

DISINFORMATION BY OMISSION: DISCOURSES OF ANTI-TRANS DISINFORMATION ON THE JOE ROGAN EXPERIENCE PODCAST

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As one of the world's most popular podcasts and boasting a larger audience than mainstream media outlets like CNN (Bozzi, 2025; Mwachiro, 2025), discourses of trans-critical disinformation that are shared on the Joe Rogan Experience (JRE) podcast matter greatly. This paper employs corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (Baker, 2020; Hodson & Lefevre, 2022) to understand discourses related to trans individuals on the JRE podcast, and the ways they may threaten the safety and security of trans people. Using the framework of communicative capitalism (Dean, 2014), the role of precarious masculinity (DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021) in creating an audience for trans-critical disinformation is considered. The results of this study suggest that more needs to be done to raise awareness of and counter the one-sided politicization and dehumanization of trans bodies as expressed by Rogan and most of his podcasts guests.

The Joe Rogan Experience (JRE) Podcast is currently one of the most popular podcasts in the Western World (Bozzi, 2025). The podcast has 19.4 million subscribers on YouTube (McFall, 2025), and has 14.5 million followers on Spotify (Carman, 2024). This gives Rogan

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a reach far greater than most traditional media outlets. For example, CNN reported just over half a million prime time viewers in March 2025 (Mwachiro, 2025), whereas a recent JRE Interview with Elon Musk was watched over 13 million times on YouTube alone. As a result, some media commentators have suggested that it is possible that Rogan's endorsement of Donald Trump prior to the 2024 US Election was an important factor in the election's outcome (Siegal & Spangler, 2024). With such a platform, the guests and views that Rogan's podcast invites to the table matter greatly.

By critically analyzing the discourses that target disadvantaged groups, it is possible to see how the JRE podcast contributes to disinformation that exacerbates inequality. This paper thus unpacks the relationship between inequality and disinformation about trans people on the JRE Podcast. It is important to analyse the discussion about the trans community on popular alternative media like the JRE podcast because, as Billard (2023) wrote, gender critical discourses are not neutral, but are often part of "a coordinated disinformation campaign" (p. 236) aimed at reinforcing dominant power structures.

Employing corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA), transcripts of all JRE episodes mentioning the word "trans" were collected using the podcast search engine PodScripts (2025). These episodes were then cleaned and collated, then analyzed using corpus linguistics software to isolate all instances where the trans community was mentioned. These instances were then used as the site for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (see Baker, 2020; Hodson & Lefevre, 2022; Jakubowska, 2023).

The paper begins with an overview of how communicative capitalism contributes to the spread of disinformation, particularly on media like podcasts. Next is a review of the critical literature on how trans bodies are portrayed in media. After this literature review, the methodology and method are explained, followed by a detailed analysis of trans discourses in 188 episodes of the JRE podcast. Finally, these discourses are considered in light of Rogan's precarious masculinity (DiMuccio & Knowles, 2021). This paper argues that the question of whether the transphobic discourses are misinformation, shared unwittingly, or disinformation, sharing with intent to deceive is an argument that obscures the negative repercussions of such discourses. The mechanisms behind communicative capitalism's tendency to reward content with maximum (negative) impact will ultimately result in salacious falsehoods spreading faster than efforts to counter them.

1. Review of the Literature

1.1. Communicative Capitalism and the JRE podcast

Communicative capitalism acts on the process of communicating, making communication the “primary means for capitalist expropriation and exploitation” according to Jodi Dean (2014, p. 4). Capitalism favours certain types of communication over others. For instance, it favours conspiracies and other content that produces highly negative affect, thus contributing to the conditions that favor the spread of disinformation. Dean (2019) suggests that under communicative capitalism, the content of communication is less important than its capacity to arouse strong emotions in the people who consume such content. Podcasting is an ideal medium under communicative capitalism because podcasts are intimate, and sensory. Podcasts also tend to be more informal than other media forms, which helps to inspire strong parasocial relationship potential between the listener and the podcaster (Rae, 2023). This makes podcasting uniquely suited to boost the affective nature of information exchange.

The important role of affect in the audience reception of Rogan’s podcast can be seen in a recent scholarly article about an episode with Elon Musk. After the episode was posted to YouTube, the top comment was not about the content of the episode, but about the way Musk spoke, and the emotions that were aroused in the commenter when he listened (Rae, 2023). The affect aroused by Rogan, whether inspired by comedy or conspiracy, is likely an important source of the podcast’s popularity. If Rogan has noticed, over the years of his podcast, that certain content (salacious or conspiratorial) gets more engagement, he may, as a result of audience capture (Jurg *et al.*, 2025), consciously or unconsciously decide to create similar content in the future. Whether Rogan believes the information about trans people that is shared on his forum or not doesn’t matter because the mechanism of communicative capitalism rewards the content that is most likely to garner a response. Simply put, communicative capitalism rewards the spread of disinformation. Rogan might not be aware he is spreading misleading information, but he is also incentivized to not fact-check it.

Rogan and his supporters claim that the editorial choices of the podcast are driven mainly by an ideological commitment to protect an idea of free speech. But not all speech is created equal within the framework of communicative capitalism (Bozzi, 2025). Bozzi (2025)

notes that clips from Rogan's episodes are frequently re-posted in shorter versions across social media sites, with the edgiest, or controversial, clips spreading the farthest. These snippets circulate because they are controversial—affect is what drives the sharing. Rogan shares his sizable platform more often with people who are like him (men, comedians, MMA fighters, or people who share his already existing views), making him a purveyor of biased information at the very least. Communicative capitalism, however, weaponizes biased views and creates the conditions for disinformation because the most scandalous clips—the ones most likely to dehumanize trans individuals—are the clips most likely to travel the farthest in the online environment, spread both unwittingly (misinformation) and intentionally (disinformation). Whether purveyors of disinformation seek a spot on Rogan's podcast because they know Rogan loves to engage with controversies, or whether people repost a clip from his podcast because they want to "troll the left," Rogan contributes to the conditions that make the spread of disinformation more likely.

Under communicative capitalism what matters is the accumulation of money and symbolic power in an attention economy (Dean, 2024). Information that feeds into a stereotype that arouses fear or outrage is considered valuable because of its capacity to attract attention. This paper argues that understanding the role played by the current communicative capitalist media environment means recognizing that while Joe Rogan is discussing ideas that are already circulating, he is also giving them extra attention and is rewarded by the market for doing so. In the act of spreading these ideas, Rogan spreads dehumanizing disinformation. Communicative capitalism creates incentives for Rogan to not interrogate his own beliefs or the beliefs of his guests, and, as exemplified by Rogan's podcast, rewards disinformation.

1.2. Trans Bodies in the Media Gaze

Media have long framed trans identities through a limited set of tropes, often portraying trans individuals as the psycho-trans (as in the film *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1991), tragic victims (as in the film *Boys Don't Cry*, 1999), traitor figures (as in the film *The Crying Game*, 1992), or people with hypersexualized bodies (as in the film *Girl*, 2018) (Cavalcante, 2013; Capuzza & Spencer, 2017; Solomon & Kurtz-Costes, 2018). These representations uphold trans-normativity, which Johnson (2016) defines as "a hegemonic ideology that structures

transgender experience, identification, and narratives” (p. 466). This is particularly concerning given that, as McInroy & Craig (2015) argue, media function as a primary source of information about transgender issues reinforcing simplified and often misleading understandings of trans identities and experiences.

Multiple studies have shown that trans women are consistently overrepresented compared to trans men and nonbinary individuals across both entertainment and news media (Åkerlund, 2019; Billard & Zhang, 2022; Bracco *et al.*, 2024). This overrepresentation is shaped by both societal investment in binary gender norms and a voyeuristic fascination with femininity as transgression. As Schilt & Westbrook (2009) argue, deviations from masculinity are more harshly sanctioned, which renders trans women more visible and more vulnerable to sensationalized media framing. Koch-Rein *et al.* (2020) describe this phenomenon as hypervisibility, which results in the frequent objectification, ridicule, and misrepresentation of trans femininity, while simultaneously erasing the experiences of trans men and nonbinary people (Koch-Rein *et al.*, 2020, p. 6).

Trans women are not only more visible in media, but also more frequently subjected to stereotypes of deviance, criminality, or victimhood (Mogul *et al.*, 2011; Billard & Zhang, 2022). Solomon & Kurtz-Costes (2018) document the enduring presence of harmful portrayals of trans women as mentally unstable or deceitful. This excessive focus on the physical body reinforces what Van Haelter *et al.* (2022) call a “transnormative gaze,” where media obsess over surgical status, genitalia, and physical transformation, thus reducing identity to corporeal change. Media can also be significant sources of disinformation about the trans community and medical transitioning.

Billard (2023) grouped misinformation about the trans community into six categories:

- 1) definitional misinformation, which is misinformation about what transition-related health care actually is and what it does; 2) misinformation about the accessibility of trans care; 3) misinformation about the safety of trans care; 4) misinformation about the cost of trans care; 5) misinformation about desistance, or the frequency with which people cease to be trans or detransition; and 6) misinformation about the etiology or cause of trans identity (p. 236).

These six forms of misinformation are mostly spread unknowingly by well-meaning people but can also be used by opportunistic actors to scapegoat the trans community. Unfortunately, key systems of media power are often implicated in the spread of trans-related mis- and disinformation. Influential media sources can spread disinformation to a broad audience, deepening the inequalities experienced by trans and non-binary individuals. Negative and stereotypical media portrayals, and trans-related disinformation have tangible negative and dangerous consequences for the well-being of trans individuals (Ringo, 2002; Kermode, 2010; Hughto *et al.*, 2021; Tebbe *et al.*, 2022). Studies link media stereotypes directly to discrimination, including verbal harassment and policy-level consequences, such as opposition to trans-inclusive bathroom laws (Price-Feeney *et al.*, 2021; Neidenmark, 2023).

Despite the growing body of scholarship on trans representation in visual and online media (Billard, 2016; McInroy & Craig, 2017; Van Haelter *et al.*, 2022), academic attention for the portrayal of trans women within podcasting remains scarce. While some studies have explored podcasting as a medium for queer and trans visibility (Ferreira, 2022) or examined structural gender biases in podcast discourse (Teleki *et al.*, 2025), these works do not specifically address how trans women are represented or misrepresented on influential platforms such as the JRE podcast. This gap underscores the need for critical analysis of podcasting not only as an emerging media form but as a space where transphobic narratives and dehumanizing disinformation may circulate unchecked, helped along by key influencers with very large audiences, like Rogan.

2. Methods and Methodology

2.1. Research Question

This paper asks how trans-exclusionary mis- and disinformation is spread on the Joe Rogan podcast, and how the mechanisms of communicative capitalism contribute to disinformation by omission related to this topic. To answer this question, corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (CACDA) is employed following Baker (2020). CACDA was chosen so that a more expansive sample of podcasts could be examined systematically, in order that the research could present a broader view of Rogan and guest's statements in context.

2.2. Sampling

The website PodScripts was used to search for and download every episode containing the keyword *trans**. This search garnered 200 episodes from 2012 until the end of May 2025 out of 2097 total episodes during that time frame. The data were cleaned, and any transcripts where “*trans**” referred to something outside of the transsexual and transgender community—for example, trans fats or the Trans Am vehicle—were removed. This left the remaining 188 episodes for analysis (see Appendix). As most episodes were more than 2 hours long, each episode contained an average of 50 pages of single-spaced text, or over 7,800 total pages of text. The transcripts of the episodes were uploaded into the corpus analysis tool “AntConc” (Anthony, 2024) and analyzed against the included reference corpus. The reference corpus allows the critical discourse analysis to begin with an amount of statistical rigor (Baker, 2020). It is the words and phrases that are significant, when compared to a reference corpus of regular spoken and written English, which tell the researcher where to direct their attention in the dataset.

2.3. Analysis

The CACDA analysis progressed as per Baker’s 9 step iterative model as outlined in Hodson & Lefevre (2022).

1. Step one was an analysis of context around the topic under study. In this case, the context is detailed in the literature review and also included a thorough and extended engagement with the transcripts in which trans people were most and least mentioned.
2. Step two was to establish research questions, and build the corpus, which was completed as shown in subsection 2.2, previous.
3. Step three consisted of a corpus analysis of the frequencies, clusters, keywords and other properties of the corpus, which were considered in light of the related literature and social context surrounding the topic.
4. Step four used the insights gained in step three to begin conducting a CDA of smaller representative sets of data. In this case, interesting sites for CDA were identified by plotting the dispersions of the keyword *trans** in different episodes, as

well as by looking at concordances and n-grams related to the keyword *trans**, finally settling on the statistically significant concordances as the key starting point for CDA.

5. Steps five to nine included multiple iterations as needed, where key discourses and discursive strategies were identified until no new discourses were revealed.

For the corpus analysis, a stoplist from the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK) was applied and Anthony's (2024) American English (Am06) reference corpus was used since Rogan and his guests mainly speak in American English. The American English reference corpus included in AntConc suite includes 500 files with 1,017,879 tokens, taken from a wide range of contexts. The Rogan corpus included 188 files and 7,198,467 tokens. The keyness and log likelihood probability threshold was set to 0.01 (+ the Bonferroni correction), as is the standard for this kind of analysis (Anthony, 2024).

The corpus analysis stages of the research focused on the key concordances and n-grams that were identified as statistically significant when compared to the reference corpus. These words were more likely to occur together in Rogan's transcript than they are in regular written or spoken American English. This means that using the concordance measures to identify key sites for further study adds additional rigor beyond the researcher, allowing the research to focus the CDA on key sections of the corpus that are statistically meaningful. See Baker (2020) for additional details on the process of CACDA as a method and methodology. To answer the main RQ for this project, a log-likelihood with a logDice measure (see Deng & Liu, 2022) was used to calculate meaningful collocations or relationships between words to search the word *trans** with the wildcard *** used to include additional characters. Each statistically significant collocated term was then examined in context to conduct the CDA. Table 1 shows the top 15 collocates to *trans* which were selected for the more detailed qualitative analysis (note all had $p < 0.001$), sorted by rank and frequency. After collocations were identified, each instance was located in the corpus and used to conduct the CDA.

Table 1. Top 15 terms collocated with trans*

Collocate	Rank	Freq
women	1	358
trans	2	262
woman	3	278
people	4	787
rights	5	94
male	7	82
men	8	103
female	9	70
person	10	138
homophobic	11	32
exclusionary	12	23
activists	13	34
athletes	14	42
competing	15	38

Qualitative coding for the purposes of CDA followed Fairclough's three-step method (Fairclough, 1995; Gölbaşı, 2017). Beginning with step one, description or micro-level analysis, the key texts identified via the corpus analysis were analyzed at the sentence level, and key discourses were identified and grouped. In step two, the meso- or interpretive level of analysis, notes were made on the relation between the identified texts and background assumptions, which will become apparent in the discussion section of this paper. Finally, in step three, the explanation or macro level of analysis, power relations were noted and communicative capitalism as a driving discursive force was considered, which is also detailed in the discussion section of this paper. In the next section focusing on results, the outcome of the corpus analysis and the micro-level discourse analysis are presented. Then, in the discussion section, the meso and macro analyses are incorporated to complete the CDA.

3. Results

3.1. Podcast Overview and Corpus Data

Between 2012 and the end of May 2025, Joe Rogan spoke about trans people on 188 episodes. Often Rogan would bring his favorite people back to do multiple shows. Of 188 shows mentioning trans people, 136 had unique guest combinations, and since some shows had multiple guests, there were a total of 126 unique guests. Table 2 below shows the professional backgrounds of each of the guests invited for each unique episode on Rogan.

Table 2. Guest backgrounds

Guest Background	Number
comedian	47
journalist/media/ pundit	12
academic	11
podcaster	11
MMA	7
musicians	6
writer	5
YouTuber	5
CEO	4
politician	4
entrepreneur	3
actor	2
athlete (not mma)	2
biologist	2
activist	1
attorney	1
CIA	1
porn star	1
tech investor	1

As shown in Table 2, above, most of the guests discussing trans individuals with Rogan were not experts in the field, but rather comedians, journalists, even other podcasters. Most of the academics interviewed by Rogan were not experts in gender or queer theory, but instead, scholars who were renowned for their anti-trans sentiment, such as Debra Soh, Abigail Shrier, Jordan Peterson, and Brett Weinstein. Additionally, only two guests invited to speak on this topic were trans (see Figure 1, below). Furthermore, these two trans people have very conservative views about trans people and are known for their controversial standpoints that children should not have access to trans-supportive care (Buck Angel, and Blaire White). Most of Rogan's guests in the episodes of the corpus were self-identified cis-gendered men, which puts them in a position of power relative to those people they are discussing.

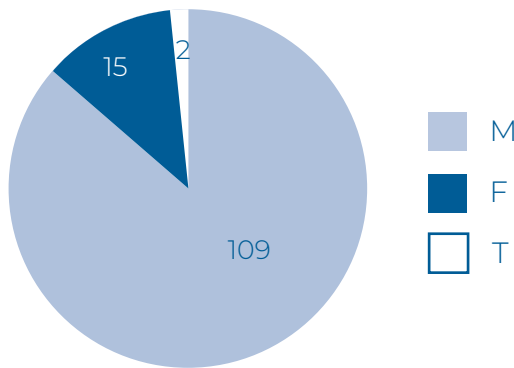


Figure 1. Guest gender identity

An internet search was conducted to find the stated political viewpoints of each guest. When a guest had not explicitly stated their political viewpoints, it was marked as unspecified or unknown. This revealed that, at least in relation to discussions of the trans community, Rogan tends to favor right of centre or libertarian guests, rather than liberal, centrist, or guests with unstated political views. In fact, more than half of Rogan's guests in this sample identified as right, far right or conservative, with many of both the right and libertarian guests stating openly that they had voted for Trump (see Figure 2, below). Rogan has declined to take a political side, suggesting that he and his podcast are

centrist (Bozzi, 2025), however, this analysis suggests the claims of centrism may not actually be true.

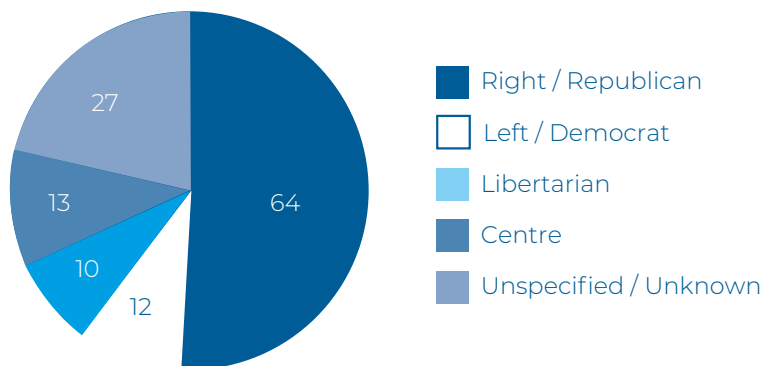


Figure 2. Guest political views

3.2. Critical Discourse Analysis

The transphobic discourses in Rogan’s podcast often discredit the idea of a trans identity. Claiming that transgender identity is a symptom of a mental illness, or autism, to claiming that trans people are actually sexual perverts who cheat at sports, and/or support the “radical left” or “woke” agenda, these discourses function as part of a broader discursive dehumanization of the type described by Baysha (2020). Dehumanizing discourses occur when differences between a dominant group and a dehumanized group are portrayed as inevitable, and natural, and when the dehumanized group is portrayed as threatening or immoral (Baysha, 2020). On the Rogan podcast, five key discourse topics engage in discursive dehumanization or delegitimation of trans people: 1) Fairness in sport, 2) trans moral panic, 3) naturalizing gender stereotypes, 4) “I’m not biased”/“I have trans friends”, and 5) trans rights are part of the “woke agenda” and an assault on free speech. The following section will cover each of these discourse topics in turn.

3.2.1. Fairness in sport

A key discourse topic constructs trans identity as a way men attempt to gain unfair advantages in women’s sports. This topic overlaps with

some of the other discourse topics that naturalize gender stereotypes and contribute to a trans moral panic. This discourse of fairness in sport nevertheless occurs often enough to warrant its own category of analysis. This discourse topic includes three types of trans-critical disinformation. The first concerns the idea that biological men are competing against biological women in sports and thus are sure to win at any sport that allows trans people to enter the competition. In a 2019 interview with Joe Rogan, the comedian Michelle Wolf stated:

if you're a trans person and you were born a man and but you've always believed that you're a woman that's also not fair you know like that's like (sic.) that's a crazy predicament to be put into sure yeah but that doesn't mean I want you competing with me because you're going to destroy me yeah it's not fair (episode 1396).

In this example, the word “believed” suggests that there is nothing natural about being trans. The “belief” that one is a certain gender is positioned in opposition to how a person was born in this quote, and thus it lends a degree of inauthenticity to the trans experience.

The next type of fairness in sport disinformation spread by Rogan contends that there is excessive physical danger to women who are characterized as being forced to play against trans athletes. This can be illustrated with reference to a 2018 interview with academic Debra Soh. Discussing a boxing match Rogan suggests:

You were just literally watching a former man beat up women who never had the benefit of 30 years plus of testosterone in their body (episode 1147).

These claims of excessive physical danger qualify as disinformation being spread as the claim that a trans boxer beating up a woman has been debunked. According to PBS², the boxer was never trans to begin with. Also “beat up a woman” is a leading and affect-rich phrase. In boxing, technically the opponents are beating each other up, but to suggest a man is beating up a woman brings an added level of judgement to the discussion.

2 See the news story debunking the identity of the boxer here: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/false-accusations-surrounding-olympic-boxer-highlight-debate-around-gender-and-sports>.

The final type of trans-critical disinformation in this theme concerns trans-affirming hormone therapy as a performance-enhancing drug, which gives trans men an unfair advantage. This discourse can be seen in the 2020 interview with comedian Mark Normand:

Joe Rogan: In order to transition, you have to take testosterone.

Mark Normand: Ooh, so now you're taking what you call supplements. (episode 1420).

This claim, and others like it, can be quickly debunked. In the journal *Sports Medicine*, Jones *et al.* (2017) conduct a systemic literature review that shows no evidence that gender affirming hormone therapy conveys an advantage to either trans female or trans male athletes. The use of the word “supplements” to discuss trans-affirming care brings to mind the idea of performance-enhancing drug use, which is not allowed in most professional sports. This construction erroneously suggests that trans-affirming care is akin to doping.

3.2.2. *Trans Moral Panic*

The trans moral panic discourse topic covers the idea that trans identity is a deception that preys on vulnerable women and children. This discourse topic includes three types of dehumanizing disinformation: 1) trans identification is due to mental illness, 2) trans identification is a result of peer pressure, and 3) trans identification is a sexual perversion.

A link between trans identity and mental illness tends to be presented as the idea that while there are “real” trans people, most people who think they are trans are actually suffering from psychological issues, trauma, or other mental health challenges. For example, in a 2023 episode with comedians Tony Hinchcliffe and Brian Redban, Rogan says:

It's like Jordan Peterson talked about he said it's always been a part of the psychology literature. Like it's a reoccurring thing that exists with men, that there's been men forever who like to dress up like women (episode 1948).

Included in this type of disinformation is the idea that therapists just assign trans labels to people who should not be trans because the

therapist is worried about censorship, as in this 2022 interview with journalist Megan Murphy, in which she says:

I think that these people are often trying to deal with mental problems in physical or superficial ways [...] If you go to a therapist and you're a young woman and you say, I'm a boy, you have to take an affirmative approach and say, okay, yeah, you're a boy. Go get some hormones like we can give you a mastectomy and a hysterectomy so they're not being questioned about like anything else that it might be connected to past trauma [...] I think therapists are scared so probably not all therapists but these therapists don't want to be accused of transphobia and then lose their careers (episode 1830).

The moral panic and “protect the children” discourse topics most often show up in discussions about female-to-male transitions, as seen in the quote above, and is less apparent in discussions of male-to-female transitions. Included here is both disinformation about the safety of puberty blockers, and disinformation that girls may wish to transition due to peer pressure, as exemplified by the 2019 conversation with comedian Greg Fizzsimmons, when Rogan suggested: “you’re so easily influenced by your environment right so easily influenced it’s so easy to convince a kid” (episode 1378).

In reality, trans individuals have to go through a lengthy and intense process before they can be diagnosed and treated. Therapists and psychologists have to meet rigorous standards of practice both set by their professional associations, along with larger organizations such as the American Psychological Association³. The idea that a trans identity is a result of peer pressure minimizes the bullying that trans children often receive at the hands of their peers, making them at more risk of harm, especially if they do not get the proper care.

While children assigned female at birth are portrayed as victims if they choose to transition, people assigned male at birth are portrayed as sexual perverts. This dehumanizing disinformation in trans moral panic discourse topic concerns the idea that men dress up as women to get aroused, putting women in danger, as can be exemplified with reference to a 2020 podcast interview with academic Debra Soh, who

3 See: <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-patients/gender-dysphoria-diagnosis>.

has been identified by GLAAD (the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) as a source of anti-LGBT rhetoric :

[...] for some trans women, their desire to transition stems from sexual arousal and the idea that becoming a woman is actually sexually arousing [...] I, again, I have so many people who reach out to me saying that they experienced this [...] And it's called autogynephilia, which it translates, that's a Greek word to say, love of oneself as a woman. And it's a paraphilia, which is an unusual sexual preference. And paraphilias were my research expertise when I was in academia (episode 1520).

These claims have again been debunked. Pink News, an LGBT focused publication, mentions autogynephilia specifically in the article *Five Lies Terfs Tell About the Trans Community—Debunked* (Hansford, 2023), stating that the theory has been debunked multiple times. In addition to being untrue, this type of discourse links trans women to perversion, and suggests that trans women are a threat to cisgendered women. Despite the lack of evidence, Rogan accepts Soh's discourses, and can be seen speaking to others about it in future episodes (episodes 2223, 2221, 2218, 1948, 1941, 1933, 1895, 18, 30, 1769, 1538).

3.3.3. *Naturalizing Gender Stereotypes*

If trans identification is portrayed as a perversion or mental illness then it follows that there must be a natural or non-perverted order of things. Rogan and his guests systematically naturalize gendered stereotypes. The resulting naturalizing discourse topic carries two types of dehumanizing disinformation: 1) the linking of sexual biology and gender identity, and 2) the reinforcement of outdated gender norms and expectations for men and women.

Firstly, there is an oft-repeated discourse linking gender to sexual characteristics, as in this 2020 interview with academic Abigail Shrier, who is also named by GLAAD as a source of anti- LTBTQ+ rhetoric:

Every part every cell in a boy's body is stamped with an XY chromosome right so the idea that somehow an XX chromosome to brain got stuck into his head is kind of silly right it's sort of more like tooth fairy stuff (episode 1509).

Here the tooth fairy analogy suggests that trans identities are a fiction. Additionally, the way trans identity is described here strips the experience of trans or cis identity of all nuance. Schrier is suggesting that anyone who believes in the truth of the experiences of trans people is childlike, misled and unserious. Trans harm is minimized because it simply does not exist.

As gender and sex are linked, the stereotypical expectations linked to secondary sex characteristics are continually reinforced too. An example of this second type of disinformation can be found in a 2018 interview with Debra Soh in which Rogan suggested, without pushback, that men are always physically stronger than women:

But even in that, there's people that are just physically, they're just going to be better. There's no getting around it [...] they're going to have better genetics [...] And the arguments for it are so shitty and they're so riddled with progressive speak that they're trying to pretend that this is a woman now. This is not a woman. This is a trans woman (episode 1147).

In this particular example, the word “pretend” suggests that not only is trans identification unnatural, but it is also deceptive. Also, the use of the word “better” positions men as superior to women, not only in sport, but beyond. These claims are falsifiable. The reality is there are many genetic and structural factors that contribute to success in sports and other areas of life.

3.2.4. *“I’m Not Biased”*

Despite repeated conversations disavowing the lived realities of trans people, Rogan and his guests often make a point of stating that they are not transphobic. This discursive tactic is often used to lend credence to the very arguments that are transphobic and is achieved via two means: 1) identifying what they see as good or reasonable trans people, and 2) whataboutism, as in claiming they support trans rights, but what about women or children?

In the first example of “I’m not biased” discourse, Rogan likes to bring up Buck Angel and Blaire White, the two trans people who have been on the show, as in this 2023 interview with Tony Hinchcliffe and Brian Redban, where Rogan said:

Like if you're like a legitimate trans person, and I know a lot of them. I know a lot of them now. It's more, it's, there's some that you go, like, if you ever meet Blaire White, you go, okay, that's 100% correct. Like, whatever you're doing is correct. Like, she seems like a woman. Wow, look at that (episode 1948).

Here the word "legitimate" is doing important work—Rogan is signaling that the trans people he knows are "real" trans people, while at the same time suggesting that there is a right way and a wrong way to be trans. The right way is one where you pass as the other gender, and the wrong way is when your trans identity is obvious to others.

Similarly, in a 2020 episode with Abigail Shrier where Rogan talked about his interview with Buck Angel:

Like we were talking about Buck Angel before the show [...] And he doesn't, look, he didn't do this to win friends. No. He didn't do this because of social media immersion, right? No YouTube star convinced Buck Angel. Okay. He stands up to all of them all the time. Yeah. That is also the thing. And he uses a term, the term biological that they don't like. Right. He uses biological female, biological male. Because he lives in reality (episode 1509).

As is evident from the quotations above, the trans people that Rogan claims to be reasonable, both meet his expectations of gender norms, and also share ideas that he agrees with, such as the sex/gender linkage. Everyone who disagrees with the claim is discounted. As Rogan states, they do not "live [...] in reality."

In addition to identifying acceptable trans people and using them as a shield against claims of transphobia, Rogan and guests also frequently state how not transphobic they are, while in the same breath saying "but what about..." For example, in a 2022 interview, Michael Shermer said:

I support trans rights. You know, I don't think people should be discriminated against for whoever they want to identify as or whatever, but there's conflicting rights. What about women's rights? (episode 1888).

In reality, women's rights and trans rights are not mutually exclusive, but it is a common tactic in the anti-trans community to position

trans people as a threat to women, using the moral panic discourse identified above (Worthen, 2022).

3.2.5. *Trans Rights and the “Woke Agenda”*

In this final discourse topic, Rogan and guests politicize trans rights and position the support of trans people as evidence of woke overreach and a leftist attack on free speech. This theme is made up of three types of delegitimizing disinformation. The first links the support of trans people with Marxist ideologies, not so subtly suggesting that people who support trans rights do so because they are part of a broader anti-capitalist, even communist agenda, as in the 2017 show with MMA fighters Brendan Schaub and Bryan Callen:

It’s not by chance these are the same people that support Marxist ideologies. They don’t want competition. They want a lack of competition [...] And you can see those patterns in the way those people talk. They talk about, you know, trans rights and all these different [...] talk about white privilege (JRE MMA show 7).

Rogan and his guests link a fear of competition with communism and also with trans rights, suggesting that “those people” or people who they disagree with, all think the same and that people who care for trans rights are opposed to capitalism.

The second type of disinformation that equates the struggle for trans rights with a “woke” agenda suggests there is social pressure to state that one supports trans rights, and that this social pressure to confirm exists exclusively in leftist spaces. Rogan and guests go as far as to suggest that the social pressure to support trans people is exerted with religious zeal, as described in this 2021 interview with politician and anti-muslim activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali:

Like I said about a man who has sex with women and has fathered a bunch of children then decides that he’s a woman he’s always been a woman and this is this is [sic.] this crazy ideological thing that we’re dealing with, this tribal, almost religious belief [...] And people that have been in cults, people that have been in very strict ideological religions (episode 1613).

The use of the term *cults* in this quote suggests that people who agree with trans rights are not thinking for themselves. It suggests that people who support the trans community do not do so out of empathy, or because of scientific evidence, but rather because they have been misled by charismatic others, which is striking as this is the tactic that Rogan and many of his guests use against trans inclusion.

Beyond characterizing trans support as cultish, in many interviews, Rogan or guests state that they feel oppressed by trans-inclusive discourse. This third type of trans-critical disinformation equates trans-inclusive language with oppression. For example, in a 2020 episode, journalist Bari Weiss suggested that the language used by “woke leftists” is actively oppressing people like Rogan and his contemporaries, stating:

And so in the intersectional view of the world, right, which reverses the caste system that we’ve been living in until now, where you have someone like Jon Hamm at the very top and black transgender disabled people at the very bottom. Well, the intersectional worldview comes around and reverses that and says, no, Jon Hamm and cisgendered white men like Joe Rogan are now at the very bottom and at the very top are the transgender black disabled person (episode 1415).

In this quote, Weiss uses the term “intersectional” but doesn’t seem to be clear on what it means. In her eyes, it means creating a new hierarchy, with the oppressed at the top, instead of recognizing how multiple forms of oppression can intersect.

4. Discussion

Analysis of the dehumanizing and delegitimizing discourse topics about trans people on the JRE podcast shows several key instances of trans-related disinformation that are not only not challenged by Rogan in the interviews, but also supported or emphasized by Rogan, such as the idea that trans identity is some kind of emotional contagion, or that trans-affirming care is a type of bodily mutilation. There is a wide variety of guests on the JRE who end up discussing trans issues, mostly tangential to the larger conversation, and almost none of them have any experience as a trans person or caring for a trans person, nor do they have any expertise in gender studies or transgender health.

This research shows that the gender-critical disinformation propagated on the JRE podcast fits into the six categories identified by Billard (2023). However, there are additional, sinister examples of disinformation at work. For example, the linkage of trans acceptance with “leftist” or “woke” politics forced upon people assumes that trans people don’t need care, that transphobia is not a problem, and that the call for trans acceptance is merely a tool of political control. Rogan and many of his guests position themselves as defenders of justice and fairness, and those who cannot defend themselves. They portray themselves as defenders of “authentic” women who are discursively constructed as being too weak or too corrupted by woke politics to defend themselves. These discourses, along with the gender critical disinformation described by Billard, can be understood as forms of identity propaganda (Reddi *et al.*, 2023). Identity propaganda refers to narratives that target marginalized or disadvantaged groups to maintain hegemonic social orders. Gender-critical disinformation on the JRE podcast is part of a broader discourse intended to reinforce regressive and toxic gender norms, including the oppression of LGBTQ+ individuals as a group, as well as women and racialized people.

Does it matter whether Rogan is spreading dehumanizing disinformation intentionally as a purveyor of disinformation, or unintentionally, as a purveyor of mere misinformation? This paper argues that under a framework of communicative capitalism, whether or not the harmful discourses are spread intentionally or unintentionally is irrelevant. The discourses that garner the most online attention are going to be negative, shocking and even salacious—so for example, the discussions about perversion, mental illness, women getting beat up in sports, or the woke communist mob controlling what other people can think. These are discourse topics that contribute to Rogan’s popularity precisely because they arouse strong affect. They also work to reinforce existing power imbalances between cis people and trans people, between men and women, and between Rogan and the trans people he dehumanizes. In a systematic literature review typologizing disinformation, Kapantai *et al.* (2021) define disinformation to “include [...] all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information designed, presented and promoted to intentionally cause public harm or for profit” (p. 1302). Communicative capitalism means that Rogan can intentionally share information that aligns with his far right and gender essentialist ideology and profit from it. He may believe the false claims against

trans people, but he is also intentionally sharing them and promoting them for his own gain.

As theorized by Dean (2019), we are currently living in a time of communicative capitalism which is “characterized by intense winner-take-all inequality” (p. 339). Under this framework, the precise nature of Rogan’s framing of trans bodies works to maintain the existing inequalities between cis and trans people and also serve to maintain Joe Rogan’s own position at the top of the media hierarchy. In his podcast interviews, Rogan and guests regularly express evidence of precarious masculinity, which is when men experience their masculinity as constantly under threat (Konopka *et al.*, 2021). This kind of masculinity is particularly evident in his discussions of trans people. Because men who experience precarious masculinity feel a type of competitive anxiety in which they must prove their masculinity all the time, expressions of precarious masculinity can arouse a strong fear-based affect. In other words, precarious masculinity is likely to fuel the fire of communicative capitalism that drives some people to engage with trans-critical messaging in general and Rogan’s content in particular.

Rogan’s pre-existing interest in sports and athletics is combined with his gender essentialist attitudes, which is likely why the discourse of trans women in sports is returned to so often in interviews. The ideas that men are allowed to “beat up women” or that “trans women are naturally stronger” are as biased against and unfair to both cisgendered women as they are to transgendered women since it positions women as weaker than men. Rogan and guests discuss the victimization of cis women by trans people in sport while also at the same time discussing the victimization of women who transition to being men, and both types of victimization depend on an assumption that women’s weakness is naturalized, and all men must fight for their masculine status at all times (Konopka *et al.*, 2021). Rogan cannot really understand why men would want to weaken themselves by identifying as trans. Therefore, in his mind, it must be a “perversion”. Rogan, like much media that concerns trans bodies, covers all the common tropes identified by Cavalcante (2013), Capuzza & Spencer (2017) and Solomon & Kurtz-Costes (2018), including trans as a psychosis, trans (men) as tragic victims, trans (women) as gender traitors, and trans (women) as hypersexualized/perverted.

Rogan and his guests take care to position themselves as reasonable, the ones unaffected by the illogical and emotional pleas to care about trans bodies and their representation. Even as he speaks out

against the very things trans people say they need, such as inclusion in the spaces aligned with their gender identities, or access to affordable health care, he also emphasizes the few conversations he has had with trans individuals. Schmidt (2014) reminds us that modern discrimination often comes masked, couched in rhetoric like “my friend is [part of an underrepresented group].” The inclusion of some trans-supportive, left-leaning, or even (two) trans people on the show, therefore, especially when they reiterate Rogan’s preferred messaging, lends more weight to the anti-trans bias, making it seem more reasonable, and those who ask for trans-inclusive language seem unreasonable as a result.

Dean (2014) theorized that in a world of communicative capitalism, characterized by competition, division and inequality, issue politics become more compelling. The very identity politics that Joe Rogan and similar podcasters condemn as “woke”, even “oppressive”, may be precisely the source of Rogan’s success. By focusing on issues like transgender identity, public figures like Rogan reinscribe hierarchy, draw a line in the sand on trending issues, and amass considerable capital in the attention economy. Such discourses aren’t only a source of popularity, wealth and power for those who wield them, but they also amplify gender critical rhetoric that is actively making the world less safe for trans people. Wansbrough and Dean (2021) remind us that “the internet doesn’t reflect social currents as much as create them” (pp. 196-197). Rogan and his contemporaries in what is sometimes called the Intellectual Dark Web (Finlayson, 2021) are not alone in creating a world that is hostile to trans bodies, but as a broadcaster with a larger audience than most of the mainstream media he claims to be an alternative to, his words have tremendous weight. By exclusively platforming voices that align with his own ideology, Rogan practices disinformation by omission. By not including fact checks and by failing to include voices that are more supportive of the trans community, Rogan is facilitating the spread of misleading, faulty and false information.

Under communicative capitalism, the value of Rogan’s long-form podcast lies not in creating a shared understanding, but in gaining the most circulation—the greatest attention to the message (Dean, 2005). This is why his rhetoric is divisive, conspiratorial and includes a large dose of moral panic; the strong emotions aroused on both sides of the trans exclusion argument are enough to garner attention and capital for those who spread hateful or borderline hateful messaging. So too those who engage with and circulate the content are also part of this overwhelming logic. Even here, in writing this article, the author is part

of the circulation of Rogan's content—drawn to the topic of this inquiry as a result of the power of circulation and networked hierarchies.

5. Conclusion: Trans Bodies in Rogan's Gaze

Under Rogan's far right and regressive gendered framework of precarious masculinity, trans people, especially trans women, cannot be understood as "real people" who need care and consideration. In fact, trans care is regularly portrayed as "woke" peer pressure, child abuse, or worse, and is discussed freely by people who have very little exposure to trans people in their daily lives. If the JRE podcast had a much smaller reach, with a niche audience, perhaps the impacts of these discourses would not be meaningful, but the fact is that under a framework of communicative capitalism, it is likely that the moral panic about trans medical care, trans people in sport, or trans inclusion is part of an ecology of conspiracy discourses that help to attract and grow the large audience for the show. This means that Rogan's motivation—whether he intends to share false information or not—is less important than the fact that he is incentivized to not fact-check. In this case, communicative capitalism is the cause of the spread of dehumanizing disinformation, and Rogan's podcast is the vehicle facilitating the spread. Due to the mechanisms of audience capture, it is likely that Rogan keeps returning to the subject of trans bodies because it arouses affect in him and his audience.

This research highlighted the dangerous disinformation that is spread on the JRE podcast and that serves to render trans people less safe. These discourses are able to spread under the cover of women's rights, just like other gender critical discourses (Billard, 2023), and they remain a significant source of concern. With such a large platform, Rogan has an outsized influence on how trans people are understood by millions. Key dehumanizing discourse topics uncovered in this research include sports and fairness, trans moral panic, naturalizing gender stereotypes, "I'm not biased", and trans rights and the woke agenda. These discourses are grounded in disinformation and serve to eliminate or deny the humanity of most trans people. Scholars and policymakers need to do more to help raise awareness of and counter toxic trans-exclusionary discourses like the ones repeated on the JRE podcast.

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Appendix – List of Episodes Analyzed in the dataset

Episode Number	Date	Episode
203	April 17, 2012	Jim Jefferies
JRE MMA Show 7	December 26, 2012	Brendan Schaub and Bryan Callen
399	September 30, 2013	Buck Angel
431	December 19, 2013	Matt Fulchiron Part 1
597	January 10, 2015	Magnus Walker and Alex Ross
677	August 3, 2015	Josh Zepps
740	December 23, 2015	Thaddeus Russell
796	September 9, 2016	Josh Zepps
902	January 20, 2017	Live Underground from the Comedy Store
903	January 24, 2017	Tony Hinchcliffe and Brian Redban
922	February 24, 2017	Philip DeFranco
931	March 14, 2017	Jim Norton
949	April 19, 2017	Josh Zepps
952	April 27, 2017	Thaddeus Russell
958	May 9, 2017	Jordan Peterson
981	June 28, 2017	Josh Barnett
933	August 2, 2017	Ben Shapiro
1031	October 30, 2017	Jamie Kilstein

1063	November 1, 2017	Tom Segura
1067	January 23, 2018	Whitney Cummings
1081	February 20, 2018	Bret Weinstein and Heather Heying
1085	February 28, 2018	Kyle Kulinski
1131	June 13, 2018	Dave Rubin
1134	June 22, 2018	Kyle Dunnigan
JRE MMA Show 34	July 9, 2018	Josh Barnett
1147	July 26, 2018	Debra Soh
1157	August 21, 2018	Shooter Jennings
JRE MMA Show 39	August 30, 2018	Donal Cowboy Cerrone
1183	October 11, 2018	Andrew Santino
1191	October 30, 2018	Peter Boghossian and James Lindsay
1203	November 15, 2018	Eric Weinstein
1288	January 5, 2019	John Reep
1222	January 10, 2019	Michael Shermer
1228	January 21, 2019	Bari Weiss
1275	February 4, 2019	Luis J. Gomez
1246	February 13, 2019	Alex Berenson
1248	February 19, 2019	Bill Ottman
1282	April 17, 2019	Adam Conover
1258	May 3, 2019	Jack Dorsey, Vijaya Gadde and Tim Pool
1300	May 20, 2019	Michael Malice
1241	July 2, 2019	Sam Harris
1320	July 3, 2019	Eric Weinstein
1329	August 1, 2019	Brian Moses
1242	August 2, 2019	Tim Pool
1337	August 20, 2019	Dan Crenshaw
1346	September 9, 2019	Zuby

1357	October 1, 2019	Ari Shaffir
1367	October 22, 2019	Bridget Phetasy
1243	November 2, 2019	Rafinha Bastos
1378	November 6, 2019	Greg Fitsimmons
1390	November 22, 2019	Tim Dillon
1396	December 9, 2019	Michelle Wolf
1401	December 16, 2019	Iliza Schlesinger
1406	January 1, 2020	Brian Redban
1409	January 13, 2020	Joey Diaz
1412	January 16, 2020	Jimmy Dore
1415	January 20, 2020	Bari Weiss
1420	January 31, 2020	Mark Normand
1421	February 3, 2020	Jim Norton
1422	February 4, 2020	Lex Friedman
1423	February 5, 2020	Andrew Doyle
1438	March 6, 2020	Andrew Santino
1468	May 1, 2020	Alonzo Bodden
1475	May 16, 2020	Bridget Phetasy
1501	July 2, 2020	James Lindsay
1509	July 16, 2020	Abigail Shrier
1520	August 5, 2020	Debra Soh
1538	September 17, 2020	Douglas Murray
1544	October 1, 2020	Tim Dillon
1556	October 28, 2020	Glen Greenwald
1594	January 13, 2021	Yannis Pappas
1608	February 10, 2021	Michael Malice
1610	February 20, 2021	Tim Dillon
1613	March 2, 2021	Ayaan Hirsi Ali
1617	March 10, 2021	Mike Baker
1621	March 19, 2021	Jim Breuer
1655	May 20, 2021	Sebastian Junger

1664	June 9, 2021	Josh Dubin
1665	June 10, 2021	Carol Hooven
1673	June 25, 2021	Colin Wright
1679	July 6, 2021	Adam Curry
1681	July 12, 2021	Brian Simpson
1682	July 13, 2021	Jesse Singal
1689	July 29, 2021	Yannis Pappas
1695	August 12, 2021	Andrew Shulz
1699	August 20, 2021	Meghan Murphy
1725	October 26, 2021	Bridget Phetasy
1726	October 27, 2021	Chuck Palahniuk
1727	October 28, 2021	Rob Kearney
1728	November 3, 2021	Ari Shaffir, Shane Gillis and Mark Normand
1732	November 10, 2021	Ben Shapiro
1737	November 22, 2021	Tim Pool
1745	December 7, 2021	Matt Taibbi
1746	December 10, 2021	Blaire White
1764	January 14, 2022	Ari Shaffir, Shane Gillis and Mark Normand
1769	January 25, 2022	Jordan Peterson
1783	February 24, 2022	Ben Burgis
1799	March 31, 2022	Yannis Pappas
1807	April 22, 2022	Douglas Murray
1813	May 5, 2022	Tony Hinchcliffe
1816	May 11, 2022	Gad Saad
1817	May 12, 2022	Hotep Jesus
1830	June 10, 2022	Meghan Murphy
1834	June 21, 2022	Ari Shaffir, Shane Gillis and Mark Normand
1837	June 28, 2022	Gina Carano

1846	July 23, 2022	Andrew Schulz
1848	July 27, 2022	Francis Foster and Konstantin Kisin
1851	August 2, 2022	Chris Williamson
1857	August 16, 2022	Seth Dillon
1880	October 11, 2022	Tulsi Gabbard
1888	October 26, 2022	Michael Shermer
1890	October 29, 2022	Bridget Phetasy
1895	November 7, 2022	Matt Walsh
1926	January 14, 2023	Matt McCusker and Shane Gillis
1933	January 28, 2023	Jordan Peterson
1944	February 21, 2023	Ryan Long
1947	February 28, 2023	Chris Distefano
1948	March 1, 2023	Tony Hinchcliffe and Brian Redban
1952	March 8, 2023	Michael Malice
1961	March 28, 2023	Peter Attia
1963	March 30, 2023	Michael Shellenberger
1969	April 12, 2023	Sam Tallent
1977	April 27, 2023	Dave Smith
1978	April 28, 2023	Ms. Pat
1990	May 25, 2023	Bert Kreischer
1991	May 26, 2023	Protect Our Parks 8
2004	June 29, 2023	Ice Cube
JRE MMA Show 143	July 6, 2023	Sean Strickland
2012	July 26, 2023	Gad Saad
2015	August 1, 2023	Zach Bryan
2029	September 2, 2023	Bill Maher
2030	September 5, 2023	Protect Our Parks 9
2043	October 4, 2023	Francis Foster and Konstantin Kisin
2061	November 10, 2023	Whitney Cummings
2070	November 29, 2023	Evan Hafer

2075	December 13, 2023	Protect Our Parks 10 Part 1
2077	December 20, 2023	Tim Dillon
2081	January 2, 2024	Tony Hinchcliffe
2088	January 19, 2024	Yannis Pappas
2089	January 20, 2024	Joey Diaz
2090	January 23, 2024	Bobby Lee
2097	February 2, 2024	Jeff Dye
2104	February 16, 2024	Chris Williamson
2105	February 20, 2024	Dr. Phil
2106	February 22, 2024	Kid Rock
2109	February 27, 2024	Abigail Shrier
2113	March 5, 2024	Christopher Rufo
2115	March 7, 2024	Riley Gaines
2119	March 14, 2024	James Lindsay
2122	March 20, 2024	Protect Our Parks 11
2125	March 26, 2024	Kurt Metzger
2127	March 28, 2024	Eleanor Kerrigan
2132	April 6, 2024	Andrew Schulz
2135	April 12, 2024	Neal Brennan
2140	April 24, 2024	Francis Foster and Konstantin Kisin
2145	May 3, 2024	Colin Quinn
2162	June 11, 2024	Tim Dillon
2166	June 19, 2024	Enhanced Games
2168	June 25, 2024	Tyler Fischer
2173	July 4, 2024	Jimmy Dore
2179	July 24, 2024	Bridget Phetasy
2182	July 30, 2024	Michael Malice
JRE MMA Show 161	July 31, 2024	Khalil Rountree Jr
2189	August 15, 2024	Dennis Quaid
2205	September 24, 2024	Legion of Skanks

2211	October 9, 2024	Michael Shellenberger
2216	October 23, 2024	Luke Bryan
2218	October 25, 2024	Sam Tripoli
2221	October 31, 2024	JD Vance
2223	November 4, 2024	Elon Musk
2224	November 6, 2024	Tim Dillon
2225	November 7, 2024	Dave Smith
2229	November 14, 2024	Jeff Dye
2231	November 20, 2024	Jimmy Corseti and Dan Richards
2236	November 28, 2024	Protect Our Parks 13
2239	December 5, 2024	Derek More Plates More Dates
2249	December 31, 2024	Yanis Pappas and Chris Disefano
2253	January 8, 2025	Theo Von
2256	January 15, 2025	Protect Our Parks 14
2260	January 22, 2025	Lex Friedman
2261	January 23, 2025	Warren Smith
2270	February 10, 2025	Bridget Phetasy
2273	February 13, 2025	Adam Curry
2274	February 19, 2025	Mike Baker
2285	March 6, 2025	Andrew Shuz
2297	March 29, 2025	Francis Foster and Konstantin Kisin
2133	April 10, 2025	Brendan O'Neill
2320	May 13, 2025	Tom Segura



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