

Political Gay Science: Nietzsche, Conservatism, and Nonbinary Identity *

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Abstract

Why has modern American conservatism committed itself to gender binaries? Examining why this new categorizing unsettles conservatives (and how they have reacted against teacher unions and transgender influencers), this paper turns to Nietzschean analysis. It finds that the unsettling of heteronormative gender norms resulted in a pivot by conservatism to perpetuate a new gender identity politics in which nonbinary and especially transgender people are scapegoated. Imagining a nihilistic interpretation of gender, conservatives have made “transgender” a signifier of amorality and barbarism, envisioning themselves as warriors of normalcy. Conservative activists have named their frontier “radical gender ideology” while contesting the legitimacy of diagnosed gender dysphoria, revising its pathology, and alleging clinical gender transition is a financial ploy. As a result, bodies have become sites of contestation between doctors, trans activists, and groups that advocate against gender-affirming care. This paper traces the conservative movement from resentment to opposition on three fronts – pathology, pronouns, and restrooms.

Keywords: LGBTQ rights; resentment; Nietzsche; conservatism

I talk about transgender, everyone goes crazy. Who would have thought? Five years ago, you didn't know what the hell it was. – Donald J. Trump (2023, June)

INTRODUCTION

Candidate Vivek Ramaswamy stated onstage at the second Republican presidential primary debate that “transgenderism, especially in kids, is a mental health disorder” to a supportive

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audience, with no hindrance from the other conservative candidates. How and why did conservatives come to see transness as a threat to society? Ramaswamy's confident statement seems to be tapping into genuine sentiment. Similarly, gender-neutral pronouns are becoming staple features in American society which conservatives have picked fights over, resenting the increased disclosure of closeted gender matters. But how and why? Gender-neutral pronoun usage makes conservatives feel increasingly powerless and inferior. Illustrative of many conservatives' weaknesses, pronoun norms represent a hetero stronghold within American life where being cisgender is an in-group. Finally, conservatives have acted upon Ramaswamy's rhetoric. In 2023, 591 anti-trans bills were introduced across America, and 86 were passed (Trans Legislation Tracker, 2023). Why has this become one of the central issues in American politics?

New antiliberal conspiracy theories invoke sexual deviance, like pedophilia, as a feature of liberal elites. Why would conservatives come to believe and perpetuate these conspiracies? Using the Nietzschean model of resentment, I show that American conservative backlash is a panic-stricken exercise in ignorance. Rather than constructively criticizing the measure, conservatives have set a new discourse of victimhood alleging the moral repugnance of non-cisgender citizens. Demonization, a particularly toxic mode, denies conservative will to power as they remain willfully ignorant. Reactionary conservative conspiracy offers a scapegoat mythology where non-cisgender people, especially transgender people, are out to undo the fabric of family via manipulating children. They implicate diversity training in public educational institutions and corporate settings as a subversive effort to undermine conservative, often religious, assumptions and values about gender and identity. Transgender influencers who promote gender dysphoria discourse are labeled reckless and manipulative toward the promotion of gender transition by conservative voices that claim to protect youth from consequential surgery and therapy.

Conservative strategies appear self-therapeutic because they invoke self-autonomy, science, and medicine to make universal claims against gender transitioning, aiming to retain some feeling of power and righteousness. By othering gender minorities, these conservative efforts attempt to perpetuate a new gender identity politics. I survey pathology, pronouns, and restroom politics to better understand the conservative backlash.

THINGS AS THEY WERE

Nonbinary pronouns are often used to identify what is real, yet they only became widespread in American society in the late 2010s. Part of a greater movement away from sex-based gendering, non-binary is an umbrella term for those who fall outside of or between male and female identities. They may identify as both male and female or wish to have no gendered identity at all (Monro, 2019). Until recently, binary identity was the legal and medical default. At birth, an American doctor had to decide the sex of the child as “M” for male or “F” for female, no matter how anatomically intersexed the child was (Richards et al., 2016). Later rearticulations of gender created a much broader understanding of the role of gender in society, and gender transformations (i.e., gender alterations) became more common. Many moderns now identify as transgender or gender fluid and must endeavor to correct things as they were. Inevitably, these efforts conflict with law, medicine, and language systems that remain in an “M” or “F” mode as gender and sex become troubled concepts.

The old status quo was heavily influenced by natural law (Manion, 1949), which understood gender as binary. Natural law was informed by religion, an ideology presented as infallible and eternal (d’Entreves, 2017). As the principal aspect of culture, natural law is the root producer of meaning. Throughout time, Western gender has had a heterocentric discourse.

Nonbinary people have existed throughout the ages, yet Western natural law ordered sex into the predominant binaries: male and female. Thought to be the descendants of Adam and Eve, all members of society had been gendered without self-specificity. Even among moderns, mentioning “gender” evokes a shadow binary ontology.

Natural law plays a significant role in how Americans from all walks of life understand family (Halley, 2011). It asserts that rights are equal, inherited, and inalienable, yet, for example, Americans could not wed with the same sex until recently. The English gender pronoun trios he/him/his and she/her/hers flowed from binarism. Grounded in the meaning of where humans are from, who they are, and where they are going, trans life was unimaginable for the cisgender population.

Today, many transgender people find solace in a binary identity and think of themselves as male or female, yet many do not. Despite transitioning, some do not want to be confined to a solid gender identity. Some people are genderqueer or non-binary, preferring not to be labeled male or female (Scandurra et al., 2019). Identity for non-binary people can be important not only for themselves but as a political act of solidarity and disruption. Transgender people can understand themselves as binary or non-binary, and non-binary people are not exclusively transgender, gay, lesbian, or queer. Non-binary people merely participate in the unsettled concept of gender (Richards et al., 2016).

RESSENTIMENT

Nietzschean resentment is distinct. Taken from French, *ressentiment* is best articulated in his work *On the Genealogy of Morals* where he writes that resentment is the physiological product of oppression. Nietzsche (2013) calls the oppressed “slaves” – people filled with

ressentiment. Oppressive living motivates slaves to develop their own morality known as “slave morality,” which emerges from a threefold resentment: against their condition, their “self-concept for refusing to risk life to escape it, and its self-indulgent assumption that its oppressors are as interested intrinsically in it as it is in them” (Connolly, 1988). It leads to an “excessive, paranoid sense of victimization that justifies vengeful, spiteful attacks on those the sick wronging hold responsible for the sufferings” (Ure, 2015). Ressentiment surfaces, according to Nietzsche, with someone who has difficulty smoothly incorporating experiences into ongoing projects of self-explanation (Ure, 2015). Fassin (2013) states that imagined characters cannot be the subject of resentment. I argue that Fassin’s view is contradictory because Nietzsche explicitly states that resentment may include false (imagined) portrayals of objects of contempt. I therefore apply Nietzsche’s notion of resentment to contemporary American politics.

American conservative political leadership is committed to justifying their causes to voters in a presidential campaign. They do so by creating moral arguments against their opposition, and when the opposition is not there, conservatives craft a fictional enemy or simply scapegoat to revolt (Hardisty, 2000). Within a two-party democracy, conservatives cannot escape their alleged oppression and thus must continually craft oppression narratives in which they are morally superior (Abramowitz & McCoy, 2019). Furthermore, American conservatism is ascending after President Donald Trump successfully appointed three Supreme Court justices who together overturned *Roe vs. Wade* in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* – making abortion a federally unprotected right. The Biden administration has accomplished little to revert any conservative political gains, yet conservatives insist that they are oppressed.

Nietzsche affirms that oppression can be real or imagined. I assert that imagined enemies have populated the modern conservative mind. This does not mean that conservatives make-

believe their enemies, so much as conservatives come to believe they are under threat of some specter or nefarious influence by observing political theater. I adopt resentment as an operative feature for American organized political behavior in this analysis.

CONTESTATION I: PATHOLOGY

Transgender feelings (i.e., feelings of binary gender incongruence) have been increasingly socially accepted since the 2013 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) changed “gender identity disorder” to *gender dysphoria* – “clinically significant distress or impairment related to gender incongruence, which may include desire to change primary and/or secondary sex characteristics” (Perzanowski, Ferraiolo & Keuroghlian, 2020). Clinical approval made transgender treatment medically insurable and, therefore, more accessible and commonplace. A psychotherapy known as “gender-affirming care” helps diagnose patients with gender dysphoria. If sufficient criteria are met, a diagnosis of gender dysphoria is made.

Conservatives tacitly contest the legitimacy of gender dysphoria. *The Epoch Times*’ docudrama *Gender Transformation: The Untold Realities* (Elvhage & Morberg, 2023) and PragerU’s short film *Detrans: The Dangers of Gender-Affirming Care* (PragerU, 2023) vilify gender-affirming care. Both tell stories built upon an ideology of victimhood, implicating physicians and internet transgender influencers as predatory actors. Deceived trans patients allege that they were misdiagnosed with gender dysphoria instead of receiving treatment for anorexia or depression centered on self-image. They claim that they were “groomed” online into believing that gender transformation would solve their identity problems. Once at the doctor’s office, they received free, timely surgery from an allegedly avaricious trans-positive medical community.

Concerted conservative opposition to established LGBTQ rights is a recent phenomenon that coincides with non-binary gender mainstreaming. *The Epoch Times* and PragerU present the increased visibility of transness as a trans flood. This carves into the undergirding notion of anti-trans literature: it taps into ignorance and spreads paranoid beliefs that fester into anti-trans sentiment. This is not unprecedented for conservatives who, as political theorist William E. Connolly (2005) illustrated, sow seeds of resentment and revenge that subliminally change the course of American politics. As Connolly notes, doctrine is not always a reference point; here, documentaries are a resonance-building tool free of previously stated anti-trans argumentation. These documentaries provide glimpses into conservative culture manifestation and emerging propaganda methods.

PragerU imagines itself as a maker of accessible propaganda-laced media for the religious right without discussing Donald Trump – building itself as a popular alternative educational outlet. PragerU is an intentional marriage of politics and media maneuvering for “cunning revenge” (Nietzsche, 2013). By charging their conservative thought pieces with an educational facade, PragerU deliberately elicits the same anxiety, suspicion, and resentment that Fox News did in the George W. Bush years. PragerU is then a discursive reorientation of conservative propaganda. Over the last few decades, untrusting conservatives have seen public schools as pernicious to children and have begun to opt out of public education in favor of replacement curricula provided by PragerU. *The Epoch Times* and PragerU documentaries are circulatory, as they intend to enrich conservative causes. As consumers are captivated by seemingly marginal issues, their conservative opinions are shaped and reoriented toward action. Meeting the nihilistic reality of gender, conservatives evoke what Nietzsche (2013) called the “pathos of distance” to reassert themselves as righteous and good. Nietzsche (2013) described these actors as “Their right to exist, the priority

of the bell with the clear ring over the discordant and cracked one, is clearly a thousand times greater: they alone are the guarantors of the future.” It appears that founders Dennis Prager and Allen Estrin invest in fringe issues to craft new conservative agendas, including undermining LGBTQ rights.

The foundation of anti-trans politics is rooted in reverberating hate for the Affordable Care Act alongside gender dysphoria denial. Both films contain little to no argumentation yet depict affirming care as part of liberalizing medicine and society. These conspiratorial films plant distrust and suspicion that wedge innocent families against transness, or what is dubbed an undifferentiated “radical trans ideology” that preys upon their children. By embodying victimhood, transness is branded predatory, as Americans must combat it to save impressionable children from irreversible loss. This message is not only transphobic but repathologizes transgender. Toward the final crescendo of the docudrama *Gender Transformation*, characters openly question the legitimacy of transgender pathology, brushing gender dysphoria off as a symptom of mental illness. By making children exempt from treatment, they masquerade as humane since best practice states that treatment (i.e., taking puberty blockers) should be done as soon as possible, not just for aesthetics but to limit individual pain and suffering.

Detrans cast members tacitly allege manipulation in their streak of victimhood. Conservatives have had to cope with the large uptick (Respaut & Terhune, 2022) in sexual and gender transformation taking shape in America. As the nation's kids reorient themselves, conservatives have developed two new rationalizations: the social contagion theory and the snowflake theory (Ryan, 2023). Social contagion is the flood of sharing and learning on social media platforms that, in some way, messes up ‘normal’ kids. Again, no argumentation just nods and innuendo. Snowflake theory, on the other hand, presumes that youth who identify as nonbinary

are simply confused, pretending, or looking for attention. These rationalizations implicitly reject gender non-binarism – again, without any argumentation. Instead of implicating TikTok or YouTube as irresponsible platforms pernicious to impressionable children, both theories perpetuate fear and generate a trope of the other. Alleged grooming builds an unstated, unknown other out on the web without specifics or argumentation. At best, Prager can claim he wants to inform parents about threats, but then why is his film so worried about queerness? And who is grooming whom?

Trans bodies become objects of political contestation when revenge orients conservatives in what Connolly (2005) calls the “resonance machine,” which builds resentment dispositions, not opinions. Dehumanized depictions of transgender people in these films will likely lead to dehumanized treatment at the hands of conservatives. Hatred of Obamacare and fear for the future rub off well on discontentment over gender dysphoria. For the conservative psyche, Obamacare unleashes anti-transness. Instead of reckoning with gender dysphoria, conservatives will likely rage against those who are gender nonbinary. This new conservative orientation on gender perpetuates ignorance and debasement around gender, which could lead to the repathologization of transness. As Michel Foucault (1990) reminds us, the ‘pervert’ is created by institutions (e.g., law, medicine, and education systems). As with the legal aversion against sodomy, transphobic laws can generate self-hate and shame and turn gender non-conformists into a new species. An American minority, nonbinary people are the new convenient casualties for conservative mobilization.

CONTESTATION II: PRONOUNS

For Americans, gender norms are being obliterated. As philosopher Monique Wittig (1996a) comments, “for us, this means there cannot any longer be women and men, and that as classes and categories of thought or language they have to disappear, politically, economically, ideologically.” American discourse exists in a hetero-archy. The predominant language in America (English) inherits a binary understanding of gender, but language changes. Supporters of Preferred Gender Pronouns (PGP) incorporate nonbinary features to promote diversity and inclusion, as many people and institutions see heteronormativity built into language adopted by institutions (e.g., workplaces and schools), which contributes to the plight of nonbinary individuals (Ozturk, Rumens & Tatli, 2024; Ozturk & Tatli, 2016; Tavits & Pérez, 2019; Healy, 2015). Many Fortune 500 companies have pursued workplace diversity and inclusion efforts that include PGP to improve the work environment of LGBTQ workers, without outside pressure (Everly & Schwartz, 2014). Although challenging to implement successfully, diversity and inclusion programs are seen by many in the business world as important for creating a more just society (Ozturk, 2021).

PGP is a way to subvert and change the discourse on gender toward a liberatory mode. True liberation goes through language; as Wittig (1996a) argues, “The transformation of economic relationships will not suffice. We must produce a political transformation of the key concepts, that is of the concepts which are strategic for us. For there is another order of materiality, that of language, and language is worked upon from within by these strategic concepts.” For some transgender people, pronouns affirm true gender identity, and gender-fluid people can express themselves more authentically. There are also the “rebels,” which political theorist Joan Cocks (1989) describes as:

a visible denial of hegemonic truth, a declaration in the body that at least *here* the rule is dying or decaying. It points to in its being to possible schemes of things beyond the given: schemes that are not natural or rational or true but

radically different – and a radical difference from Masculine/feminine is surely good enough.

Although not a panacea, PGP can enhance the lives of those out of the heteronormative discord. As Miller (2015) illustrates, being trans often comes with its share of microaggressions, often centered around PGP, but for many, PGP represents an opportunity for hegemonic reprieve in American life via “abstraction” (Wittig, 1996b), yet not everyone supports nonbinary pronouns. Conservatives resent them. A recent poll found that 90% of Republicans say that there are only two genders, and 65% say they are uncomfortable using gender-neutral pronouns (PRRI, 2023). An article in the conservative *National Review* titled “Conservatives Shouldn’t Use Transgender Pronouns” incorrectly argues that using nonbinary pronouns is a form of reparations (Hillard, 2019). Falsely ascribing a nonbinary person may trigger a gender dysphoria reaction akin to intense anxiety. The author chooses to draw the political line onto the bodies of the nonbinary. This is worrisome, as recent studies show the more conservative someone is, the greater their negative gender biases (Prusaczyk & Hodson, 2020).

Modern American conservatives orient themselves as what Nietzschean analysis would refer to as “slaves” (Nietzsche, 2013). In their eyes, they are the good, civilized bunch trying to build a good society. Baked into their schema of a good society is the cisgender heterosexual male. As Wittig (1996b) cites Aristotle’s *Politics*, “For Being is being good, male, straight, one, in other words, godlike, while non-Being is being anything else (many).” Confronted with contra-man (i.e., a gender-fluid individual), fear is evoked. American conservatives thus cry foul when PGP enters common life. In fact, as Nietzsche (2013) wrote, they cry “God!” for a nature that is not real.

Gender theorist Jack Halberstam (2018) insists that pronouns are a shift in habits and customs that can help obliterate several dimensions of identity politics, but for many American conservatives, mundane language is something to fracas over. Foucault’s observation that humans

relish being grounded in categories is revealed in pronoun wars. The “discursive formations” of language establish normality in everyone’s life besides queer life (Foucault, 1994). As creatures living a groundless existence, humans generate meaning to better ground themselves. Culture, even pronouns, can ground humans in meaning so long as they still are useful. Misrecognition is where fear of groundlessness resides, and in a heteronormative nation, only binary people can find that grounding. People can find greater equal humanity in a more inclusive society that accepts transness and fluidity.

It is precisely within social discourse, Foucault (1990) argued, that truth is generated. Thus, anti-transgender and anti-gender-fluid pronoun use is a conservative reaction to unfamiliar discourse. Homophobic and transphobic reactions against PGP represent clinging to old notions of gender that generated power for cisgender heterosexuals. Articles from the conservative Catholic journal *First Things* make a markedly similar case that evangelicals did under George W. Bush: pronouns are tearing apart humanity; we are better off with scriptural pronouns.

In “Clinging to God and Grammar,” conservative Christian theologian Carl R. Trueman (2021) incorrectly invokes Nietzsche to argue that gender is not real but a linguistic construct, warning that with PGP, we surrender God. Nietzsche (1990) wrote that language should be debated to get further to the truth and that it can be used as a tool for domination. Additionally, he questioned reducing experience to language. Nietzsche (1990) made special note of what he called the “transvaluation of values.” In the process of reassessing values, like diversity and inclusion, language plays a critical role. Built into Trueman’s assertion is a claim to nature: governments that interfere with our nature are a threat to nature. Trueman (2021) asserts that “those who deem any and all categories oppressive except those they invent themselves” hate reality and God for establishing correct grammar. Trueman (2021) finishes his piece with a stark warning: “And as for

politicians who despise those who believe in a God-given reality: You can take my grammar and dictionary from me when you tear them from my cold, dead hands.” Again, Trueman insinuates a crisis of nature and with it, a crisis of binarism.

Carl R. Trueman also sows the same inflammatory homophobic and transphobic seeds as Dennis Prager and Allen Estrin. By labeling PGP as an ungodly ploy that will envelop all humankind, Trueman invokes the same end-times rhetoric gleefully embraced by evangelicals to legitimize the Iraq War invasion. Writer Samira Kawash’s *First Things* opinion, “The Pronoun Ritual,” echoes Trueman’s concern over pronouns, yet her piece enunciates victimhood. Kawash (2022) acknowledges the harm of refusing to use others’ preferred pronouns. She contests that the moment of conception is when gender is determined. As she puts it, using pronouns subtly undermines the truth and changes what a pronoun is. For her, making pronouns variable denies what she calls “sexual truth,” and PGP perpetrates a “radical gender ideology” ritual that attacks that reality (Kawash, 2022). Kawash evidently feels that even non-binarism is an attack on binary-normative culture.

Claims to nature are nothing new for conservatives. In the battle over gay marriage, Seana Sugrue (2006) argues that a “soft despotism” surfaces in a civilization that fashions itself against nature. Sugrue (2006) foresaw a crisis brought on by gay marriage in which gay marriage families generate “children who confuse liberty with license” because they are not loved as true children and, therefore, cannot “flourish,” which threatens the nation’s long-term sustainability.

CONTESTATION III: RESTROOMS

Restrooms have become loci of contestation in gender debates, too. American restroom segregation began with differentiation between genders and races. Hence, restrooms still exist for

boys, girls, men, and women. With the recent rise in nonbinary acceptance has come controversy over who may use which restroom. Some institutions have reimagined the restroom, making nonbinary restrooms accessible (West, 2010). This is a minute issue for many, but it matters for conservatives, like in Virginia, where conservative Governor Glenn Youngkin has passed new restroom policies on the treatment of transgender students where parents can request sex-separated facilities for their children (Rankin, 2023). As Paechter, Toft & Carlile (2021) report, such unsupportive environments yoke nonbinary students into outgroup members who may develop residual issues such as anxiety. Binarism is couched in the entire school experience, including restrooms.

Restrooms have become a major gender matter because transness has been accepted by the public so long as femininity is maintained. For example, if someone transitions to female and aspires to be feminine, that person is left alone, but if a nonconforming body enters a non-befitting restroom, it elicits a feeling of violation. Luce Irigaray (1985) observes that the female body is “marked off” from signification. Anyone who breaks the hetero-mode is “cancelled” (Butler, 2011). Christine Jorgensen was the first known transgender American woman. She was supported only because she was a “passing” blonde. For conservatives, passing matters and when nonconformists do not pass as the right gender, an interactional breakdown occurs which generates “anxiety, concern and even anger” (Swales, 2018; Westbrook & Schilt, 2014) because hetero-archy crafts women as a necessary object of difference (Butler, 2011). Much like race, sex becomes a signifier used for domination. Transgender people want to be treated as citizens with equal liberty; therefore, much like with PGP, they see restroom acceptance as part of their affirmation.

As with pronouns, heteronormativity has made restrooms a political issue. Jorgenson was accepted because she fit the norm, whereas transgender individuals are increasingly not because

they defy expectations. To what extent can we say that restroom politics is hinged on a battle of inconvenience between trans bodies and people of convention? As scholar Sara Ahmed (2016) argues, “Being offended is registered as an imposition on the freedom of others. The real offense is caused by those who are offended. This is how the very use of the word transphobia is heard as an attempt at censorship.” Restroom politics are indeed contestation and indicative of something greater.

Restroom nonconformers are clearly a small minority but have caused much political upheaval. Often, when protesters are depicted in the media, they are labeled “violent,” regardless of what sparked the so-called violence. When people complain about restroom nonconformists, they are revealing their cisgender privilege. As Ahmed (2016) writes:

minorities are often deemed as being violent, or as causing violence, or even as causing the violence directed against them. To give an account of trans people as causing violence (by virtue of being trans) is to cause violence against trans people. We are most certainly talking about lives and deaths here; and we are most certainly talking about incitement to violence.

So, who is more likely to suffer from restroom politics axioms such as presidential candidate Nikki Haley’s “Biological boys don’t belong in the locker rooms of any of our girls”?

The myth of the transgender restroom predator is an old one. It insinuates a perverted, hypersexual streak among people who are presumed to be public about their sexuality. Most transgender individuals are trying to pass as male when entering a men’s restroom and so on. It is only when the person cannot pass, that is, meet the criteria of binary society, that hostility can manifest. Again, as Foucault tells us, the pervert is a species created by gender-guided institutions. Even if a trans woman can pass as a female in a women’s restroom, the data show that there is no record of an uptick in associated restroom attacks (Barnett, Nesbit & Sorrentino, 2018; Schilt & Westbrook, 2015). Rather, Haley’s transphobic remarks reflect delusional politics.

Yet confused speech of perverts and rapists takes familiar shapes and colors in American conservative politics. Like any system of categorization before it, gender is discriminatory. In 2016, Donald Trump ran a successful xenophobic presidential campaign alleging Mexican immigrants are rapists. But before that scapegoating and the scapegoating of the trans community, there was explicit racial discrimination in America. Before the 1967 ruling of *Loving vs. Virginia*, members of different races were not allowed to marry in Virginia. These laws existed because of conservative normative exclusion, not out of nature. Today, the conservative backlash to the free use of restrooms is rooted in fear and ignorance. Every family believes in harm reduction and the protection of children, but the fact remains that the people who are most vulnerable and endangered in a restroom are transgender. For them, passing in a restroom can mean forgoing death, assault, or rape (McGuire, Okrey Anderson & Michaels, 2022; Guckenheimer, 2021), thanks to misinformation. So why misinform?

Red herrings are political cache. Since religious arguments are a losing battle before the U.S. Supreme Court, conservatives use the nomenclature of “natural rights” and “parent’s rights,” but more importantly, they resort to manipulating sentiment. Transgender rights erode natural conceptions of humans, yet they do not intrude on the rights of others. Rather, they inconvenience the privileged. Furthermore, ‘parent’s rights’ constitute conservatives rebelling against public life. The parental rights movement is opposed to the teaching of inclusive gender, sexuality, and race teachings without parental consent. Cleaving to legal principles of consent, organizations like Moms for Liberty disrupt inclusive curriculum. Members of Moms for Liberty may feel that they are losing their right to public schools where ideology is not oppressive, yet trans ideology is a hoax. Regardless, gender has become a central feature of the enduring American culture wars (Castle, 2019).

Today, political wars are rarely won with ideas, as they are often won with sentiments. I do not discount the legal friction between the queering of gender and natural law (Hutchinson, 2000). To say that natural law has lost out in recent cases (i.e., same-sex marriage) is an understatement, although resentment does not stem from there. Instead, the recent conservative pivot to binarism is politically conjoined to non-binarism because to insist on binarism is to exclude nonconformists. The conservative pivot is mobilized via drills in moral panic made possible by resonating ignorance and paranoia to build resentment against a nonbinary other. If candidate Ramaswamy insists that “there are two genders,” one should ask why this is happening and what it could mean for American citizens.

CONCLUSIONS

Why resent gender-fluid or transgender individuals? Is binarism an intensification of hatred or a strategic pivot by conservatives? I argue in this analysis that this recent conservative reorientation is indeed a pivot, not an intensification. Conservatives have not loathed the crossdresser, the transgender, or the queer until they perceive them as a familial threat, and that they have become. Very much a not-in-my-backyard reaction, Fox News generation conservatives devour what media resonance sows: hate and distrust because of what allegedly threatens their family. Political theorist Corey Robin (2017) attributes conservative political behavior to “the reactionary mind,” which is guided by the motto: “Cede the field of the public, if you must, stand fast in the private,” explaining how many conservatives react to familial breaches. As Meltzer & Musolf (2002) write, resentment is acted upon if a perceived practicable corrective measure, such as political oppression, is available. One must then ask why PragerU and *The Epoch Times* deliberately foster such resentment.

In taking a fascistic turn, conservative politics has embraced a baseless panic platform. Their leader, Donald Trump, taps into conservative resentment to direct new orientations to reelect him to office. Despite having run on a pro-LGBTQ platform in 2016, Trump is now primed to demonize those same people for political gain. Nonbinary bodies are merely auxiliaries to his end. Tales of coercive victimhood are being used by conservatives to unite against “radical gender ideology” – a signifier cataloged as opaquely liberal. Under the anti-nonbinary banner, conservative media merges liberalism and non-binarism to unite people toward conservative causes. Time will tell if conservatives are truly behind binarism. Until then, outfits like PragerU and *The Epoch Times* orient resentment against imagined characters for conservative ends, further politicizing trans bodies and delaying a genderless utopia.

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