

Conference Proposal Submission for *Backlash: Gender-Inclusive Language in a Time of Resistance*

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Title of Presentation:

Mapping the emergence of "Groomer" discourses in Canada: A discourse analysis of the proliferation of anti-gender politics targeting trans and queer affirming education and youth in schools

Abstract:

In this presentation we provide an analysis of the emergence and proliferation of “groomer” discourses in Canada, as part of a broader far-right tactical anti-gender political campaign targeting trans and queer affirming education and youth in schools. We focus on news media reports in a three-year period from 2022 to 2024 accessed electronically via the Factiva database and google.com. This period reflects what we identify as a turning point in the mainstreaming and populist uprising of right-wing political mobilization here in Canada with anti-government freedom protests in the country's capital during Covid in 2022 in addition to the *Million March for Children* protests in 2023 and 2024 organized by parental rights advocates (Martino & Kuhl, 2024). Our purpose is to map the specific effects of the tactical weaponization of this phantasmatic discourse (Butler, 2024) in the Canadian context, given its significance as a nodal point in the mobilization and mainstreaming of anti-gender political narratives and campaigns (Correa et al, 2023; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). We conceive of such campaigns as part of a broader transnational far-right network of actors, such as white supremacist and parental rights groups, as well as Christian nationalists and other religious minorities in the United States with whom there are shared grievances converging around ‘gender ideology’ as a threat to white cishet traditional family values (Butler, 2024; Perry et al, 2022; Preston, 2024). Our investigation is informed by a Foucauldian interpretive analytic approach which treats discourse as historically specific ensembles of *intradiscursive*, *interdiscursive* and *extradiscursive* formations and clusters of motivated far-right networked relations and tactics conceived of as a *dispositif* (Foucault, 1991; Gøtzsche-Astrup, & Villadsen, 2025). Our analysis contributes to broader discussions about the impact of anti-gender political campaigns on the thwarting of gender-inclusive discourses in schools.

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Biography

Wayne Martino PhD. is Professor of Equity and Social Justice Education in the Faculty of Education at Western University, Ontario, Canada. His most recent SSHRC (Social Sciences, Humanities Research Council) funded research study is entitled: *Supporting transgender students and transgender affirmative education in a context of resurgent anti-trans backlash and far-right extremism*.

Jennifer C. Ingrey PhD. is an assistant professor in equity and social justice education in the Faculty of Education at Western University, Ontario, Canada. Her recent book is published by Routledge entitled, *Rethinking School Spaces for Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender Diverse Youth: Trans-ing the School Washroom* (2023).