrQdel98 · 6 jul. 2020



Y esto es lo que quieren legalizar los amigos del colectivo #LGTBIQ...
Es enfermizo y aberrante...normalizar **esto es** el primer paso a la normalización de la violencia infantil.

[#Q](#) [#QAnon2020](#) [#QANONWORLDWIDE](#) [#QanonArmy](#)
twitter.com/IlluminateDark...



P•nch•Mejia @PonchoMejia3 · 20 jul. 2020



¿Por qué destruir a los niños dándoles hormonas? ¿Estás de acuerdo que cualquier niño “decida,” su propio mal y destrucción? ¡De este tamaño la propuesta de la Ley Trans!



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International LGBTIQ+ Pride Day & Transgender Law

La Coalición SUMAS @CoalicionSumAS · 26 nov. 2020

● #Pedofilia y #LGTB: Mucho en común

En sus orígenes los pedófilos formaban parte del colectivo gay e incluso marcharon juntos reclamando libertades.

#NoALaPedofilia #NoALaldeologiadegenero



Carlos Oropeza @CarlosE_Oropeza · 26 ene. 2020



Ya basta! .@Robertlger, @DisneylandParis, @WaltDisneyWorld, ¡dejad a los niños que disfruten de los parques de atracciones sin adoctrinamiento #LGTB!



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Support, solidarity and outrage: (I) #justiciaparaSamuel



Columna Cero (4 de julio de 2021). Un grupo de jóvenes asesinan a Samuel Luiz, al golpearle (columnacero.com)

He is not "dead", **my brother HAS BEEN KILLED**. A piece of life has been taken from me. Everything you know, the smallest detail, **please get in touch**
#justiceforsamuel



Sandra Pérez
@SandraaPerez

No "ha muerto" a mi hermano lo HAN MATADO. Me han arrebatado un trozo de vida. ⚠️ Todo lo que sepáis, el detalle más mínimo, por favor poneros en contacto ⚠️ **#justiciaparasamuel**



Cabeza, L. (2021, July 7). Detenidas tres personas por la paliza al auxiliar de enfermería Samuel Luiz. *Columna Cero*. <https://columnacero.com/sociedad/61600/detenidas-tres-personas-por-la-paliza-a-samuel-luiz>



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Support, solidarity and outrage: (II) #justiciaparaSamuel

May Samuel's murderers rot in jail! Each and every one of them. They must be found. A faggot is not the one who loves freely, a faggot is the one who murders someone with the "support" of 12 other people. Faggot and COWARD is what you are, murderers. [#justiciaparasamuel](#)

Spain 2021. Killed for being gay.
[#justiciaparasamuel](#) "Hate speech precedes hate crimes".



Anabel Alonso Oficial  
@AnabelAlonso_of

España 2021.
Asesinado por ser gay.
[#justiciaparasamuel](#)
"Las palabras de odio preceden a los crímenes de odio".



La Rana Verde 
@LaRana_Oficial_

¡Qué los asesinos de Samuel se pudran en la cárcel!
Todos y cada uno de ellos.
¡HAY QUE ENCONTRARLOS!

¡Maricón no es quién ama libremente, MARICÓN es
aquel que asesina a alguien con el "apoyo" de 12
personas más!

Maricón y COBARDES es lo que sois ASESINOS
[#justiciaparasamuel](#)



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Semantic Network and Narratives through hashtags (III) #justiciaparaSamuel

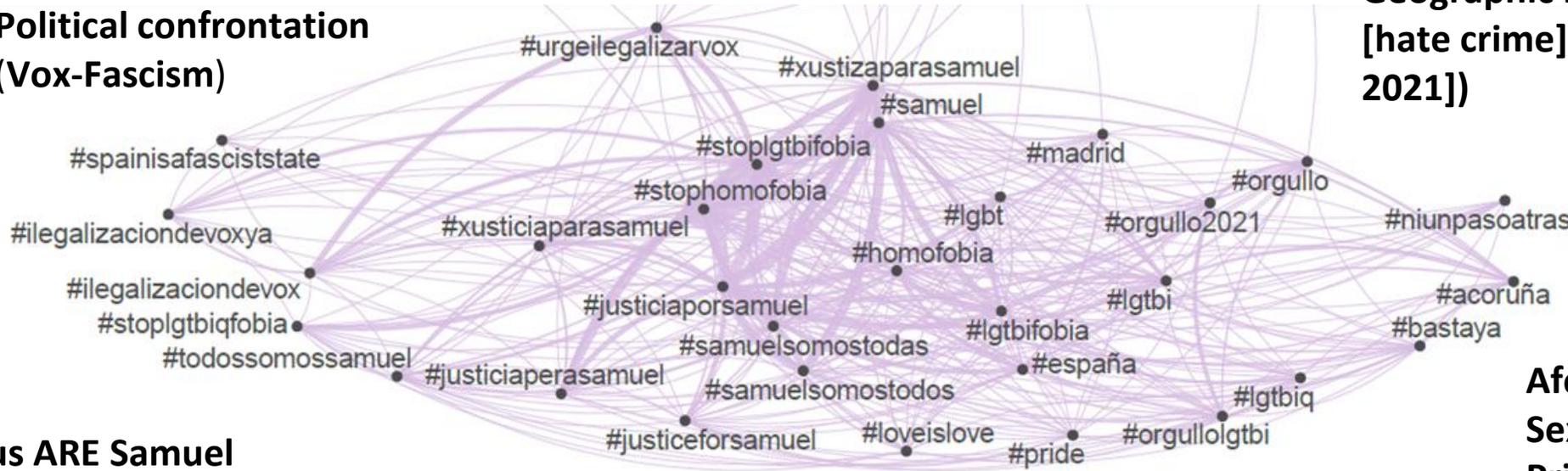
343.780 total & 30.081
organic tuits

Stop LGBTIQ+ phobia

Justice

Geographic Identity (La Coruña
[hate crime] – Madrid [orgullo
2021])

Political confrontation
(Vox-Fascism)



All of us ARE Samuel
(Identities – Sense of belonging to a group
or community)

Afective &
Sexual Freedom
Pride



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#Gaysper: Contranarratives: Answering hate speech with humour (28/4/2019)

**Strategy: Cultural
reappropriation of the insult
to counteract hate speech**

(Zaera, Tortajada & Caballero, 2021)



<https://www.publico.es/tremending/2019/04/29/gaysper-el-fantasma-lgtbi-creado-por-vox-que-se-ha-convertido-en-su-mayor-pesadilla/>

Zaera Bonfill, A., Tortajada Gimenez, I., & Caballero Galvez, A. A. (2021). The reappropriation of the insult as queer resistance in the digital universe: The gaysper case. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 12(1), 103-113. doi:10.5209/infe.69684



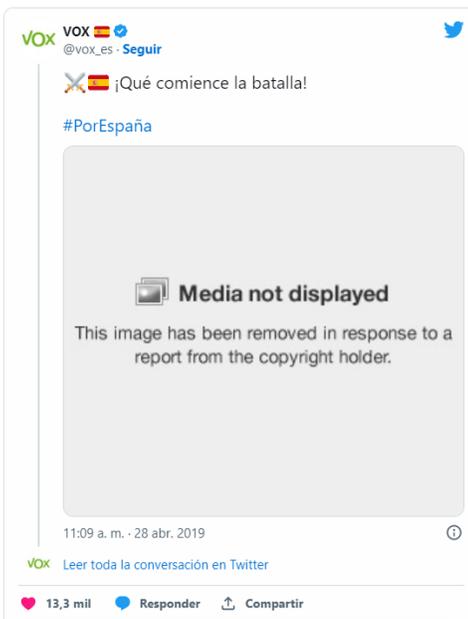
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#Gaysper & General Elections in Spain

After knowing the Election Results

Empowerment & Identity



<https://twitter.com/davidpareja/status/1122599387371397120>

Me encanta Gaysper y me encanta como el colectivo lgbt se adueña de los insultos y ataques hacia la comunidad, demostrando que somos fuertes y que no podrán con nosotros



1:00 p. m. · 29 abr. 2019

<https://twitter.com/Chemzih/status/1122817865843970049>



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From Casper, the friendly Ghost, to the new saga



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Casper_the_Friendly_Ghost



Become a new Gay icono, and new sign of identity and strength for the LGTBQ+ people

Diario de Sevilla (29 de abril de 2019)
https://www.diariodesevilla.es/sociedad/gaysper-fantasma-LGTiB-Vox-Meme_0_1350165368.html



GAYSPER



LEBSPER



BISPER



TRANSPER



INTERSPER



FLUIDSPER



NOBINSPER



ASEXSPER



BEARSPER



LEATHERSPER



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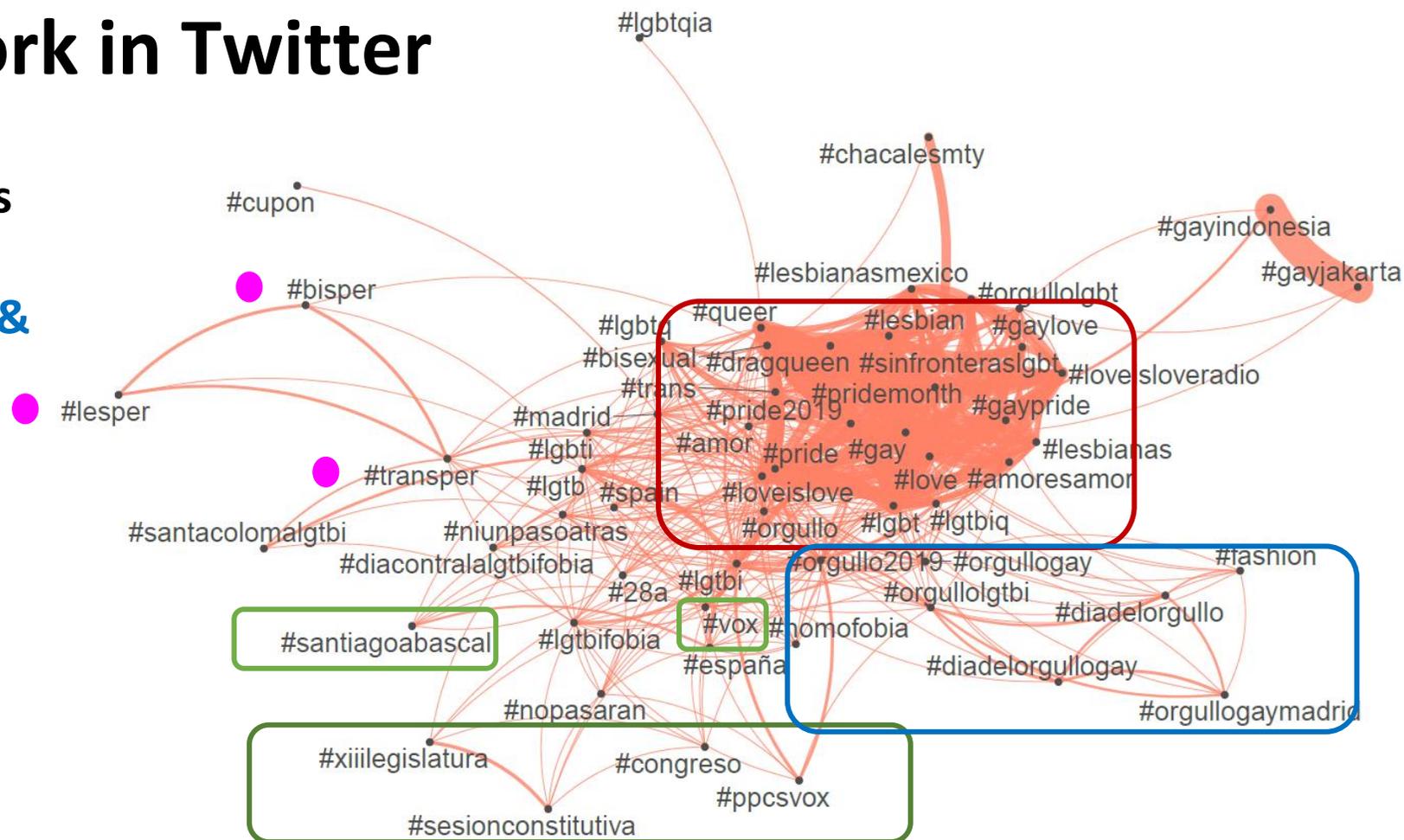


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#Gaysper Network in Twitter

Different communities of actors and narratives:

- Solidarity, Social Justice and & support to LGTBQ+
- Political confrontation in Spain [against Vox and Far-Right or Facism]
- Defence of Sexual Freedom [#loveislove, and Pride Movement ...]
- Other LGBTI+ people identified with the new icon





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#Lightyear Examples

As Pakistan is Islamic Republic, & this movie is on foreign agenda of Anti-Islamic values, plus violating constitution of Pakistan (Pakistan Penal Code 1860: Article 292, 294, 377, Part II 37), this movie should be Banned ☹ in Pakistani Cinema @reportpemra #ban_lightyear_in_pak

Can't afford my children watching gay movies ffs! This needs to be banned. #Lightyear #ban_lightyear_in_pak
The new disney lightyear movie sexualizes toys to children and is the textbook definition of grooming. #boycottdisney.
Stop the moral decay of this country.

Do not take your impressionable children to this Satanic Agenda - #SatanicAgenda #Lightyear #boycottLightyear #boycottdisney #TheNewEra Lightyear' same-sex couple is part of an evolution at Pixar - The Washington Post <https://t.co/ZEH5gX6VM5>

This pedophile grooming agenda must cease - this is Disney not Queer as Folk!! I've seen the end of the tunnel - it is DARK - like LEGALIZE it - DARK boycott Satanic Agenda Disney! - #Lightyear #Boycottlightyear #boycottdisney #SatanicAgenda #TheNewEra <https://t.co/45zeS4VgyM>

#Disney Disaster: United Arab Emirates Bans Pixar's 'Lightyear' over Lesbian Kiss #boycottdisney <https://t.co/36TQq4t5iD> via @BreitbartNews



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Hate speech online & Grooming (II) Bud Light & Dylan Mulvaney

 **Marjorie Taylor Greene** 
@mtgreeee

This is the result of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Bud Light chose a segment of the population that already has the same rights as everyone else and decided to join the movement that is grooming and sexualizing children and destroying women's rights. This is the song everyone is singing. Bud Light should apologize and kick Dylan Mulvaney to the curb.

[Traducir Tweet](#)

 **Trumps Nephew** 
@ForgiatoBlow47 · 12 abr.

FOCK BUD LIGHT SEND THIS BITCH TO #1

[Mostrar este hilo](#)



1,4 M reproducciones 1:05 / 2:09

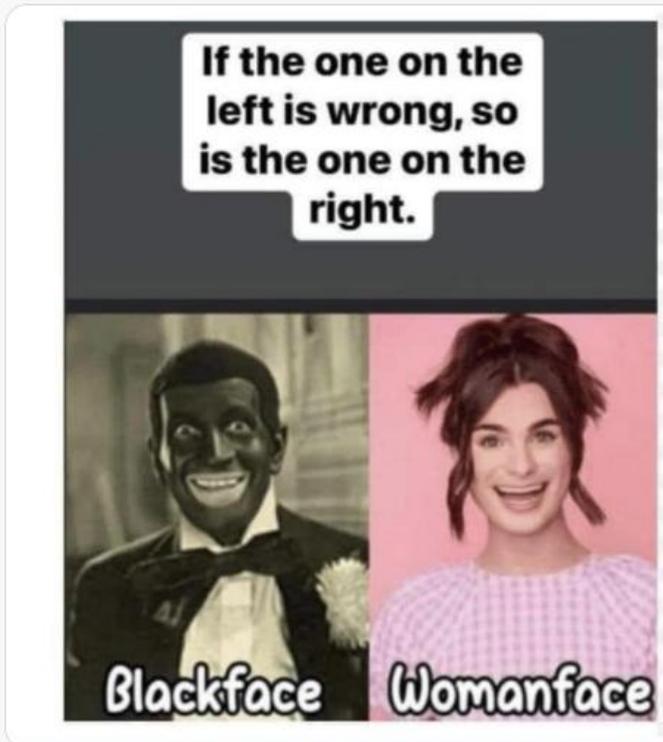
2:49 p. m. · 12 abr. 2023 · 2,4 M Reproducciones

 **novaculus**  **Pureblood Renegade** 
@novaculus · 12 abr.

If one is wrong, the other is wrong

If Rachel Dolezal can't be black, **Dylan Mulvaney** can't be a woman

[#BoycottBudweiser](#)



29 144 493 34,4 mil



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Discussion & Conclusions

End by leaving some ideas, suggestions, or questions for common debate.
Also, some concerns:

Common patterns were found through different case studies in terms of communities of support and rejection of LGBTQ+ people from the streets to the screens.

Some narratives are transversal, and are found in different datasets

- **Sex & Gender**: the biological versus the sociocultural
- Strength and recurrency of different **very emotional conspiracy theories associated with danger or risks for minors** (grooming)
- **Institutions and Leaders defending diversity accused or suspicious of grooming** [#irenemonteropedera = similar discourses to Hillary Clinton - QAnon]
- **Bag image** transmitted through conspiracy theories as a **precursor or hate speech/ crime**
- **Quick dissemination of very negative narratives about transgender** issues: castration, mutilation of minors, etc. (again)



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Finally, for the debate

- If **online** narratives maybe **represent**, in a great measure, what can be found today in society (**offline**)...
- And it has been found and strong confrontation between feminist & LGBTI+ online communities [around transgender law] [several times with the participation of far-right]
- Is this representing a real division of the feminist movement and the LGBTIQ+?
- Effects for the next future? Reflections