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Presentation Proposal for *Backlash?* Conference

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Presentation Title: Counting or Cutting Identity Labels: How Social Media Dealt with Trump's Orders against Gender

Abstract

Online social platforms variously contended with Donald Trump's refusal to legally recognise any gender beyond binary sex assigned at birth following the U.S. president's executive orders 14168 ("Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government") and 14190 ("Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling") in January 2025. While the American government rapidly erased all presence of transness and gender-nonconformity from the language employed in its official websites, Mark Zuckerberg promulgated Meta's compliance with the federal policy change by removing identity label options other than *man* and *woman* from Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Conversely, popular dating apps such as OkCupid, Tinder, Hinge, Bumble and Feeld were prompt to defend the trans+ community and reject these presidential mandates.

I take up a comparative sociolinguistic analysis of gender labels prescribed and/or deployed (1) in early executive orders decreed by the second Trump administration, and (2) on social media that embrace or denounce the governmental invalidation of contemporary gender proliferation. This paper examines linguistic manifestations of ideologies involving gender and its very definition, doing so across the sectors of "Government and Law" and "Digital Platforms and Technology" in the context of the conference *Backlash? Gender-Inclusive Language in a Time of Resistance*. I propose to carry out a detailed comparison of social media drop-down identity label menus from before and after the executive orders, as well as the virtually published "Presidential Actions" and corresponding coverage by online press. This account serves to distinguish and describe ideological discourses, performative utterances and injunctions in relation to sex/gender from various parties across the dividing line of beliefs on the multiplicity or binarity of gender identity and existence. My inquiry pressingly addresses how socially-oriented corporations do or can, with use of language in the face of repressive governmental backlash, defend trans and gender-nonconforming existence.

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Biography

Elyx Desloover is a PhD candidate in cultural studies and feminist theory & research at the University of California, Davis who holds two prior degrees in philosophy and French-language literature from Université de Montréal. Xyr dissertation in critical feminist, queer and trans media studies and sociolinguistics interrogates the implications and impact of gender neolabels and microidentities proliferating since the mid 2010s on the internet and beyond. They are also a yin, vinyasa and hatha yoga teacher and a freelance writer. Ze regularly contributes thought pieces on polyamory, transness and kink to the sex-positive feminist educational platform Just A Little Fun.