



TRANSFORMING THE NARRATIVE

An Evaluation of the Strategic Impact of *Disclosure* on
Public Discourse about Transgender People

2025



PERSPECTIVE FUND

Part of the Documentary Power Research Institute Series
The Documentary Influence:
A Social Science Investigation of Film Impact Campaigns

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Perspective Fund

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ABOUT THE REPORT

TRANSforming the Narrative is an independent research project of the Center for Media & Social Impact's (CMSI) Documentary Power Research Institute, which produces public research and convenes topical conversations to investigate and strengthen the role and power of documentary storytelling in democracy, social change, and justice.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR MEDIA & SOCIAL IMPACT (CMSI)

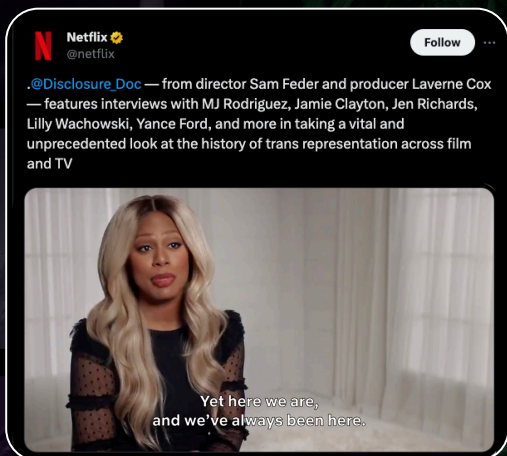
The Center for Media & Social Impact (CMSI), based at American University's School of Communication, is a creative innovation lab and research center that creates, studies, and showcases media for equity, social change, and social justice. Focusing on independent, documentary, and entertainment media, the Center bridges boundaries between scholars, producers and communication practitioners across media industries, social justice, public policy, and public engagement. The Center produces resources for the field and academic research; creates original media; convenes conferences and events; and works collaboratively to understand and design media that matter.

ABOUT THE DOCUMENTARY POWER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Based at the Center for Media & Social Impact, the Documentary Power Research Institute produces public research and convenes topical conversations to investigate and strengthen the role and power of documentary storytelling in democracy, social change, and justice. With seed funding from the Perspective Fund, the multi-disciplinary Institute grapples with the field's most urgent challenges and works to expand access to timely learnings, needs and tools of documentary-centered research in order to serve academic and practitioner communities interested in the role that documentaries can play in community building and fields of social impact, justice and change. The Institute also spotlights the legacies and present-day work of impact producers, activists, filmmakers, and organizations who are committed to leveraging documentaries for social impact.



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

The documentary *Disclosure* (2020), directed by award-winning transgender filmmaker Sam Feder and executive-produced and narrated by Emmy-Award winning trans actor Laverne Cox, takes “an in-depth look at Hollywood’s depiction of transgender people and the impact of those stories on transgender lives and American culture.”¹ The film juxtaposes archival film and television portrayals of transgender people from the past century with the personal interpretations and experiences of numerous trans filmmakers, actors, and thought leaders, providing viewers with a moving experience and a new lens on what it really means to be transgender.

Consistent with contemporary trends, *Disclosure* was embedded within a larger impact campaign that used a range of online and offline strategic communication strategies and tactics to create social change.² A central strategy of these campaigns is to blend the power of storytelling with the participatory internet to foster public engagement in “coordination with the public and civil society around social justice themes.”³ By collaborating with entities, such as issue–advocacy organizations, human rights groups, and community-based organizations, impact campaigns can amplify their messages, engage audiences, facilitate community organizing, and attract media attention.⁴

Despite the growth of these more participatory approaches, digital campaign evaluations for social-issue documentaries rarely go beyond reporting basic campaign reach or engagement metrics.⁵ This study delves deeper by evaluating if – *and more importantly how* – the *Disclosure* impact campaign was able to drive and shape public discourse about transgender people.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

The first section of the report—About *Disclosure* & The Impact Campaign—provides a brief summary of the documentary and an overview of the impact campaign’s target audiences, objectives, strategies, and tactics to provide necessary context for the report and its findings. The next section, About the Study, details the study focus and research questions followed by an overview of its methodology. The Executive Summary highlights the major study findings and their implications in brief, which is followed by a more detailed Complete Findings section. The Appendices contain examples of the impact campaign’s tactics and the detailed study methodology.

¹ IMDb description, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8637504/>

² Nash, K., & Corner, J. (2016). Strategic impact documentary: Contexts of production and social intervention. *European Journal of Communication*, 31(3), 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323116635831>

³ Borum Chattoo, C. & Jenkins, W. (2019). From reel life to real social change: The role of contemporary social-issue documentary in U.S. public policy. *Media, Culture, & Society* 41(8), p. 1110. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718823145>

⁴ Borum Chattoo, C. (2020). *Story movements: How documentaries empower people and inspire social change*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

⁵ Donnelly, K. (2020). Decoding media impact: Insights, advice, and recommendations. Media Impact Funders. p. 21. <https://mediainpactfunders.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/MIF-Guide-Digital-FNL.pdf>

ABOUT *DISCLOSURE* & THE IMPACT CAMPAIGN

DISCLOSURE SUMMARY

Disclosure premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on January 27, 2020. Netflix subsequently purchased the distribution rights, and the documentary made its debut on the streaming service on June 19, 2020, in 190 countries reaching 182 million subscribers.⁶ As one of the first documentaries to interrogate the history and consequences of Hollywood's portrayals of transgender people, the film has been critically acclaimed and lauded as "ground-breaking," "powerful," and "eye-opening."

The documentary is directed by award-winning transgender filmmaker Sam Feder and executive-produced and narrated by Emmy-Award winning trans actor, Laverne Cox. It intersperses footage of film and television portrayals of transgender people from the past century with personal stories and commentary from 30 cast members, including many well-known transgender creators, entertainers, and intellectuals, such as filmmaker Yance Ford, actor Jen Richards, and historian and filmmaker Susan Stryker.



“

The film was made for a lot of audiences, not just cis audiences. There was an impact on cis folk who all of a sudden just got how false and harmful these tropes are, and that right there is change in itself. But, the film was primarily made for trans folk to see and uplift their own stories.”

ELIZA LICHT,
IMPACT PRODUCER

⁶ Red Owl Impact Campaign Update (provided by Eliza Licht)

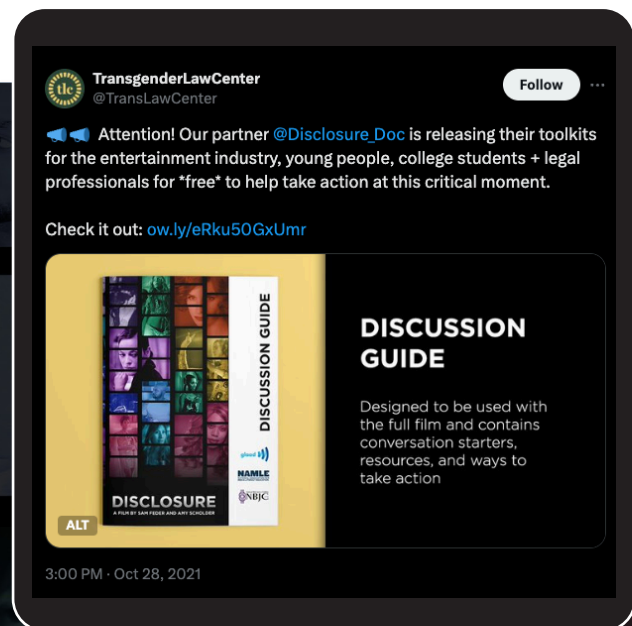
Committed to the principle of **Disclosure** being a film by and for trans people, director Sam Feder hired transgender crew members whenever possible and provided immersive on-the-set fellowships and paid mentorship opportunities for trans people interested in learning to become filmmakers. This unique production arrangement strived to support trans representation at every stage of the production process and modeled inclusive hiring solutions for the entertainment industry.

Among its many accolades, **Disclosure** was nominated for and received several prestigious national and international film and media awards in 2021, including five “outstanding” or “best” documentary awards from major LGBTQ-focused organizations and competitions.⁷

DISCLOSURE IMPACT CAMPAIGN

The impact campaign was launched in September 2019, approximately four months prior to **Disclosure’s** premiere at the Sundance Film Festival on January 27, 2020, and ended in February 2022, approximately 20 months after its June 19, 2020, Netflix premiere.

The **Disclosure** impact campaign was developed and managed by Eliza Licht, **Disclosure** Impact Producer and the Founder & Managing Partner of Red Owl, an impact strategy and production firm that specializes in documentary films, in collaboration with the film team. **Disclosure** Associate Producer and Senior Director of Entertainment & Transgender Inclusion at GLAAD, Alex Schmider, conceived, directed, and managed all social media for the campaign, in collaboration and with support from Bryce Kirchhoff at Eleven Thirteen Collaborative and the filmmaking team. Interviews with Licht and Schmider were combined with analysis of campaign materials to understand the impact campaign’s target audiences, objectives, strategies, and tactics to provide context for the main study research question and results. Campaign materials examined included the documentary’s website, discussion guides and audience-specific toolkits produced for the film, and a campaign summary report provided by Red Owl.



⁷ <https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/awards>

TARGET AUDIENCES & OBJECTIVES

The primary target audience group for the documentary and the campaign was transgender people. The purpose was to lift up the trans community first, and then to educate others and spark conversations about the relationship between media portrayals of trans people and how trans people are perceived, understood, and treated by society. For the education of others, the campaign tailored materials to five specific communities: Youth (especially questioning), Colleges, DEI/workplaces, Legal, and Industry.

Disclosure's impact campaign materials described the documentary "as both an educational tool and a catalyst for social and behavioral change." The campaign was designed to achieve five primary objectives:⁸

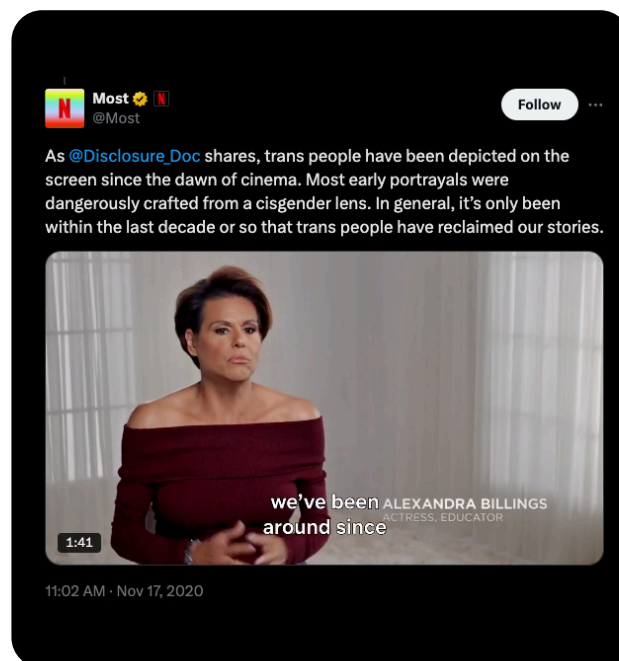
"AMPLIFY the voices and work of trans communities, particularly Black trans people, through public-facing conversations: press coverage, social media engagement, wellness events, and virtual panels."

"PROMOTE health & wellness within trans communities."

"EDUCATE audiences about media literacy, how to think critically about media, and show how media representation affects the lives of trans people."

"TRAIN high school and college students; lawyers and judges; and human resources departments in diversity, equity and inclusion(DEI); with a focus on trans awareness."

"EFFECT change within the entertainment industry by modeling equitable hiring practices, and showcasing the importance of trans people telling their own stories at all levels of the industry."



CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES & TACTICS

Interviews with Producers Eliza Licht and Alex Schmitter revealed three overarching campaign strategy themes: community-centered collaboration, lifting up trans voices, and driving engagement and conversation.

COMMUNITY-CENTERED COLLABORATION

The *Disclosure* impact campaign was grounded in community-centered collaboration. A central strategy was to leverage and strengthen existing connections within the existing creative and LGBTQ communities, and continue to grow that network. For example, the campaign did not hesitate to amplify the accomplishments of other creators and producers uplifting the trans and broader LGBTQ community in their work to build a sense of community and collaboration in the interest of continually working toward building a coalition of people and organizations with common purpose.

⁸ Red Owl Impact Campaign Update (provided by Eliza Licht)



LIFTING UP TRANS VOICES

Consistent with the documentary's purpose of centering trans people's voices and educating others on why it is essential to let transgender people tell their own stories, the campaign focused on amplifying the stories and experiences of trans people in their own words. A statistic used in the film and in campaign-generated materials, social media, and press coverage came from a GLAAD survey indicating that "80% of the population have never met a trans person."⁹ Introducing trans voices to the public and amplifying them by distributing powerful video clips from interviews with the trans cast and crew was at the heart of the overall content strategy.

DRIVING ENGAGEMENT AND CONVERSATION

The campaign sought to engage people in meaningful conversations about media representation of trans people and their personal reactions to the film. To a lesser, but important extent, this included addressing issues that impact the safety, health, and wellness of the transgender community. Discussion guides and toolkits were made available to help people have conversations in their own communities, and the campaign executed many online chats and discussion panels to provide spaces for dialogue. Enormous effort was made to ensure the campaign's social media accounts interacted with posts and responded to direct messages as opposed to just pushing information out.

The impact campaign tactics included a range of materials, activities, and communication channels, including film discussion guides and toolkits for general and more tailored audiences, organizational partnerships, online and offline screening and discussion events, social media engagement, and media relations. [See Appendix A for more detailed examples.]

“

There would be direct messages from people around the world talking about how [the film] personally affected them, and I would do my best to respond to each one... being acknowledged by this documentary that has meant something to you.”

ALEX SCHMIDER,
ASSOCIATE PRODUCER

⁹ <https://www.disclosurethemovie.com/about>



ABOUT THE STUDY

PRIMARY FOCUS & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

While the *Disclosure* impact campaign had multiple components, this study focused on examining if and how the campaign was able to drive attention to the documentary and frame the topical nature and sentiment of public discourse on Twitter and in English-language news media outlets in ways that aligned with campaign objectives from January 1, 2020, to September 15, 2023. The study start date was selected to capture discourse leading up to the film's Sundance Premiere on January 27, 2020. The decision to set a study end date more than three years after the film's debut was made to explore how documentaries might continue to sustain attention long after their active campaign periods.

Six main research questions guided data collection and analysis. All research questions and results refer to Twitter (as opposed to X) because Twitter was still the name of the platform during the impact campaign.

TWITTER

- 1 **Social Network Dynamics:** What does the structure of the *Disclosure* discussion network on Twitter reveal about how *Disclosure*-related discourse was spread across interconnected groups of individuals and organizations?
- 2 **Disclosure Opinion Leaders:** What individuals or organizations were most likely to have their *Disclosure*-related tweets retweeted, and to what extent were they affiliated with the *Disclosure* impact campaign?
- 3 **Discussion Themes and Sentiments:** What topical themes and sentiments emerged from *Disclosure*-related Twitter discussions, and how well did they align with the objectives of the impact campaign?

MEDIA RELATIONS

- 4 **PR & News Activity:** How frequently and what types of organizations distributed press releases or published news stories that mentioned *Disclosure*?
- 5 **PR & News Framing:** How closely did news stories mirror press releases in terms of overall story angle, how *Disclosure* was described, and sentiment toward the documentary?

SUSTAINING CONVERSATION

- 6 **Discourse Drivers:** How much did the amount of Twitter and news activity vary over the study time period, and what types of events or contextual factors were associated with those shifts?

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

A data set of 79,678 tweets that contained any mention of *Disclosure* during the study time period was used to discover how posts about the film were spread across interconnected groups of individuals and organizations. Questions about tweet themes and sentiments were answered with a subset of English-language tweets (n=68,885). Analyses for all questions related to media relations and news activity were based on English-language press releases (n=43), news stories (n=165), and trade press articles (n=29) that mentioned the documentary over the same time period. [See Appendix B: Detailed Methodology for more information about the study design and procedures.]



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An analysis of almost 80,000 tweets and more than 200 press releases, news stories, and trade press articles related to **Disclosure** indicated that the impact campaign was able to drive and frame much of the discussion about the documentary on Twitter and in news and trade outlets in ways that aligned with the film's purpose and the impact campaign's objectives.

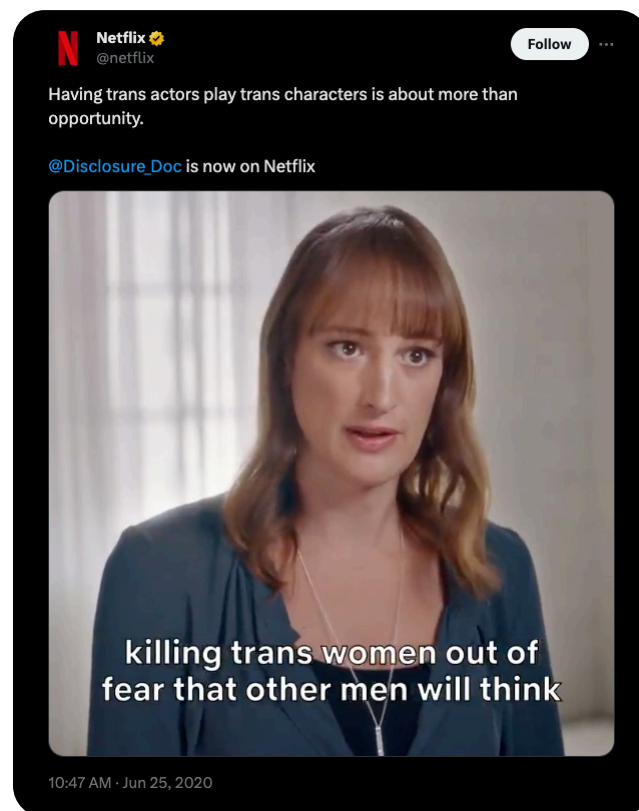
The campaign's community-centered strategy was evident throughout the campaign. A key advantage was the impact campaign's close collaboration with GLAAD on Twitter, which was facilitated by Alex Schmider's role as the **Disclosure** producer in charge of social media for the documentary and its alignment with GLAAD's mission, where he served as the Senior Director of Transgender Representation. GLAAD was able to activate its robust networks of individuals and organizations, including a range of LGBTQ and/or social justice-oriented, filmmakers, entertainers, journalists, and activists who engaged with the content and shared it with their own networks. Overall, a relatively small number of users—most of which were officially associated with the documentary—emerged as opinion leaders who were most extensively and widely retweeted.

Tweets promoting **Disclosure** screenings, discussions, or online chats emerged as the most frequent topical theme of discussion, reflecting the impact campaign's strategy of providing different events and spaces to drive engagement and conversation. Supporting the campaign's media literacy objectives, the second and third most frequent topics of discussion focused on two of the documentary's major themes: representation of transgender people by Hollywood and the need to cast trans people in trans roles. The majority of Twitter dialogue expressed positive sentiment toward the documentary. When negative sentiments were expressed they tended to be expressions of anger or frustration about trans representation problems highlighted by the film or about the consequences and challenges faced by trans people. The campaign released many video clips of the trans cast and crew, which received numerous interactions and retweets, aligning with the campaign's objective to amplify trans voices.

News media stories that mentioned **Disclosure** were written with similar major story angles as press releases, with journalists seeming to show more interest in publishing stories that mentioned **Disclosure** in the context of trans issues and rights or cultural controversies, such as when

celebrities make trans jokes, than more promotionally oriented stories, such as film feature stories or reviews or news about the film's awards or recognition. News coverage that emerged around LGBTQ observance days or months and mentions of **Disclosure** in stories about celebrities or other television or film productions contributed to continued mentions of **Disclosure** in press releases and news stories across the study period, albeit to a limited extent.

Given the hostile nature of much of the conversation about transgender people and transphobia in the United States,¹⁰ it was surprising not to find more tweets expressing negativity toward the film and the issues it raises, beyond one discussion theme related to gender transition. Because social media networks have a tendency to become insular with limited diversity of opinion, documentaries that seek to change hearts and minds may benefit from more robust social listening strategies and platforms to surface and engage in a wider range of conversations and networks. For example, in some cases, impact campaigns may even wish to inject their documentaries and their talking points into conversations that contain significant misunderstanding – or even hate – in hopes of sparking more civic dialogue.



¹⁰ Brandwatch and Ditch the Label, n.d. Exposed: The scale of transphobia online. <https://www.brandwatch.com/reports/transphobia/>

KEY FINDINGS

The impact campaign's community-driven strategy effectively activated what appeared to be a coalition of trans and LGBTQ producers, creators, actors, journalists, activists, civil society organizations, and community members who were motivated to promote **Disclosure** and to uplift trans voices more generally.

A total of 79,678 tweets that mentioned **Disclosure** were posted by 48,239 unique Twitter users between January 1, 2020, and September 15, 2023. Only 29% of these tweets were original, indicating that the vast majority of all tweets that mentioned **Disclosure** (71%) were retweets that served to amplify the comments and sentiments of others.

The **Disclosure** discussion network, which refers to the unique 48,239 Twitter users that tweeted about the documentary, was highly centralized, meaning a small number of users – or “opinion leaders” – were frequently and widely retweeted across the discussion network, giving them significant influence over the topical nature and tone of **Disclosure**-related discourse.

Eleven of the “opinion leaders” were officially affiliated with the **Disclosure** campaign, demonstrating that the campaign was able to influence a substantial amount of the discourse. Based on a metric called “relative influence,”¹¹ these 11 **Disclosure** opinion leaders combined were responsible for half (51%) of the total influence generated by retweets across the network's 48,239 users.

Associate Producer Alex Schmitter's management of all social media, in coordination with GLAAD, was key to the campaign's ability to authentically engage the creative and LGBTQ communities and amplify the stories of the film's cast and crew in a coordinated fashion, highlighting the importance of partnerships between documentarians and relevant advocacy and community groups. Quite unique to this campaign was the benefit of having many celebrity cast members with large social media followings who also acted as celebrity endorsers for the film.

The impact campaign effectively drove and responded to Twitter posts in ways that promoted the film and its core messages. The top three discussion themes included promotion of screening, streaming, and discussion opportunities; dialogue about the history of trans representation by Hollywood and resulting harm; and debates about and the importance of casting trans people in trans roles. Additionally, most tweets expressed positive sentiment toward the film itself.

The impact campaign effectively inserted **Disclosure** as an education resource into highly publicized cultural controversies that played out on Twitter and in news media related to negative representation and commentary about transgender people by well-known actors, comedians, and writers, resulting in significant exposure for the documentary and its positioning as a valuable media literacy tool.

The majority of press releases that mentioned **Disclosure** (24 out of 43) were written and distributed by GLAAD on a variety of topics; the remaining were distributed by other LGBTQ-focused organizations, local/municipal governments, and colleges that most often publicized **Disclosure** screening and discussion opportunities.

Disclosure was most likely to appear in news stories with major story angles—or frames—focused on controversy (in this case cultural controversies related to trans people) or other trans issues or rights rather than stories focused on “film news,” such as film screenings, reviews, or awards. Just about all news stories, regardless of topic, expressed neutral or positive sentiment toward the film. It should be noted, however, that media outlets opposed to the topic may have opted not to cover the film at all.

Mentions of **Disclosure** on Twitter and in news media tended to rise and fall together over the study period, with similar events generating spikes in online conversations and news coverage. **Disclosure**'s two premieres and two cultural controversies that emerged about issues related to trans representation resulted in the most notable spikes. Trans and LGBTQ awareness and observance days have and continue to provide more minor upticks in mentions of **Disclosure** over time.

¹¹ Relative influence is a proportion that represents the amount of influence a user has (weighted in-degree) divided by the total influence of all users in the discussion network (total weighted in-degree for all users).

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KEY IMPLICATIONS

Employing automated social media listening tools and other environmental scanning techniques effectively may surface additional opportunities to insert **Disclosure** into current dialogues and debates (e.g., trans athletes, trans healthcare) to keep the film relevant and top of mind as a resource.

Monitoring for social media posts that display ignorance and bias toward trans people—and perhaps even hate—may provide important opportunities to insert **Disclosure** into different conversational networks of users where people may benefit from additional education. This may be true for many social-issue documentaries given the increasingly partisan and ideologically insulated nature of social media networks.

Framing the overall news hook or story angle for more press releases in terms of the issue a documentary addresses and current societal controversies or developments related to it may help stimulate additional news coverage over time, particularly after the documentary debut period of screenings and award ceremonies comes to an end.

Adding more specific tips to film discussion guides and toolkits on how to spark conversations or find supportive communities online may help stimulate additional digital engagement further out in time, particularly for impact campaigns that target younger audiences who are increasingly likely to discuss social issues and take civic action online.

Evaluation plans for digital impact campaigns need to be developed early to collect social media data in real time; retrospective data collection is not possible for all platforms and can also be cost prohibitive or incomplete, given that social media posts are continually being deleted or archived by users.

Evaluation studies are more meaningful when their results can be benchmarked in comparison to similar cases. Social-issue documentary funders, filmmakers, and researchers may benefit from collaborative efforts to create standardized evaluation methodologies and metrics and by sharing results for the purposes of benchmarking and developing best practices.



Brian Michael Smith
@TheBrianMichael

Follow

My entire life, I feel like I've been trying to explain a movie that didn't exist yet, and that film would become [#DisclosureNetflix](#) ... As I watched, thoughts from my head were appearing outside of me, in the voices of people who had shared them.

I never stopped crying.



Them @them · Jun 19, 2020

Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen, streaming now on Netflix, is a testament to the power of cinema and the power of trans history. them.us/story/disclosure

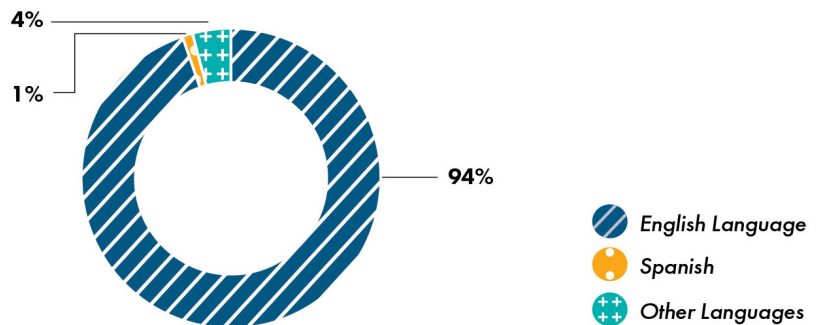
4:36 PM · Jun 19, 2020



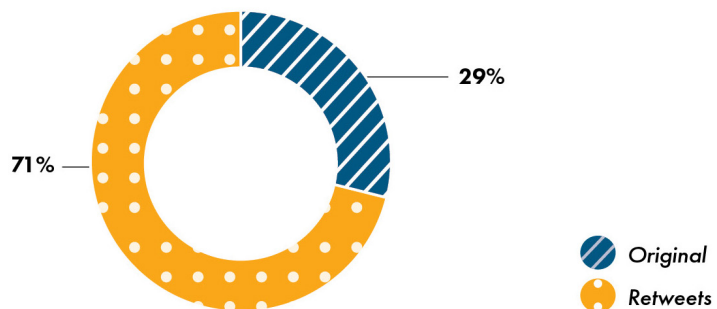
COMPLETE FINDINGS

NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF TWEETS

The full universe of tweets that mentioned **Disclosure** was used to assess the amount and nature of **Disclosure**-related discourse across the Twittersverse, including conversations generated by the impact campaign and conversations that emerged organically from individuals not associated with the campaign.



A total of 79,678 tweets mentioned **Disclosure** from January 1, 2020, to September 15, 2023. Most (94%) were English-language tweets (n=74,972) and 1% were in Spanish. The remaining 4% of tweets were dispersed across many different languages used across the globe, including Arabic, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Hindi, Japanese, and Turkish.



A total of 48,239 different accounts tweeted about **Disclosure**. Of the 79,678 tweets, less than one-third (29%) were original tweets (n=22,847). More than seven in ten (71%) of the tweets (56,831) were retweets.

SOCIAL NETWORK DYNAMICS

The **Disclosure** impact campaign delivered on its community-driven strategy. Eleven **Disclosure** “opinion leaders” were able to effectively activate a coalition of trans and LGBTQ producers, creators, actors, journalists, activists, civil society organizations, and community members with their tweets. These opinion leaders included @Disclosure_Doc (the film’s official Twitter account), members of its celebrity cast, its partner organization GLAAD, and Netflix accounts used to communicate with different groups of Netflix customers and fans. Examination of retweeting behaviors found that these **Disclosure** opinion leaders generated 51% of the total influence attributed to retweeting behaviors across the entire network of 48,239 users that tweeted about the documentary.

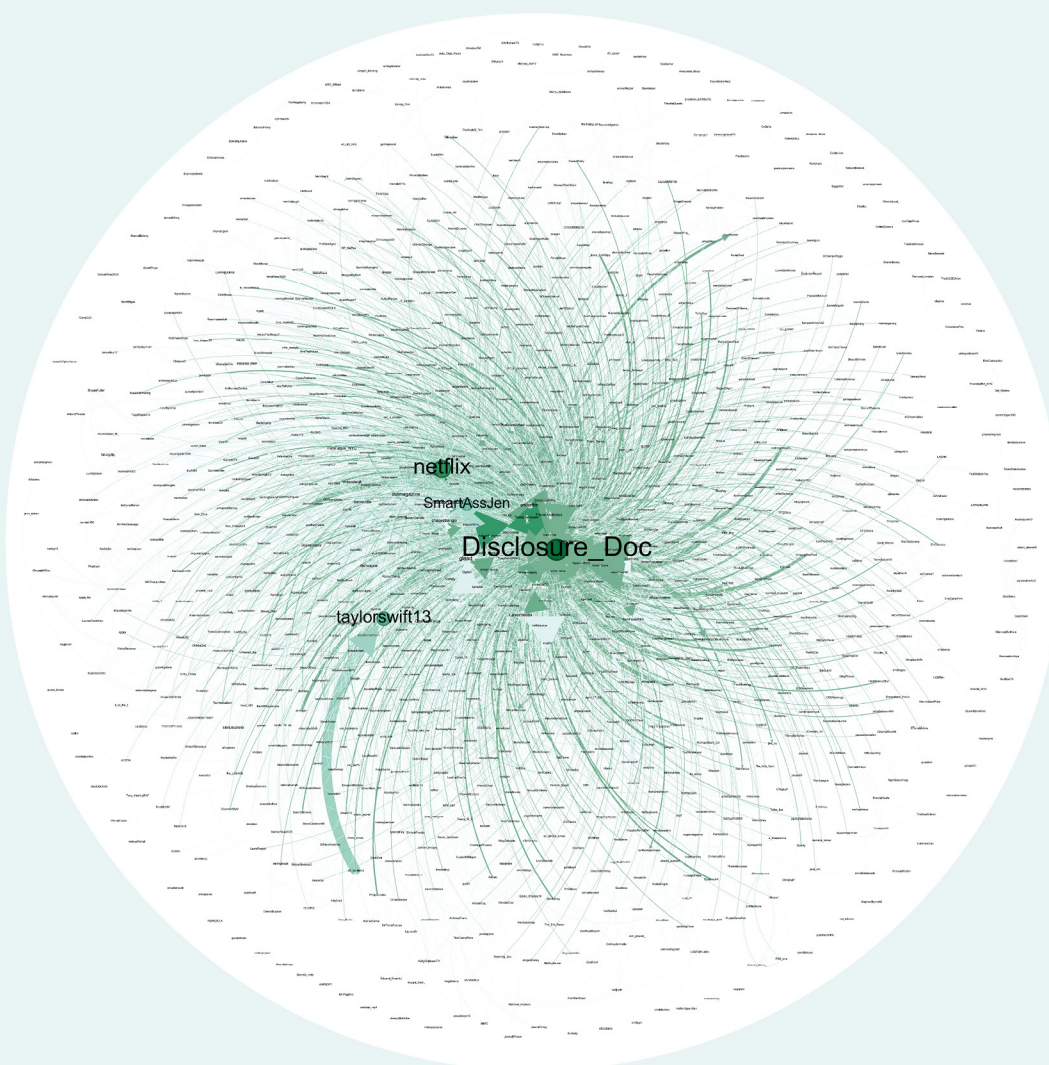
Disclosure Discussion Network

What does the structure of the Disclosure discussion network on Twitter reveal about how Disclosure-related discourse was spread across interconnected groups of individuals and organizations?

Examining retweeting behaviors in social media discussion networks can help determine when discourse on a topic or issue is dominated by a few voices or the product of many voices. It can also show how communities converge, separate, and interact with one another conversationally online around topics and issues that interest them.

Figure 1 visualizes the structure of the overall **Disclosure** Twitter discussion network. Twitter user accounts are represented by their usernames and the lines represent retweets between users.¹² The network was highly centralized, meaning a small number of opinion leaders¹³ at the center of the network were retweeted more frequently and widely across the larger network of users, allowing them to drive substantial proportions of the overall conversation.

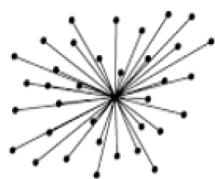
Figure 1: Disclosure Discussion Network Structure Based on Retweet Activity



The visuals below show three types of social media discussion networks.

- **Centralized:** A relatively small number of influential users are retweeted by many other users about a topic or issue.
- **Decentralized:** A relatively small number of users are retweeted by others, but in their own distinct conversational networks.
- **Distributed:** Many users initiate original posts and retweet each other about the issue or topic.

Figure 2: Visual Examples of Centralized, Decentralized, & Distributed Networks



centralized



decentralized



distributed

What individuals or organizations were most likely to have their Disclosure-related tweets retweeted across the network, and to what extent were they affiliated with the Disclosure impact campaign?

Figure 3: Center of Disclosure Discussion Network

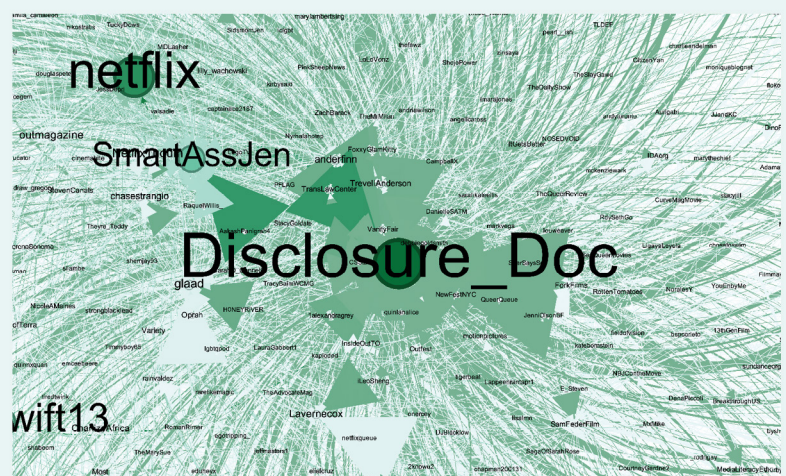


Figure 3 shows the center portion of the **Disclosure** discussion network. Usernames with larger font sizes have higher influence scores relative to usernames displayed with smaller font sizes.

¹² See methodology section for a more detailed discussion of the social network analysis procedures.

¹³ These "opinion leaders" are often referred to in social movement literature as "crowd-enabled elites," defined as "individuals or institutions that organically rise to dominant positions in the process of network formation"; see Shahin, S., Nakahara, J., & Sánchez, M. (2024). Black Lives Matter goes global: Connective action meets cultural hybridity in Brazil, India, and Japan. *New Media & Society*, 26(1), 216-235.

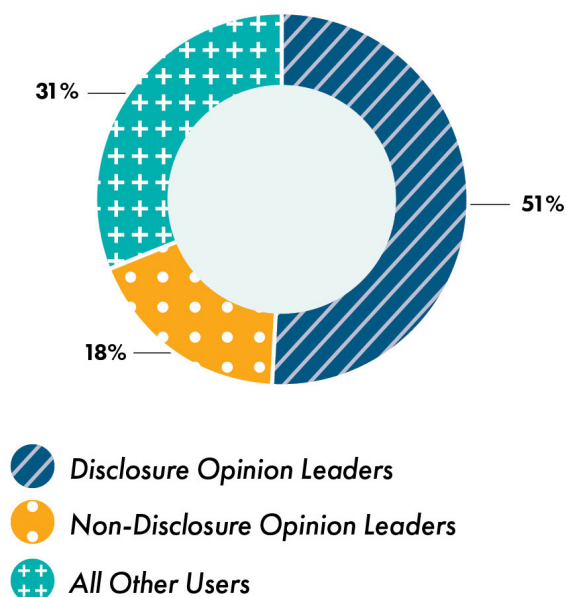
¹⁴ Weighted in-degree was calculated based on the number of times a user's original tweet was retweeted within the *Disclosure* discussion network, weighted by the likelihood of the retweeting account being retweeted itself.

¹⁵ The selection of users with the top-20 influence scores was based on the methodology used in Shahin, S., Nakahara, J., & Sánchez, M. (2024). Black Lives Matter goes global: Connective action meets cultural hybridity in Brazil, India, and Japan. *New Media & Society*, 26(1), 216-235.

¹⁶ The top-20 user bios were checked against all names and organizations listed on the film's IMDb profile and website.

Figure 4: Relative Network Influence

To facilitate comparisons between users, a metric called relative influence was calculated, which translates each user's influence score into a proportion of the total influence score attributed to retweets across the entire discussion network. The top 20 users by influence score were identified as "opinion leaders." Of these, eleven **Disclosure**-affiliated opinion leaders posted a total of 1,306 original tweets that were widely retweeted to produce 52% of the total network influence score. Nine opinion leaders not affiliated with **Disclosure** posted a total of only 57 original tweets, which accounted for 18% of the total network influence score. The remaining 48,219 Twitter users posted or reposted a total of 22,833 tweets to capture the remaining 30% of network influence.



Disclosure-Affiliated Opinion Leaders

Table 1 displays the eleven **Disclosure**-affiliated opinion leaders ranked by their influence score and relative influence scores. The **Disclosure** impact campaign (@Disclosure_Doc), Netflix (@netflix), and cast member Jen Richards (@SmartAssJen), a well-known trans writer, producer, actor, and activist, clearly stood out as the most influential **Disclosure**-affiliated users, claiming 18%, 15%, and 9% of relative network influence, respectively.

While highly influential users often have large numbers of followers, users with smaller followings can sometimes emerge as influential if their posts are retweeted by users with large numbers of followers. @Disclosure_Doc with its 8.7K followers and Jen Richards with her 53.8K followers had to generate more original posts that mentioned **Disclosure** (803 and 90, respectively) to achieve their level of network influence compared to Netflix that only needed to share five original **Disclosure**-related posts with its 22.4M followers to achieve a similar level of network influence.

Notably, GLAAD (@glaad) and the personal user account for Alex Schmider (@anderfinn), **Disclosure** Associate Producer and GLAAD's Senior Director of Entertainment & Transgender Inclusion, were the only opinion leaders associated with one of the impact campaign's partner organizations. These two user accounts frequently interacted in **Disclosure**-related discussions in a coordinated fashion with the @Disclosure_Doc account, amplifying one another's messages and those of the other **Disclosure**-affiliated opinion leaders.

The remaining **Disclosure**-affiliated opinion leaders included **Disclosure** Executive Producer and Narrator Laverne Cox; other actors, LGBTQ advocates, and journalists who were part of the **Disclosure** cast; and additional Netflix Twitter handles dedicated to the streaming service's fans and those interested in LGBTQ content.

Table 1: Disclosure-Affiliated Opinion Leaders

User Name/ Handle	Disclosure Affiliation	Following & Followers	Number of Disclosure Tweets	Influence Score ¹⁷	Relative Influence ¹⁸ (%)
Disclosure Documentary @Disclosure_Doc	Official Disclosure Account	858 Following 8.7K Followers	2,263 total posts 803 Original 1460 Retweets	10,499	18%
Netflix @netflix	Distributor [U.S. Account]	2,273 Following 22.4M Followers	16 total posts 5 Original 11 Retweets	8,330	15%
Jen Richards @SmartAssJen	Cast [Actor, Writer, Producer]	1,360 Following 53.8K Followers	2,017 total posts 90 original 117 retweets	5,122	9%
GLAAD @glaad	Partner [LGBTQ Advocacy Organization]	39.5K Following 487.9K Followers	181 total posts 94 original 87 retweets	1,126	2%
Netflix Tudum @NetflixTudum	Distributor [Official Fan Site]	720 Following 2.1M Followers	39 total posts 15 original 24 retweets	1,083	2%
Laverne Cox @Lavernecox	Executive Producer & Cast [Actor]	2,281 Following 623.8K Followers	219 total posts 120 original 99 retweets	825	1%
Alex Schmider @anderfinn	Associate Producer [Director at GLAAD]	3,712 Following 4,026 Followers	245 total posts 67 original 178 retweets	755	1%
Chase Strangio @chasestrangio	Cast [Attorney & Advocate]	585 Following 103.7K Followers	73 total posts 27 original 46 retweets	605	1%
Tre'vell Anderson @TrevellAnderson	Cast [Journalist]	1,021 Following 36.7K Followers	138 total posts 49 original 89 retweets	384	<1%
Most @Most	Distributor [Posts about LGBTQ Netflix content]	535 Following 106.3K Followers	39 total posts 10 original 29 retweets	292	<1%
Brian Michael Smith @TheBrianMichael	Disclosure Cast [Actor]	2,046 Following 22.8K Followers	246 total posts 26 original 220 retweets	278	<1%

¹⁷ Weighted in-degree score for the individual user.

¹⁸ Percentage of total weighted in-degree score (56,810) for the entire network.

Non-Disclosure-Affiliated Opinion Leaders

The remaining nine opinion leaders appear in Table 2, also ranked by their influence and relative influence scores. None of these opinion leaders had any official affiliation with **Disclosure**. Just one tweet from music icon Taylor Swift encouraging her 94.9 million followers to watch **Disclosure** was responsible for the largest proportion of network influence by a non-**Disclosure** opinion leader.

The remaining opinion leaders included other celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and actor Charlize Theron and a range of writers, artists, and activists involved in media and/or activism work. Generally, the users in this table were able to achieve influence, even with few original **Disclosure** posts, given their very large number of followers, providing value to the impact campaign by spreading awareness of the film across their extensive social networks.

Table 2: Non-Disclosure-Affiliated Opinion Leaders

User Name/ Handle	Public Role/ Identity	Following & Followers	Number of Disclosure Tweets	Influence Score	Relative Influence (%)
Taylor Swift @taylorswift13	Celebrity [Musician]	0 Following 94.9M Followers	1 total post 1 original	6,256	11%
Out Magazine @outmagazine	Media [LGBTQ Magazine]	1,347 Following 263.4K Followers	7 total posts 6 original 1 retweet	897	2%
Charlize Theron @CharlizeAfrica	Celebrity [Actor, Producer, HIV/AIDS Activist for African Youth]	308 Following 939.1K Followers	4 total posts 3 original 1 retweet	567	<1%
FilmFatale_NYC @FilmFatale_NYC	Media [Entertainment Journalist/Critic]	6,038 Following 58.9K Followers	21 total posts 3 original 18 retweets	523	<1%
Francesca Ramsey @chescaleigh	Celebrity [Writer, Producer, Actor]	2,918 Following 248.7K Followers	2 total posts 2 original	424	<1%
Katelyn Burns @transscribe	Media [Freelance Journalist]	1,633 Following 73.5K Followers	42 total posts 32 original 10 retweets	406	<1%
Terra Field, Ghost of Systems Past @RainofTerra	Activist [LGBTQ Advocacy]	6,862 Following 12.8K Followers	35 total post 5 original 30 retweets	304	<1%
Oprah Winfrey @Oprah	Celebrity [Talk Show Host, Actor]	314 Following 41.9M Followers	1 total post 1 original	317	<1%
Saeed Or The Other One @theferocity	Author [Writer, Poet, LGBTQ Topics & Themes]	1,010 Following 222.5K Followers	4 total posts 4 original	296	<1%

DISCUSSION THEMES AND SENTIMENTS

This study found that the social media conversations sparked by the film predominantly focused on the preferred topical themes and framings of the impact campaign. The top three discussion themes included promotion of *Disclosure* screening, streaming, and discussion opportunities; dialogue about the history of trans representation by Hollywood and resulting harm; and debates about and the importance of casting trans people in trans roles. In addition, the campaign proactively inserted itself into cultural controversies that played out on Twitter. These controversies were fueled by negative representation and commentary about transgender people, which resulted in significant exposure for the documentary and its positioning as a valuable media literacy tool.

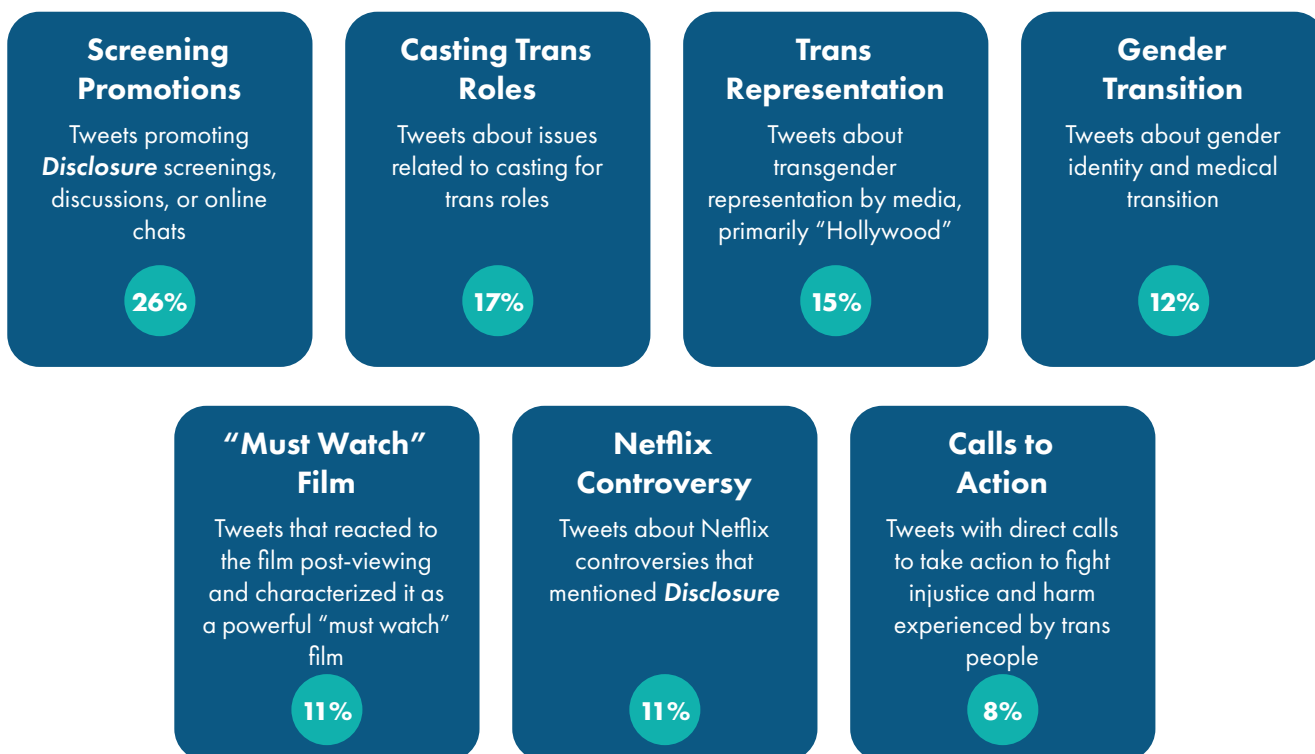
What topical themes and sentiments emerged from *Disclosure*-related Twitter discussions, and how well did they align with the objectives of the impact campaign?

All analyses conducted to assess conversational topics and sentiment were based on 68,885 English-language tweets that mentioned *Disclosure*.

Topical Discussion Themes

Seven main topical themes of conversation emerged across the tweets based on structural topic modeling and researcher interpretation. Figure 5 shows the proportion of tweets that fell into each topical theme. The *Screening Promotions* category had the largest number of tweets to drive viewership, followed by tweets about two major issues addressed by the documentary, *Casting Trans Roles* and *Trans Representation*. *Calls to Action* to fight injustice and harm experienced by trans people was the most infrequent topical theme.

Figure 5: Percent of Tweets by Topical Theme

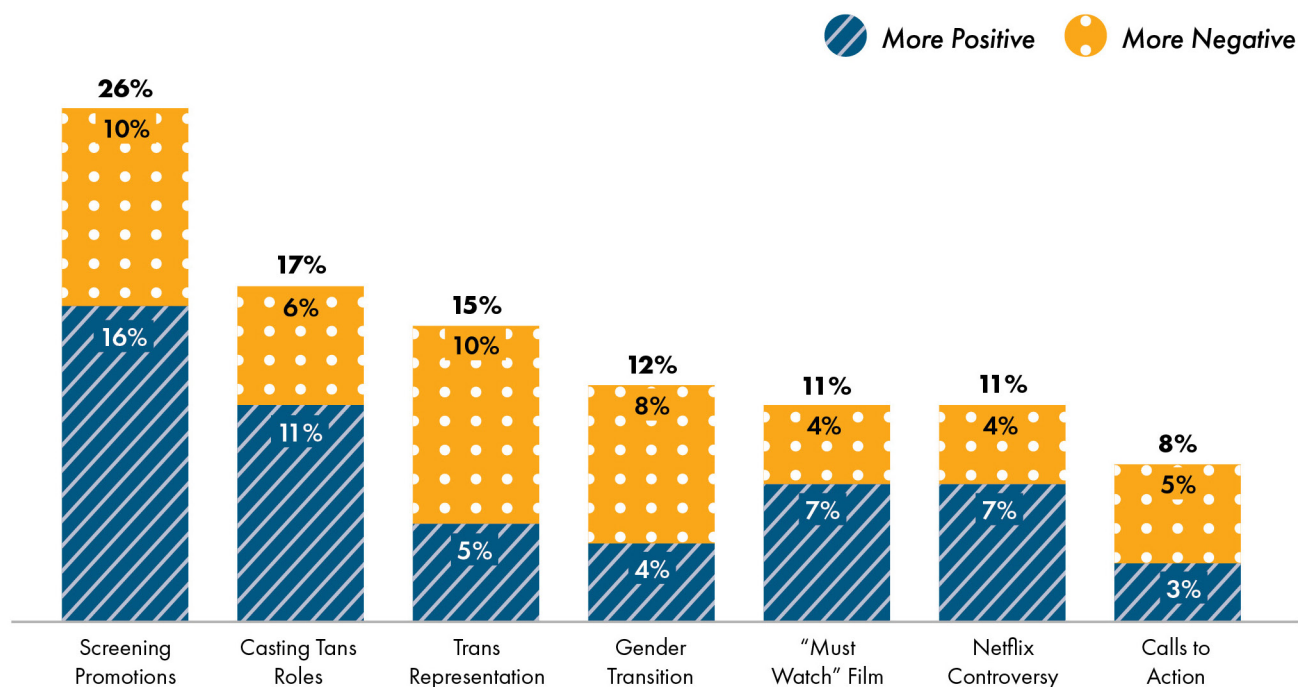


Sentiments by Topical Theme

Computer-assisted sentiment analysis was used to score each tweet as more positive or negative based on a dictionary-driven methodology to identify positive and negative words. The proportion of tweets with more negative sentiment scores and the proportion with more positive sentiment scores were then calculated within each of the seven discussion themes.¹⁹

As seen in Figure 6, tweets in four of the seven thematic discussion categories tended to be more positive than negative: *Screening Promotions*, *Casting Trans Roles*, *“Must Watch” Film*, and *Netflix Controversy*. The other categories contained more negative than positive sentiment: *Trans Representation*, *Gender Transition*, and *Calls to Action*.

Figure 6: Proportion of Tweets Containing More Positive vs. More Negative Sentiment by Topical Theme



While sentiment analysis is a reasonable surface-level measure of polarity, it must be combined with careful, qualitative examination of example tweets given some of the known limitations of computer-based sentiment analysis, such as the inability to recognize nuances like sarcasm or other contextual issues. The following section describes insights gleaned by examining both the content and sentiment scores of tweets that fell into the seven different topical categories.

¹⁹ See Appendix B for more information about the sentiment analysis.

Taylor Swift
@taylorswift13

Can't wait to watch @Disclosure_Doc on @netflix today!! Executive produced by @Lavernecox who is extraordinary ❤️❤️❤️ Who else is gonna watch?!

THEME 1: Screening Promotions

Tweets that clustered around this theme promoted **Disclosure** screenings and streaming opportunities, sometimes with panels, discussions, or online chats featuring opportunities to hear directly from the filmmakers or cast members. These tweets were sent out by @Netflix, the official @Disclosure_Doc account, and the film's producers and cast members, along with others not explicitly connected to the film, including celebrities, universities, LGBTQ advocacy groups, art/film groups, and local communities. Sentiment was more positive than negative due to expressions of joy and excitement; most tweets expressing negative sentiment commented on the representation problems that made the film necessary.

Examples include a post by Netflix featuring the documentary's video trailer in advance of the June 2020 Netflix premiere, a post by global music icon Taylor Swift expressing her excitement about the premiere asking, "Who else is gonna watch?!", and a tweet from the Burns Film Center about a screening and discussion with **Disclosure's** Director, Sam Feder, to honor #TransAwarenessWeek. Pride Month and other trans and LGBTQ days of visibility and remembrance continued to trigger screening and discussion opportunities across the study period.

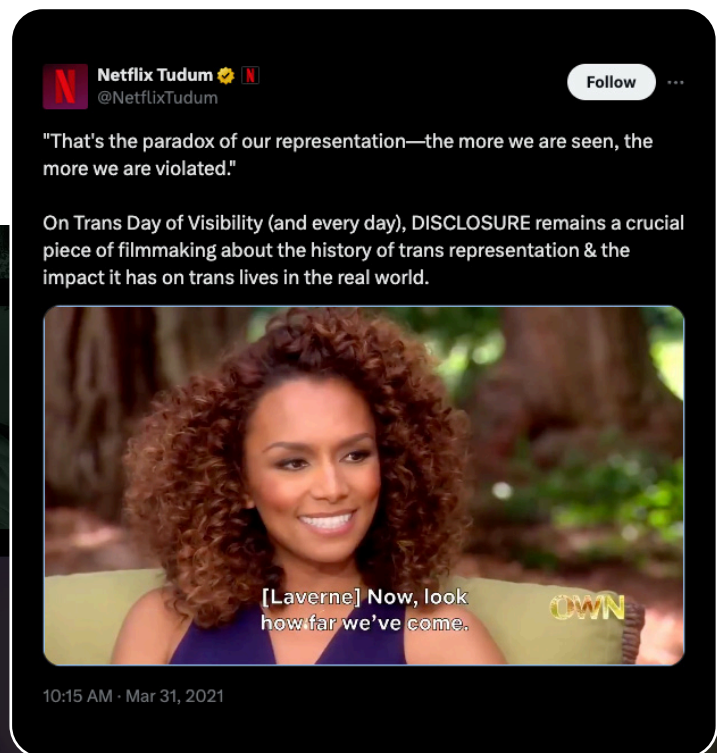
Twitter Handle ²⁰	Example Tweet
Netflix (@Netflix) Bio: 🌈 Nick & Charlie & Tao & Elle & Tara & Darcy & Isaac 🌈 2,290 Following 22,142,339 Followers	Date/Time: June 11, 2020 11:05 a.m. <i>@Netflix announces Disclosure and tweets out the film's Twitter handle with the 2.51 minute trailer for the film.</i> .@Disclosure_Doc — from director Sam Feder and producer Laverne Cox — features interviews with MJ Rodriguez, Jamie Clayton, Jen Richards, Lilly Wachowski, Yance Ford, and more in taking a vital and unprecedented look at the history of trans representation across film and TV. [2.3K Retweets; 5.5K Likes; 91 Replies]
Taylor Swift (@taylorswift13) Bio: I'm the problem it's me 0 Following 93,121,617 Followers	Date/Time: June 19, 2020 1:09 p.m. <i>@taylorswift13 tweets out her plan to watch Disclosure's Netflix premiere later in the day with the film's Netflix announcement image.</i> Can't wait to watch @Disclosure_Doc on @netflix today!! Executive produced by @Lavernecox who is extraordinary 💖💖💖 Who else is gonna watch?! [8.2K Retweets; 70K Likes; 2.7K Replies]
Burns Film Center (@jbfc_ny) Bio: A fiercely independent art house theater using the power of film to entertain and enlighten audiences 🎬 2,901 Following 7,035 Followers	Date/Time: November 24, 2020 12:43 p.m. In celebration of #TransAwarenessWeek, we were thrilled to host @SamFederFilm on 11/17 for a virtual discussion of their incredible documentary @Disclosure_Doc with the #JBFC's own @britfryer! Couldn't tune in live? Catch up on their full conversation: https://youtu.be/QIZwLGSgJAc [1 Retweet; 4 Likes; 0 Replies]

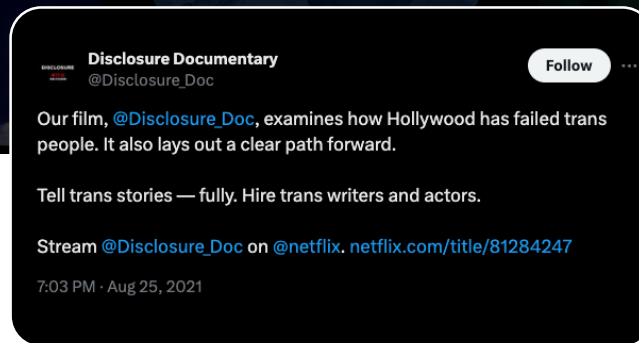
²⁰ Number of retweets, likes, and replies reflect Twitter metrics on December 26, 2023. Bios, following, and followers reflect the date of the actual tweet.

THEME 2: Casting Trans Roles

Tweets associated with this theme addressed or debated issues related to Hollywood's casting of cis people in trans roles. Both **Disclosure** and the impact campaign stressed why trans people need to tell trans stories and play trans roles. These tweets were dominated by a controversy surrounding actor Halle Berry's consideration of a future role playing a trans man and by comments she made that misgendered the character by referring to her as a "woman." Prominent accounts in the discussion included @Disclosure_Doc and a variety of LGBTQ actors, advocacy organizations, and community members. Despite the controversy, more tweets conveyed positive than negative sentiment due to Berry's subsequent apology and decision to abandon the role.

Examples include a post by @Disclosure_Doc on July 6, 2020, at 3:27 p.m. in the midst of online backlash directed at Berry asking her to please watch **Disclosure** before making a decision. By 8:57 p.m. the same day, Berry tweeted her apology and decision to abandon the role, which was swiftly followed by tweets from @Disclosure_Doc and @glaad minutes later thanking the actor for "listening and learning" and encouraging others to watch **Disclosure**. While some Twitter users questioned why a cis person cannot play a trans role, other users continued to push back. For example, @RainbowWocky, unknown to the **Disclosure** campaign, created a series of homemade "flashcards" in response to unconvinced users with all of them ending in "Go watch @Disclosure_Doc on Netflix". While these tweets received minimal to no interaction, they exemplify how many individual users contributed to the overall impact of the film within their own Twitter networks.





Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Netflix (@Netflix) Bio: 🏳️‍🌈 Nick & Charlie & Tao & Elle & Tara & Darcy & Isaac 🏳️‍🌈 2,290 Following 22,142,339 Followers	Date/Time: June 25, 2020 1:47 p.m. <i>@Netflix sends tweet with 1.41 minute clip of writer and actor Jen Richards discussing why she thinks having cis men play trans women is linked to violence against trans women.</i> Having trans actors play trans characters is about more than opportunity. @Disclosure_Doc is now on Netflix [9.7K Retweets; 28K Likes; 254 Replies] <i>This is the most retweeted tweet in the dataset.</i>
Disclosure Documentary (@Disclosure_Doc) Bio: The history of trans images in film & TV from @SamFederFilm @amyscholder @LaverneCox. Tweets from filmmakers. #DisclosureDoc 886 Following 9,017 Followers	Date/Time: July 6, 2020 3:37 p.m. Hi @halleberry, we heard you're considering playing a trans man in your next project. We ask that you please watch @Disclosure_Doc on @netflix first to understand how cis actors like yourself acting in trans roles has major cultural consequences offscreen. #DisclosureNetflix [Retweets 627; Likes 2,087; 38 Replies] Date/Time: July 6, 2020 9:10 p.m. <i>@Disclosure retweets Halle Berry's apology tweet (sent at 8:57 p.m.) minutes after she posts it with a thank you.</i> Thank you @halleberry for listening and learning. We hope #DisclosureNetflix is one of many educational tools you and others can rely to inspire and strengthen allyship. [351 Retweets; 1.7K Likes; 13 Replies]
RainbowWocky (@RainbowWocky) Bio: She/her 🏳️‍🌈 1,639 Following 1,423 Followers	Date/Time: July 9, 2020 5:10 p.m. <i>@RainbowWocky sends out a series of tweets that feature white flashcard images with ignorant comments people have made about trans casting issues.</i> I have taken up making flashcards for this bullshit. Spoiler alert, all of them end with "Go watch @Disclosure_Doc on Netflix" [0 Retweets; 0 Likes; 0 Replies]

THEME 3: Trans Representation

These tweets discussed issues related to *Disclosure*'s main purpose of interrogating the limited and/or negative media portrayals of transgender people by Hollywood. Active user accounts included @Disclosure_Doc, *Disclosure* filmmakers and cast members, LGBTQ organizations and community members, film groups, educators, and everyday individuals. Many tweets lauded *Disclosure* as unprecedented and powerful, with many of the most engaged with tweets sharing poignant clips and quotes from the film. Tweets tended to convey more negative than positive sentiment, but the negativity was most often directed at some of the stereotypical and dehumanizing Hollywood clips featured in *Disclosure* and their impact on trans people. Some tweets by trans people were highly emotional, expressing a sense of relief and gratitude for finally being seen and heard despite the painful nature of many of the clips.

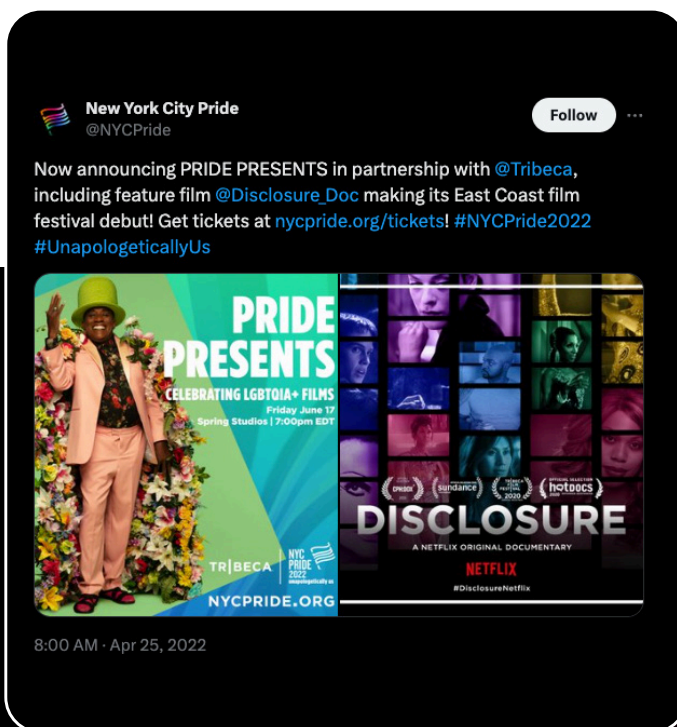
An example of a popular tweet with a video clip from the film was sent by @Disclosure_Doc featuring actor Laverne Cox, *Disclosure*'s star narrator and executive producer, affirming the humanity and existence of trans people despite Hollywood's misrepresentation, ending on "Yet here we are, and we've always been here." Examples of other types of tweets associated with this theme include a tweet by an Irish film club member about the consequences of Hollywood representations on perceptions of trans people, and an emotional tweet by trans actor and cast member Brian Michael Smith expressing what the film meant for him personally.

Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Disclosure Documentary (@Disclosure_Doc) 886 Following 9,017 Followers	Date/Time: June 19, 2020 11:37 a.m. <i>Tweet sent with 2:19 minute clip from the film.</i> "I think for a long time, the ways in which trans people have been represented on screen have suggested that we're not real...that we don't exist. And yet here I am. Yet here we are, and we've always been here." @Lavernecox #DisclosureNetflix is now streaming worldwide. [2.8K Retweets; 4.8K Likes; 51 Replies]
Aine Ni Shuilleabhain @Aine_NiSh Bio: Oifigeach Gaeilge/Irish Language Officer @tcddublin @IFAA_eire Board Member. Mo chuid tuairimí féin. 1,999 Following 779 Followers	Date/Time: July 2, 2021 3:26 p.m. <i>@Aine_NiSh, a member of the Irish Fulbright Alumni Association film club located in Ireland tweets:</i> Hollywood has taught people how to react to trans people for decades, and it's often with fear @Disclosure_Doc #IFAAFilmClub [1 Retweet; 3 Likes 3; 0 Replies]
Brian Michael Smith (@TheBrianMichael) Bio: 🏳️ Actor on @911lonestar @queensugarown @sho_thelword 2,065 Following 23,276 Followers	Date/Time: June 19, 2020 7:36 p.m. <i>Actor @TheBrianMichael forwards a tweet about Disclosure from LGBTQ publication, them, with his own commentary.</i> My entire life, I feel like I've been trying to explain a movie that didn't exist yet, and that film would become #DisclosureNetflix ... As I watched, thoughts from my head were appearing outside of me, in the voices of people who had shared them. I never stopped crying. [127 Retweets; 744 Likes; 15 Replies]

THEME 4: Gender Transition

Tweets in this category rarely focused on *Disclosure* itself; instead the @Disclosure_Doc Twitter handle was tagged or included in original tweets—and many more retweets—that expressed opposition to media focused on transgender people or themes. Most of the tweets in this category were in reaction to an episode of another Netflix show, *The Baby-sitter's Club*, which included a scene showing a young transgender girl named Riley resisting a blue hospital gown because she didn't think it matched her gender identity. While some Twitter users applauded the episode, many ridiculed it and called it “dangerous” for suggesting that boys who like pink or girls who like blue must be transgender. This discussion prompted a number of tweets expressing opposition to providing transition-related healthcare for youth.²¹

Tweets in this category were twice as likely to express more negative than positive sentiments, driven by users using terms like “child abuse,” “sick,” and “disgusting” when discussing puberty blockers, hormones, or surgical interventions for trans youth. While some other Twitter users tried to push back on these negative narratives, they were outnumbered. There was some evidence of tweets from organized efforts by identity-based groups, such as trans-exclusionary radical feminists, commonly known as TERFS, who push the belief that trans women are threats to women and/or the gay community.



²¹ While most discussion was about medical transition, transition-related care can also include social and legal transition for youth.

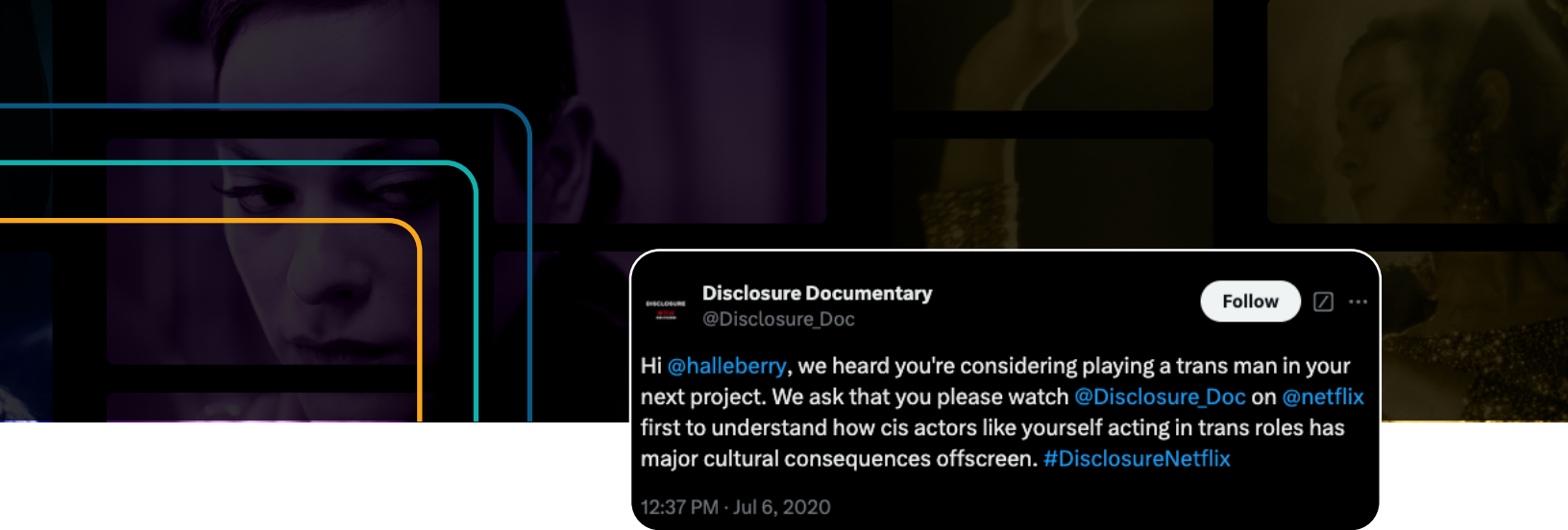
Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Gini The Insomniac (@GiniAndInsomnia) Bio: Labels are for soup cans.#8090 🤪 #TerfListParty 2,285 Following 949 Followers	Date/Time: July 26, 2020 at 1:29 a.m. @lspiguesslol @RadFemme74 @freexcj @netflix @Disclosure_Doc You seem to not understand. If there is no such thing as a male or female brain you can not have the wrong one in the wrong body. Transgender is having a mental disorder called gender dysphoria, similar to body dysphoria. That does not make you a woman or man. It's a delusion. [1 Retweet; 38 Likes; 1 Replies]
Brandon Michael Vincent (@enemy88_) Bio: 🇺🇸 Person of Interest 🇺🇸 Replies are hit or miss 🇺🇸 America First #Father #Son #Brother #Friend #Enemy 🇺🇸 1,377 Following 376 Followers	Date/Time: July 27, 2020 12:46 a.m. When people have an issue with trans children, it's the mental abuse from their enablers. It is child abuse to give children puberty blockers or hormones. [1 Retweets; 3 Likes; 0 Replies]
Dr. Sarah Rutherford (@sarahrutherford2) Bio: Writer, researcher, consultant on gender in the workplace. Author of Women's Work Men's Cultures available on Amazon. Blog //somethingtosay.london 725 Following 8,585 Followers	Date/Time: July 26, 2020 2:18 a.m. Actor @TheBrianMichael forwards a tweet about Disclosure from LGBTQ publication, them, with his own commentary. @netflix @Disco[sure_Doc Netflix...like Starbucks, you've got this so so wrong... in the UK companies are beginning to wake up to the medical and social experimentation of children in the name of an ideology which aims to erase the priority of biological sex. Please read https://cambridge.org/core/journals-gender-and-gender-identity-a-reevaluation-of-the-evidence/76A3DC54F3BD91E8D631B93397698B1A/core-reader [8 Retweets; 27 Likes; 2 Replies]
Arty Morty (@artymortyarty) Bio: Gay, Canadian. Super controversial. My Wordle starting word is RAISE. 773 Following 14,794 Followers	Date/Time: July 25, 2020 3:41 p.m. @netflix @Disclosure_Doc There have always been little boys who are distressed about being boys because they fit in more with girls And they have always grown up to be homosexual men not transsexual women Until adult transvestites transsexuals rebranded as transgender targeted the gay kids [0 Retweets; 11 Likes; 0 Replies]

THEME 5: “Must Watch” Film

These tweets encouraged viewership by characterizing *Disclosure* as a “must watch” film for everyone due to its educational value, and in some cases, for specific people perceived as misinformed or transphobic. Active user accounts included @Disclosure_Doc and Netflix accounts, such as its fan account Netflix Tudum, *Disclosure* cast members, other creators and actors in the film industry, particularly those involved in LGBTQ affirming productions, LGBTQ organizations and community members, and everyday people. Many tweets expressing positive sentiment were from users who had just watched the film and described it with adjectives like “powerful,” “moving,” “eye-opening,” and “inspiring” combined with phrases such as “highly recommend,” “required viewing,” and “a must watch for everyone.” Posts expressing negative sentiment commented on problematic media portrayals and challenges faced by trans people for the most part.

Some tweets that received particularly high engagement were posted by popular entertainment industry names associated with other productions featuring trans characters, such as Steven Canals, writer/director/producer of the critically acclaimed *Pose*, and Laura Prepon, Laverne Cox’s co-star from *Orange is the New Black*. An example of a post containing negative sentiment that received high engagement and many retweets was sent out proactively by @Disclosure_Doc to mobilize followers to express opposition to J.K. Rowling’s 2020 book *Troubled Blood* and encourage her to watch *Disclosure*.





Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Disclosure Documentary (@Disclosure_Doc) 886 Following 9,017 Followers	Date/Time: September 14, 2020 12:25 p.m. If you've seen the news about a certain influential UK-based author's new book peddling a trope tied to trans people being deceptive & dangerous, we think she could really benefit from watching #DisclosureNetflix. RT if you think so too. [696 Retweets; 1.2K Likes; 5 Replies]
Netflix Tudum (@NetflixTudum) Bio: Hi. Heartstopper Season 2 premieres August 3! 731 Following 2,210,999 Followers	Date/Time: June 24, 2020 6:38 p.m. Hey there! Entertainment journalist @TrevellAnderson here to discuss @Disclosure_Doc — a chronicling of trans representation on screen. Perhaps you've heard that this documentary is "necessary" and a "must-see." But you may not know WHY... Well, let me put you up on game! [381 Retweets; 979 Likes; 14 Replies]
Steven Canals (@StevenCanals) Bio: Afro-Puerto Rican BX bred Neurotic Storyteller Emmy nominated writer/director/producer of @poseonfx	Date/Time: June 19, 2019 1:53 p.m. Want to know more about the history of Trans representation in film & TV? Watch @Disclosure_Doc a beautifully moving documentary directed by my friend @SamFederFilm & produced by @Lavernecox! I highly recommend, but have Kleenex handy! #TransIsBeautiful #DisclosureNetflix 💙💜 [270 Retweets; 558 Likes; 13 Replies]
John Walker (@JMwalker1982) 447 Following 296 Followers	Date/Time: June 20, 2020 8:31 p.m. just finished @Disclosure_Doc and wow, it's amazing. everyone should watch this and just *listen* #DisclosureNetflix [2 Retweets; 5 Likes; 0 Replies]

THEME 6: Netflix Controversy

A few tweets directed at Netflix that received high engagement and a large number of retweets accounted for most of the discussion in this category. These tweets supported a Netflix employee walkout in response to the streaming service special, *Dave Chapelle: The Closer*, in which the comedian made jokes perceived by many as transphobic. Active user accounts included @Disclosure_Doc, *Disclosure* creators and cast members, other film industry creators and actors, journalists, LGBTQ organizations and community members, and everyday individuals. A number of user bios in this discussion referenced other social justice issues and communities, such as Black Lives Matter and the disability community, particularly in the case of those on the autism spectrum. The controversial nature of the special resulted in tweets expressing a mix of positive and negative sentiment.

A tweet by LGBTQ magazine *Out* used a clip featuring Jen Richards from *Disclosure* to highlight the hypocrisy of a statement by Netflix CEO Ted Sarandos saying that content like Chappelle's special "doesn't directly translate to real-world harm" after the network had released *Disclosure*. In response, another tweet by Jen Richards sought to clarify Netflix's role in *Disclosure*, revealing that the filmmakers and artists supported all production and promotion, with Netflix only paying for the streaming rights, which was followed by additional tweets suggesting that Netflix continued to support shows like Chappelle's because they earn more money than a film like *Disclosure*.

Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Alex Schmider @anderfinn Bio: Producer @ChangingGameDoc @ChasingAmyDoc @Disclosure_Doc @FramingAgnes Stay on Board: The Leo Baker Story Director Transgender Representation @GLAAD 3,712 Following 4,026 Follower	Date/Time: October 20, 2021 11:32 a.m. Today some will be boycotting Netflix in solidarity, some will be watching @Disclosure_Doc, some will be attending the rally. Above all, I hope people listen to the concerns of the employees & community, hear the challenges to do better & commit to change." [386 Retweets, 891 Likes, 6 Replies]
Out Magazine (@outmagazine) Bio: We're here 1,358 Following 264,726 Followers	Date/Time: October 14, 2021 9:39 a.m. It's absolutely bewildering that Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos can say "we have a strong belief that content on screen doesn't directly translate to real-world harm" when last year they released the Netflix Original @Disclosure_Doc, which included salient scenes like this. [with 1:00 scene of Jen Richards in <i>Disclosure</i>] [1K Retweets; 2.7K Likes; 55 Replies]
Jen Richards (@SmartAssJen) Bio: that woman from that thing you saw 1,374 Following 55,455 Followers	Date/Time: October 14, 2021 4:04 p.m. I love all the love @Disclosure_Doc is getting, but I'd like to clarify that Netflix did not produce or commission our doc. They purchased the streaming rights for less than half of what it cost to make and relied on us to promote it. Most of us paid our own way to Sundance. [4.8K Retweets; 18K Likes; 40 Replies]

THEME 7: Calls to Action

The *Call to Action* theme appeared the most infrequently across all the *Disclosure*-related tweets. These tweets focused on direct calls to “fight” or take “action” against injustice and violence experienced by trans people. A number of the tweets announced the availability of and links to free toolkits provided by *Disclosure* for different groups to take action, such as the entertainment industry, college students, and legal professionals. Active user accounts included @Disclosure_Doc; @anderfinn; *Disclosure* partner organizations that helped produce or review the toolkits, such as the Transgender Law Center and the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE); other civil society organizations and groups dedicated to supporting and advocating for the trans and LGBTQ communities, such as SAGE_USA, which advocates for LGBTQ elders and PFLAG, which supports LGBTQ people and their loved ones; and other creators working in the social justice documentary space, such as Fork Films.

Twitter Handle	Example Tweet
Disclosure Documentary (@Disclosure_Doc) 886 Following 9,017 Followers	Date/Time: August 30, 2020 2:42 p.m. Black trans lives matter. Black trans dreams matter. Black trans hopes matter. Black trans joys matter. Black trans arts matter. Black trans experiences matter. Black trans people matter. Period. Celebrate, appreciate, value, respect & fight for Black trans people every day. [337 Retweets; 843 Likes; 2 Replies]
TransgenderLawCenter @TransLawCenter Bio: TLC keeps trans & gender nonconforming people alive thriving & fighting for liberation. Celebrate our 20th birthday by donating: https://t.co/zNSC9BcEJ8 1,240 Following 73,208 Followers	Date/Time: October 28, 2021 6:00 p.m. 📢 Attention! Our partner @Disclosure_Doc @Disclosure_Doc is releasing their toolkits for the entertainment industry young people college students + legal professionals for *free* to help take action at this critical moment. Check it out: http://ow.ly/eRku50GxUmr [4 Retweets; 12 Likes; 0 Replies]

PUBLIC RELATIONS & NEWS MEDIA DISCOURSE

The *Disclosure* impact campaign also engaged in traditional media relations activities to promote coverage of *Disclosure* and its key messages by news media. Examining the distribution and content of press releases and news stories can provide insights into if and how an impact campaign for a social-issue documentary like *Disclosure* was able to build and frame the topical nature and sentiment of news media coverage about *Disclosure* in ways that aligned with its objectives. All English-language press releases and news stories that mentioned *Disclosure* worldwide were retrieved and content-analyzed to examine their overall news angle, how the documentary was described, and overall sentiment toward the documentary.

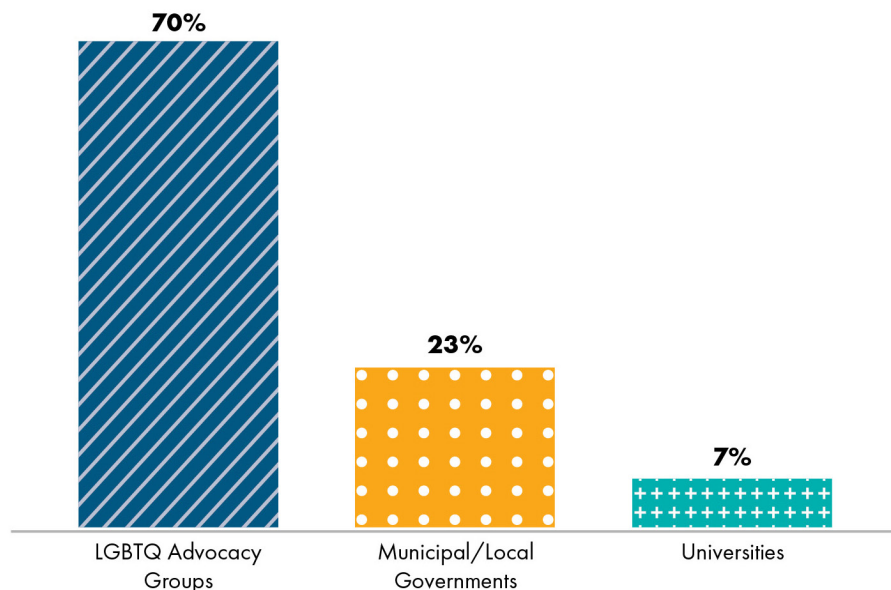
Press Release & News Activity

How frequently and what types of organizations distributed press releases or published news stories that mentioned Disclosure?

Press Releases

A total of 43 press releases were distributed over the study period by three types of organizations; all organizations were based in the U.S., except for one in the U.K. The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) distributed almost all (n=24) of the releases by LGBTQ advocacy groups that mentioned *Disclosure*.

Figure 7: Press Release Distribution by Type of Organization



News Stories

A total of 194 news stories, which includes broadcast, newspaper (print and online), and trade publication stories, mentioned **Disclosure** over the study time period. The majority (59%) appeared in a range of print and online newspapers covering different geographical areas, some with broad reach and some with more local readership, such as *USA Today*, *The Guardian* (London), and the *Chicago Daily Herald*. While most news stories appeared in the United States, a substantial number appeared in the U.K., and to a lesser extent in Latin America and Canada. Sporadic stories also ran in other places across Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, Oceania, and SouthEast Asia.

The remaining stories were spread out across industry trade magazines (e.g., *Deadline* and *Variety*), newswire services (e.g., *The Associated Press* and *Asian News International-ANI*), university newspapers (e.g., University of Southern California's *Daily Trojan* and Pennsylvania State University's *Daily Collegian*) and broadcast television and radio outlets (e.g., ABC's *The View* and National Public Radio's *Morning Edition*) also ran stories that discussed or mentioned the documentary.

Figure 8: News Stories by Country

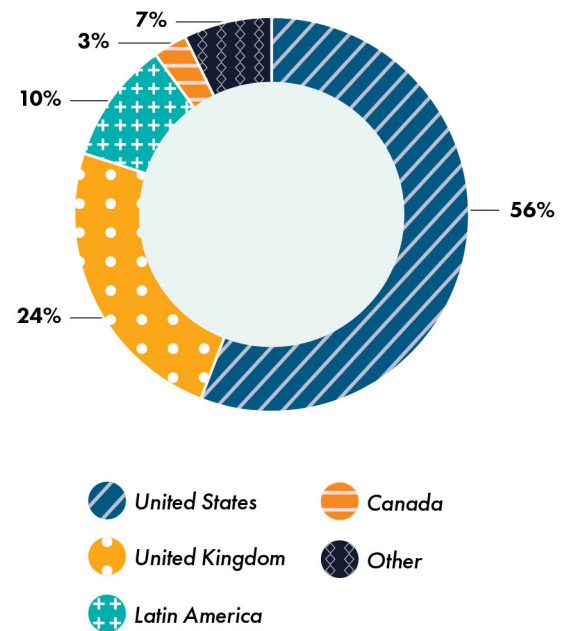
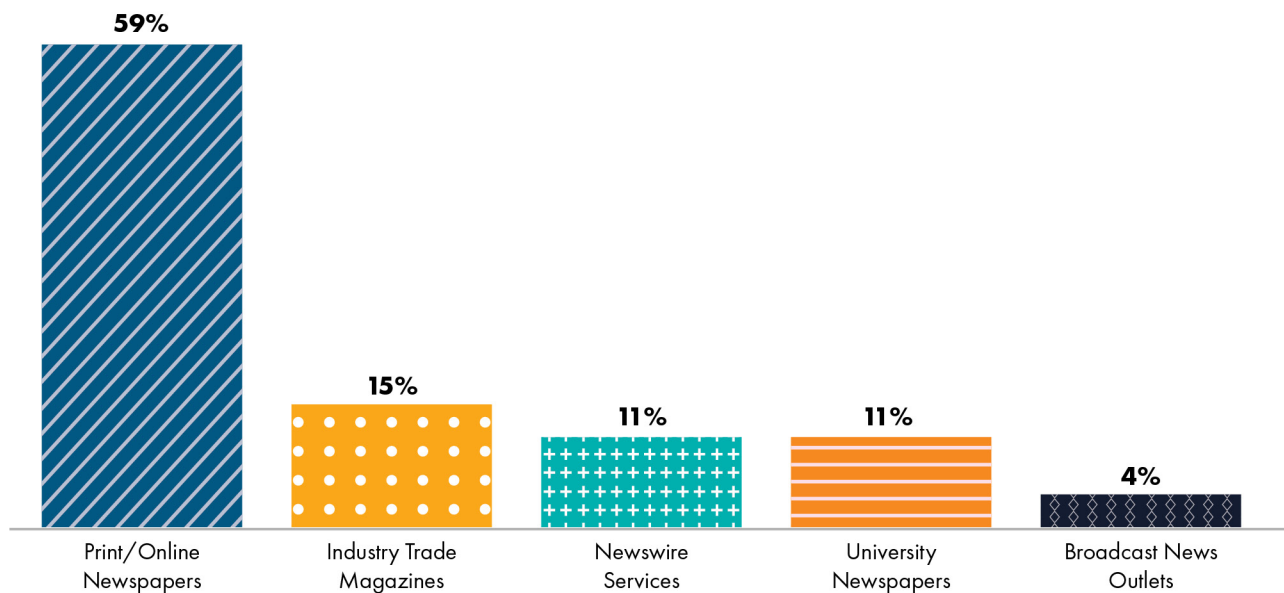


Figure 9: News Stories by Source Type



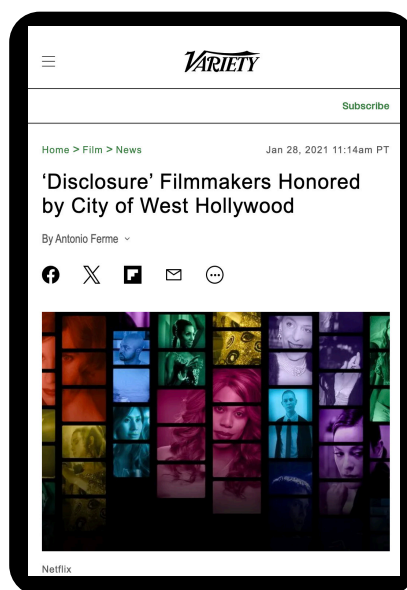
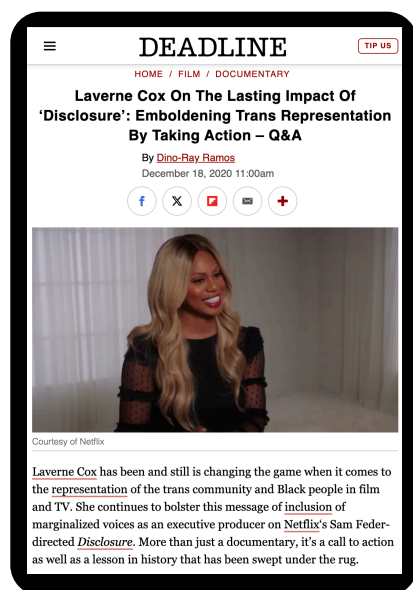
PRESS RELEASE & NEWS FRAMING

How closely did news stories mirror press releases in terms of overall story angle, description of Disclosure, sentiment toward the documentary, and quoted individuals?

To better understand how a social-issue documentary like *Disclosure* made the news, each press release and news story was coded to one of six categories based on its major “story angle,” which refers to the major frame or “hook” used to position a story as newsworthy based on the headline and lede (first paragraph). Press releases and news stories all used the same six, major story angles in Table 3; there were no releases or stories that did not fit into the six-category coding scheme.

Press releases and news stories that focused on *Disclosure* itself as the major story angle by presenting an in-depth feature story about the documentary or a review of it were fairly infrequent, particularly for news outlets. Most of the activity that did occur in this category happened around the documentary’s Sundance Film Festival premiere and Netflix release. Instead, *Disclosure* tended to be mentioned in larger stories about trans-related issues or topics. It is notable and positive that the film was frequently mentioned to support statements about trans representation or issues or as an educational resource to learn more. This is very much in alignment with the campaign objective for media literacy.

In terms of overall trends, the types of major story angles in press releases and news stories were relatively similar, though news outlets appeared more interested in publishing stories about trans issues and rights and controversies than in other areas.²² As to be expected, individuals and organizations rarely issue press releases about controversies that involve them. In this case, however, three press releases in the controversy category were issued by Halle Berry about her decision to decline a role playing a trans man after her commentary about her intentions to do so sparked controversy.



²² Observations about different patterns of results between press releases and news stories were not tested for statistical significance given the small number of press releases (N=43), which resulted in Chi-square cell size violations.

Major Story Angle	Description	Example Headline	Press Releases % (N=43)	News Stories % (N=194)
Feature Stories & Reviews	Feature stories about and/or reviews entirely focused on <i>Disclosure</i>	“‘Disclosure’ Review: A Transgender Lens on Film and TV History”	12	7
Screening & Event Announcements	Announcements about <i>Disclosure</i> screenings and discussions (many were from colleges, theaters, or other community settings and associated with Trans/LGBTQ awareness months/days)	“Hammer Museum to host ‘Disclosure’ screening, Q&A on trans depictions in media”	21	18
Awards & Recognition	Stories about awards or recognition (focused entirely on <i>Disclosure</i> or more often <i>Disclosure</i> was listed in a larger story about awards)	“32nd Annual GLAAD Media Award nominees include outstanding stories about trans people #GLAADawards”	21	9
Actors/Creators, & Other Productions	Stories focused on actors, creators, or other trans-focused productions that mentioned <i>Disclosure</i> (e.g., as a previous credit, a source to support a statement, or a recommended educational resource)	“Brian Michael Smith Talks about Making Trans TV History on the LGBTQ&A Podcast”	23	17
Trans/LGBTQ Issues & Rights	Stories focused on trans/LGBTQ issues or rights (e.g., media portrayals, discrimination, violence) that mentioned <i>Disclosure</i> (e.g., as a source to support a statement or as a recommended educational resource)	“Her advice on transgender workplace issues? Make what’s different work for you”	21	25
Controversy	Stories that were primarily about a controversy that mentioned <i>Disclosure</i> (e.g., a cis-actor planning to play a trans role, insensitive rhetoric about trans people)	“Netflix CEO criticized for claiming on-screen content doesn’t cause ‘real-world harm’ amid Dave Chappelle backlash”	2	24

DAILY BRUIN

ARTS, FILM & TV, THEATER & FINE ARTS

Hammer Museum to host 'Disclosure' screening, Q&A on trans depictions in media



GENE AVEY, STORMÉ DELARVERIE, DORE ORR

(Courtesy of Netflix)

"Disclosure screening with Laverne Cox, Sam Feder & Amy Scholder"

Jan. 19

Online

Free

By Austin Nguyen

Jan. 19, 2021 2:47 p.m.

"Disclosure" is bringing the hammer down on the history of transgender representation.

Disclosure Description & Sentiments

The majority of press releases (70%) and news stories (77%) described *Disclosure* as a documentary about the history of trans representation by Hollywood, and 12% of press releases and 8% of news stories described its trans-inclusive approach to casting and production. Roughly one-quarter of press releases (28%) and news stories (21%) provided no substantive description of the documentary. In many of these cases, *Disclosure* appeared in a list of recommended films or award winners.

As seen in Table 4, commentary about *Disclosure* tended to be neutral in most press releases and news stories. When sentiment was expressed, it was almost always positive. Only 2% of press releases and 1% of news stories expressed positive and negative sentiment toward the film, and none conveyed only negative sentiment.

the QUEERTY interview

Sundance 2020

'Disclosure' director Sam Feder on the complicated history of trans representation

By David Reddish

February 16, 2020 at 11:00am



Director Sam Feder

In 2014, *Time* magazine broke new ground by featuring **Laverne Cox** on its cover—the first for any transgender person. The magazine heralded the moment as “The Transgender Tipping Point.”

Six years on, director Sam Feder aims to fulfill that declaration, and uncover the veiled history behind it. Feder's newest film, *Disclosure: Trans Lives on Screen* follows in the tradition of movies like *The Celluloid Closet*, tracing the evolution of transgender images in film and television from the dawn of the mediums to the present. Featuring interviews with transgender stars like Cox, Brian Michael Smith, MJ Rodriguez, Jen Richards, Candis Cayne, Trace Lysette and more, Feder exposes how some of the most

Table 4: Disclosure Sentiment in Press Releases & News Stories

Sentiment	Press Releases % (N=43)	News Media Stories % (N=194)
Neutral	65	77
Positive	33	23
Mixed	2	1
Negative	0	0

Sustaining the Conversation

How much did the amount of Twitter and news activity vary over the study time period, and what types of events or contextual factors were associated with those shifts?

Over-Time Patterns in Disclosure Discourse

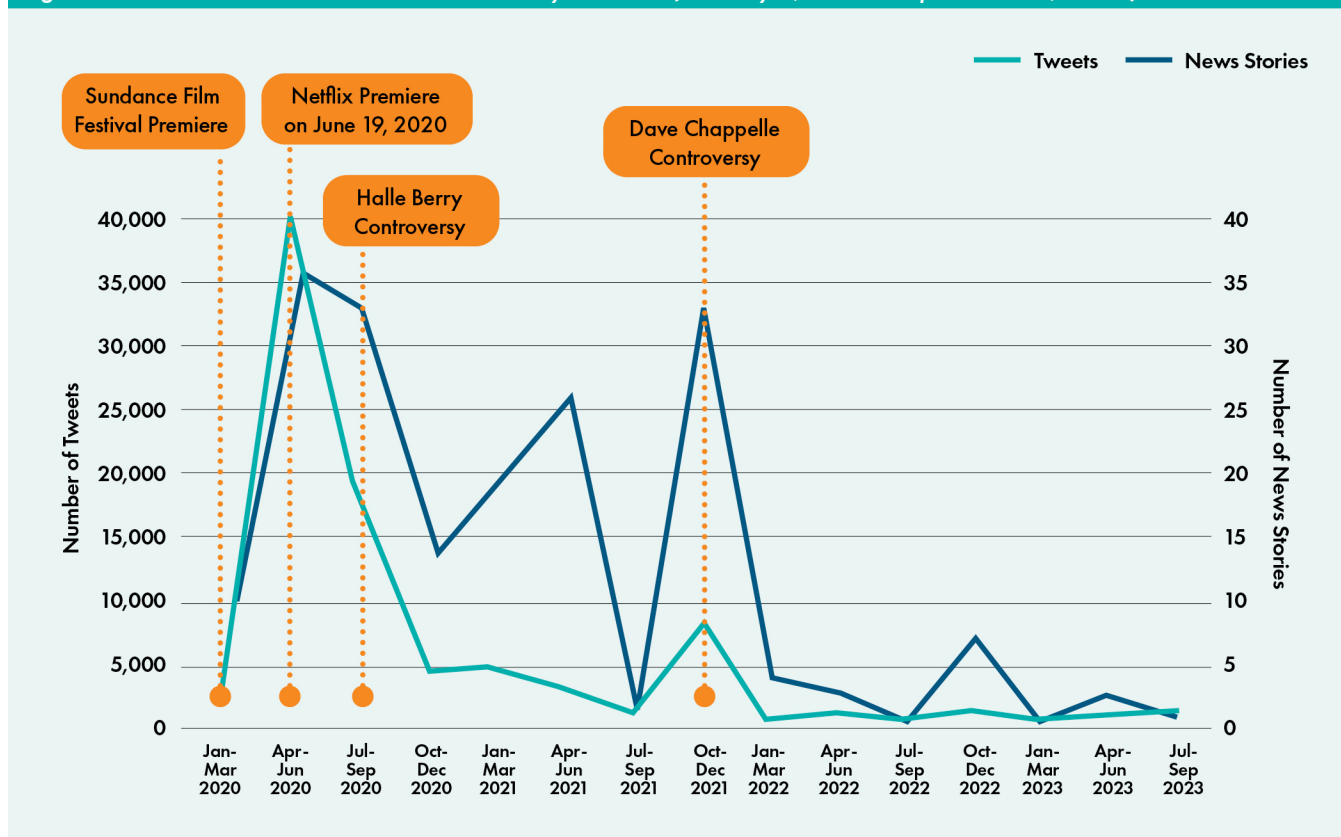
Longitudinal analyses can help identify how contextual factors, events, and seasonal patterns relate to up and down patterns in coverage of a documentary over time. A common challenge for social and behavioral change efforts is keeping an issue top of mind. Understanding what drives and sustains attention to a documentary and/or the social issues it addresses can help impact campaign planners and issue advocates identify ongoing opportunities to reinsert a documentary and its key messages into conversations at important political, social, or cultural moments.

“

I think most documentaries have the potential for social impact, but that is often dependent on not only the quality of the film, but the sustainability of continuing a conversation around it.”

ALEX SCHMIDER,
DISCLOSURE ASSOCIATE PRODUCER AND
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ENTERTAINMENT &
TRANSGENDER INCLUSION AT GLAAD

Figure 10: Number of Tweets & News Stories by Quarter (January 1, 2020–September 15, 2023)



The frequency of tweets, press releases, and news media stories about **Disclosure** varied sharply over the study period.

In the early months of 2020, tweets and news stories celebrated and anticipated **Disclosure's** inclusion in the prestigious lineup at the Sundance Film Festival on January 27, 2020. This was followed by sharp peaks in the next quarter, with tweets and news stories both increasing more than 20-fold due to **Disclosure's** worldwide Netflix premiere on June 19, 2020.

Days before the film's formal release on Netflix in June 2020, the United States Supreme Court ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects gay and transgender workers from discrimination, which was used to highlight the film's timely relevance and impact.

When the murder of George Floyd occurred a few days before **Disclosure** was announced as coming to Netflix, the impact campaign incorporated sensitivity in its release strategy, including a statement penned by Director Sam Feder and Producer Amy Scholder that was posted across social media platforms on May 29, 2020, proactively acknowledging the moment and its relation to the film's announcement and release.

Given its release against the backdrop of the evolving global pandemic and racial reckoning, **Disclosure** emerged as a top recommendation and a must-watch on a variety of "best-of" lists. In particular, *The New York Times* included it in their "Best of Late Night" feature, highlighting it among the "50 best movies on Netflix right now" for those stuck at home.²⁴ On Twitter, the impact campaign promoted numerous online chats and discussions; many were conducted with **Disclosure's** community partners and focused on health and wellness for the trans community, along with some information about **Disclosure**.²⁵

In July 2020, the Halle Berry controversy received significant Twitter and news media attention and then dipped after she issued a formal apology and declared her withdrawal from the role. GLAAD's endorsement of Berry's decision on Twitter sparked coverage from news sources like *CNN Wire*, which covered the controversy and included a post from **Disclosure's** official Twitter account saying, "We hope #DisclosureNetflix is one of many educational tools you and others can rely to inspire and strengthen allyship".²⁶

²³ A portal into trans lives... 'Disclosure' debuts in the wake of the landmark US LGBTQI+ ruling on workplace discrimination. (2020, June 18). *The Star* (South Africa).

²⁴ Bendix, T. (2020, June 23). Late night stares into the abyss of Trump's mostly empty rally; best of Late Night. *The New York Times*.

²⁵ Personal Interview with Impact Producer Eliza Licht

²⁶ Halle Berry apologizes and is no longer considering a transgender role in upcoming film. (2020, July 7). *CNN Wire*.

“

An intimate transgender documentary entitled 'Disclosure' launches this week on Netflix, days after a landmark LGBTQ+ ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that creators of the project said left them elated and relieved [...] Hailed as the biggest decision in gay rights since same-sex marriage.”

THE STAR OF SOUTH AFRICA²³



In the first half of 2021, *Disclosure* news media focused on the return of in-person events after pandemic restrictions, including those dedicated to Transgender Day of Visibility, Pride celebrations, and the GLAAD Media Awards. Additionally, it marked the first year following the widespread activism of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Consistent with the impact campaign's objective to pay particular attention to uplifting Black trans voices, a number of tweets, press releases, and news stories noted and explored the intersections between the BLM movement and Black trans and LGBTQ communities, with the slogan "Black Trans Lives Matter" appearing in tweets.

After declining for several months, another controversy emerged in October 2021, this time involving Netflix and CEO Ted Sarandos's support of Dave Chappelle's contentious comedy special, *The Closer*, which contained remarks and jokes targeting the transgender community. Chappelle's jokes inspired tweets and news stories pointing out their inconsistency with the central message of *Disclosure*, also distributed by Netflix. The decision faced criticism from LGBTQ people and allies, prompting Netflix employees to stage a walkout in protest. The controversy captured widespread attention on social media and from various news outlets, which often underscored GLAAD's statement that "film and TV have also been filled with stereotypes and misinformation about us for decades, leading to real world harm, especially for trans people and LGBTQ people of color. Ironically, the documentary '*Disclosure*' on Netflix demonstrates this quite clearly."²⁷

After this controversy subsided, the quantity of tweets decreased again and remained fairly flat for the remainder of the study period with the exception of the last few months of 2022. Articles during this period spotlighted Pride celebrations and LGBTQ activism, like Perth County's first-ever Transgender Pride Week.²⁸ Articles also highlighted the Transgender Day of Remembrance and awareness events centered on LGBTQ representation in the media. These themes continued to generate periodic activity into 2023, with communities coming together for pride events and transgender advocacy days.

²⁷ Diaz, A. (2021, October 15). Netflix FIRES employee for leaking Dave Chappelle's \$24.1M salary for his controversial special: CEO tells angry staff 'we are on the right side of history' in message board row over trans jokes. *MailOnline*.

²⁸ Simmons, G. (2022, November 3). Stratford-Perth Pride to host Perth County's first-ever Trans Pride Week; Events include a documentary screening, a panel discussion, and drop-in café. *The Stratford Beacon-Herald*.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE DISCLOSURE IMPACT CAMPAIGN TACTICS

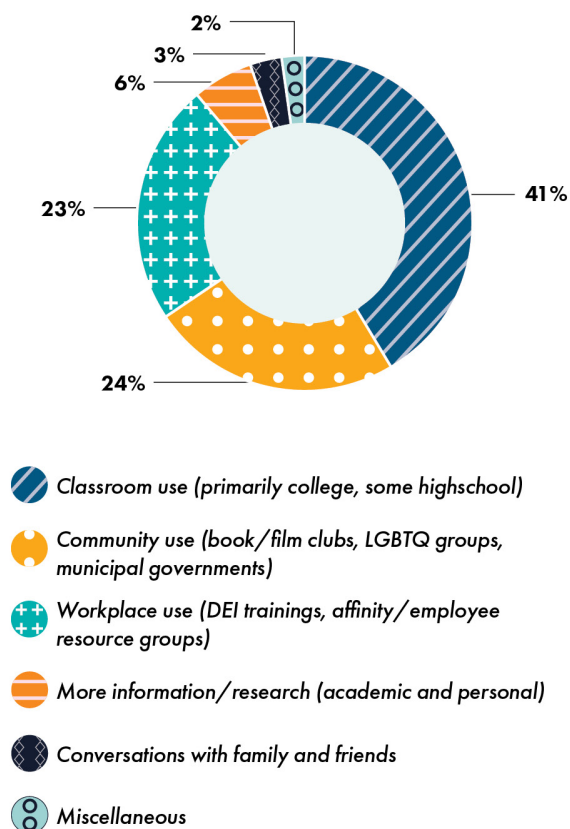
Discussion Guides & Toolkits

- ☐ Free **Disclosure** discussion guide
- ☐ Five specialized toolkits with audience-tailored discussion questions, video clips, additional resources, and call to action ideas to support trans people (See Appendices):
 - ☐ Youth (especially questioning)
 - ☐ Colleges
 - ☐ DEI/workplaces
 - ☐ Legal community
 - ☐ Entertainment industry

Partnerships

- ☐ Partnerships with 54 community-based organizations that work to protect the rights, health, and safety of transgender individuals for online panel discussions and Instagram chats
- ☐ Collaboration with 11 community/advocacy groups, professional organizations, and/or funders for sponsorship, production, or review of the five specialized toolkits
 - ☐ Media literacy organizations
 - ☐ Legal advocacy groups
 - ☐ Social justice organizations
 - ☐ Film institutes/associations
 - ☐ Foundations

The **Disclosure** website garnered over 80,000 online visits, with nearly 200 toolkits purchased and 2,932 downloads of the free discussion guide. Out of 741 individuals who described how they planned to use the guide, classroom use was the most frequent response.²⁹



²⁹ Data provided by Disclosure Impact Producer Eliza Licht.

Engagement Events

- ☐ More than 155 events conducted, mostly online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including online watch parties, panel discussions, and Instagram chats
 - ☐ Opportunities to join conversations with **Disclosure** filmmakers or cast
 - ☐ Discussions focused on health and wellness in trans communities (with some of the 54 partner organizations)

Social Media³⁰

- ☐ Strategically leveraged four primary social media channels and proactively used them to raise awareness and interact to promote dialogue. Each platform was used in a tailored manner to maximize its unique strengths and engage the target audience effectively.
 - ☐ Twitter: (Used to drive discussions about thought, feelings, and opinions about the film and issues related to transgender representation in media)

- ☐ Instagram: (Used to showcase visually appealing content and highlight the trans crew and fellows behind the scenes)
- ☐ Facebook (same as Instagram/cross-posting)
- ☐ YouTube: (Posting of trailers, TV press interviews with Sam Feder and Laverne Cox, and informal video shorts of cast talking about what the film meant to them)

Media Relations

- ☐ Press releases distributed by GLAAD to publicize **Disclosure**-related news
 - ☐ Feature story pitches
 - ☐ Awards news
 - ☐ References to **Disclosure** in stories about other trans productions
- ☐ Example TV interview appearances by Sam Feder and Laverne Cox
 - ☐ *The View*
 - ☐ *The Daily Show*



In collaboration with GLAAD, the impact campaign shared over 31 compelling posts on Instagram like the one to the left spotlighting the trans crew and fellows, some of which were also shared to Facebook, generating hundreds of online engagements.

³⁰ The impact campaign had no LinkedIn page but the platform saw numerous positive comments, posts, and shares discussing and recommending the film and its discussion guide as a resource.

APPENDIX B

DETAILED METHODOLOGY

TRANSforming the Narrative is a multi-method case study that examines the social impact of the documentary film, **Disclosure**, on public discourse about transgender people. The study uses multiple social science research methods: qualitative interviews with two of the documentary’s producers, examination of the film’s impact campaign materials, content analysis of press releases and news stories that mentioned **Disclosure**, and computational analyses of Twitter posts about the documentary to understand the topical nature of the conversations, whether the posts were positive or negative in tone, and the network structure and relational communication patterns between individuals who posted and interacted with posts about the documentary.

Data Collection

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews were conducted with two **Disclosure** producers to better understand the context of the impact campaign objectives, strategies, and tactics: **Disclosure’s** Impact Producer Eliza Licht, who is the Founder & Managing Partner of Red Owl, an impact strategy and production firm, and Associate Producer Alex Schmider, who is also Senior Director of Entertainment & Transgender Inclusion at GLAAD, the nation’s leading LGBTQ media advocacy organization. Both interviews were conducted virtually using a loosely structured topic guide. Transcripts of the conversations were examined for information that added context and/or deepened understanding of the campaign effort.

Twitter Data

We retrieved 79,678 unique Twitter posts from the Twitter API that mentioned **Disclosure** from January 1, 2020, to September 15, 2023. A comprehensive set of search strings was developed based on manual searches of the Twitter platform by the study researchers to identify the combinations of terms that did the best job gathering relevant tweets about the documentary **Disclosure** and filtering out irrelevant tweets that used the commonly used word “disclosure” in other contexts (see Table 5). All original tweets and retweets that met the search criteria were retrieved for analysis,³¹ regardless of whether any of the words—including the word disclosure—was capitalized.³² Tweets that met multiple search string criteria were deduplicated to arrive at the final dataset of 79,678 tweets.

Table 5: Search Terms and Strings Used to Retrieve Tweets that Mentioned Disclosure

Search Terms	Search Strings
@Disclosure_Doc	Disclosure AND (documentary OR film) and (Netflix OR @netflix)
#DisclosureNetflix	Disclosure AND (@SamFederFilm OR @lavernecox OR @amyscholder)
#DisclosureDoc	Disclosure AND (documentary OR film) and (#LGBTQ OR #transrights OR #pride OR #TransDayofVisibility OR #GLAADawards)
Disclosurethemovie.com	Disclosure AND (documentary OR film) and (transgender OR trans)

³¹ Tweets that met the criteria were purchased from Audiense using the Tweet Binder API.

³² Two of the study authors conducted extensive manual searches on the public Twitter platform to develop a set of search strings for retrieval via the Twitter API that captured as many relevant tweets about the documentary as possible while filtering out irrelevant tweets, such as those that used the common word disclosure in other contexts.

Press Releases & News Stories

Quantitative content analysis was used to examine any English-language press releases, news stories, and trade press articles that mentioned the documentary anywhere in the text between January 1, 2020, and September 15, 2023. The Nexis Uni database was used to access the “Newswires and Press Releases,” “Newspapers,” and “News Transcripts” databases, and the following search string was used on all three databases: “caps (**Disclosure**) AND transgender or trans AND film or documentary”³³ for any mention of **Disclosure**. After deduplication and removal of press/wire releases and news stories that were not related, a total of 43 press releases, 165 news stories, and 29 trade press articles were available for analysis.

Research Methods

A mix of computational research methods and manual content analysis techniques were used to answer the six study research questions.

Computational Methods: Computer-assisted, machine-learning and/or automated techniques used to facilitate analysis of social media and other datasets too large to be analyzed manually by researchers.

Social Network Analysis	Structural Topic Modeling	Sentiment Analysis
Examines patterns in social relations between individuals or organizations in a network. The individuals/ organizations are called “nodes” (e.g., Twitter accounts) and the relations connecting (e.g., retweets) are called “ties.”	Inductively discerns patterns in word usage across large corpora (or collections of text) by clustering together terms with a high statistical probability of occurring in close proximity to one another. Clusters are examined by researchers to ascertain their meaning.	Determines the polarity of sentiments expressed in each tweet by assigning a score ranging from -1 (negative) to 1 (positive) based on the incidence of words pre-classified as “positive” or “negative” in a software package dictionary.

Manual Content Analysis: A systematic analysis technique employed by researchers to examine, identify, and categorize content.

Qualitative Content Analysis	Quantitative Content Analysis
Researchers examine a body of content and work inductively to make meaning of the data by identifying recurring and/or important patterns or themes.	Researchers examine a body of content and work deductively to code specific words or images to a codebook of predefined categories to calculate their frequency of occurrence.

³³ Two of the study researchers conducted trial searches to arrive at the best search string to capture the relevant documents. The search string to retrieve press releases and news stories was simpler given standard news writing conventions, such as capitalizing a film title or offering a briefly worded description of what it is about.

Social Network Analysis

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a technique used to examine social relations between different actors in a network; in this case, the network included all entities or individuals that tweeted about **Disclosure**. SNA was conducted with all 79,678 tweets using the open source software, Gephi. In SNA parlance, each Twitter account served as a “node” in the model and the retweets were the “ties” (or connections) between the nodes. Interpretation focused on determining whether the network was highly centralized with a small number of nodes or “hubs” dominating the discourse, or if the network was more diffuse with many active nodes contributing. To identify hubs, otherwise known as “crowd-enabled elites,”³⁴ we used a metric called “weighted in-degree,” which is the number of times an account’s tweets were retweeted within the larger **Disclosure** Twitter network, weighted by the likelihood of the retweeting account to be retweeted itself. Accounts with the top-20 weighted in-degree scores were identified as primary crowd-enabled elites. We then extracted their usernames, bios, the number of accounts they followed or were followed by, and their posts for further examination to understand if they were officially associated with the **Disclosure** impact campaign or not and what factors made their tweets particularly influential.

Structural Topic Modeling

Computer-assisted structural topic modeling (STM) combined with manual qualitative analysis was used to identify topical themes across 68,885 English-language tweets.³⁵ STM is an unsupervised machine-learning technique used to inductively discern patterns in word usage across large bodies of text by clustering together terms with a high statistical probability of occurring in close proximity to one another. The best-fitting topic model revealed 12 clusters of related terms—or “topics”—with very few overlapping words across topics. Tweets with a high probability of association with each topic were manually examined by the researchers to ascertain their meaning. Some topics were combined to arrive at a set of seven topical themes that best expressed their conversational meaning.

Sentiment Analysis

Sentiment analysis was carried out with the help of the “sentimentR” package in RStudio to determine the positive or negative polarity of sentiments expressed in the tweets. Each tweet was assigned a sentiment score ranging from -1 to 1 based on the incidence of words pre-classified as “positive” or “negative” in the package dictionary. Raw sentiment scores were converted into proportions of the overall sentiment score for the data set. In addition, the positive and negative polarity of tweets was included as a covariate in the STM analysis mentioned above to determine topic-level polarity. Once sentiment scores were assigned to all tweets, the researchers spent some time browsing the datafile and looking at examples of very positive and very negative tweets associated with each topical theme to gain a qualitative understanding of the nature of the discourse associated with strong sentiments.

Content Analysis

We conducted two types of content analysis, qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to examine materials related to the impact campaign, including the campaign’s website, media kits, and community toolkits and discussion guides. Quantitative content analysis was used to examine any English-language press releases, news stories, and trade press articles that mentioned the documentary anywhere in the text between January 1, 2020 and September 15, 2023. The Nexis Uni database was used to access the “Newswires and Press Releases,” “Newspapers,” and “News Transcripts” databases, and the following search string was used on all three databases: “caps (**Disclosure**) AND transgender or trans AND film or documentary” for any mention of **Disclosure**. After deduplication and removal of press/wire releases and news stories that were not related, a total of 43 press releases, 165 news stories, and 29 trade press articles were available for analysis. Two of the study authors coded all data for the quantitative analyses. A codebook was created and tested for intercoder reliability based on 10% of the total sample.

³⁴ Shahin, S., Nakahara, J., & Sánchez, M. (2024). Black Lives Matter goes global: Connective action meets cultural hybridity in Brazil, India, and Japan. *New Media & Society*, 26(1), 216-235

³⁵ The STM analysis was conducted in RStudio using the custom-built “stm” package; the authors did not have access to translators for non-English tweets. Preprocessing included common procedures like stemming to capture terms with different endings and lowercasing to avoid clustering differences due to capitalization and removal of numbers, punctuation marks, hyperlinks, Twitter handles, and common English stopwords (the, is, it, etc.) that do not contribute meaningfully to topic interpretation. Tweets with no substantive text to analyze (e.g., multimedia only, Twitter handles or hashtags only) or tweets not expected to contribute to the analysis (e.g., tweets that contained words that were used 5 times or less in the entire corpus) were removed.

Evaluation Matrix

The following matrix identifies the research method, analytic approach, and data sources used to answer each of the study's research questions. The research questions are denoted by their shortened labels as the list of study questions on page 11.

Research Question Label	Method	Analytic Approach	Data Source (January 1, 2020 to September 15, 2023) ³⁶
1. Social Network Dynamics	Social Network Analysis	Every Twitter user served as a “node” in the model and the retweets were the “ties” (or connections) between the nodes.	All 79,678 tweets that mentioned Disclosure ³⁷
2. Disclosure Opinion Leaders	Social Network Analysis	A metric called “weighted in degree” was used to identify influential Twitter users (called “hubs” in SNA) based on how frequently and extensively they were retweeted across the discussion network.	All 79,678 tweets that mentioned Disclosure
3. Discussion Themes & Sentiment	- Sentiment Analysis - Structural Topic Modeling (STM) - Supplemental Qualitative Content Analysis	Tweets were classified as more “positive” or “negative” based on sentiment analysis scores. STM identified the best-fitting model of clustered terms. Study authors used qualitative content analysis techniques to examine clustered terms and associated tweets to identify topical themes.	Analysis based on 68,885 English language-only tweets ³⁸ that mentioned Disclosure
4. PR & News Activity	Content Analysis: Quantitative	Based on a systematic search string and codebook the researchers identified press releases and news stories that mentioned Disclosure and classified them by type of distributing organization or outlet.	43 press releases and 194 news stories that mentioned Disclosure
5. PR & News Framing	Content Analysis: Quantitative	Based on a codebook, the researchers classified each press release and document to identify its major story angle, how Disclosure was described, and sentiment toward the film (positive, neutral, negative, or mixed).	43 press releases and 194 news stories that mentioned Disclosure
6. Attention Drivers	Content Analysis: Quantitative & Qualitative	Visual over-time line graph showing peaks and valleys in the number of Twitter posts and news stories with qualitative analyses of events associated with shifts in quantity.	43 press releases and 194 news stories that mentioned Disclosure

³⁶ Time period for all data sequences in the study.

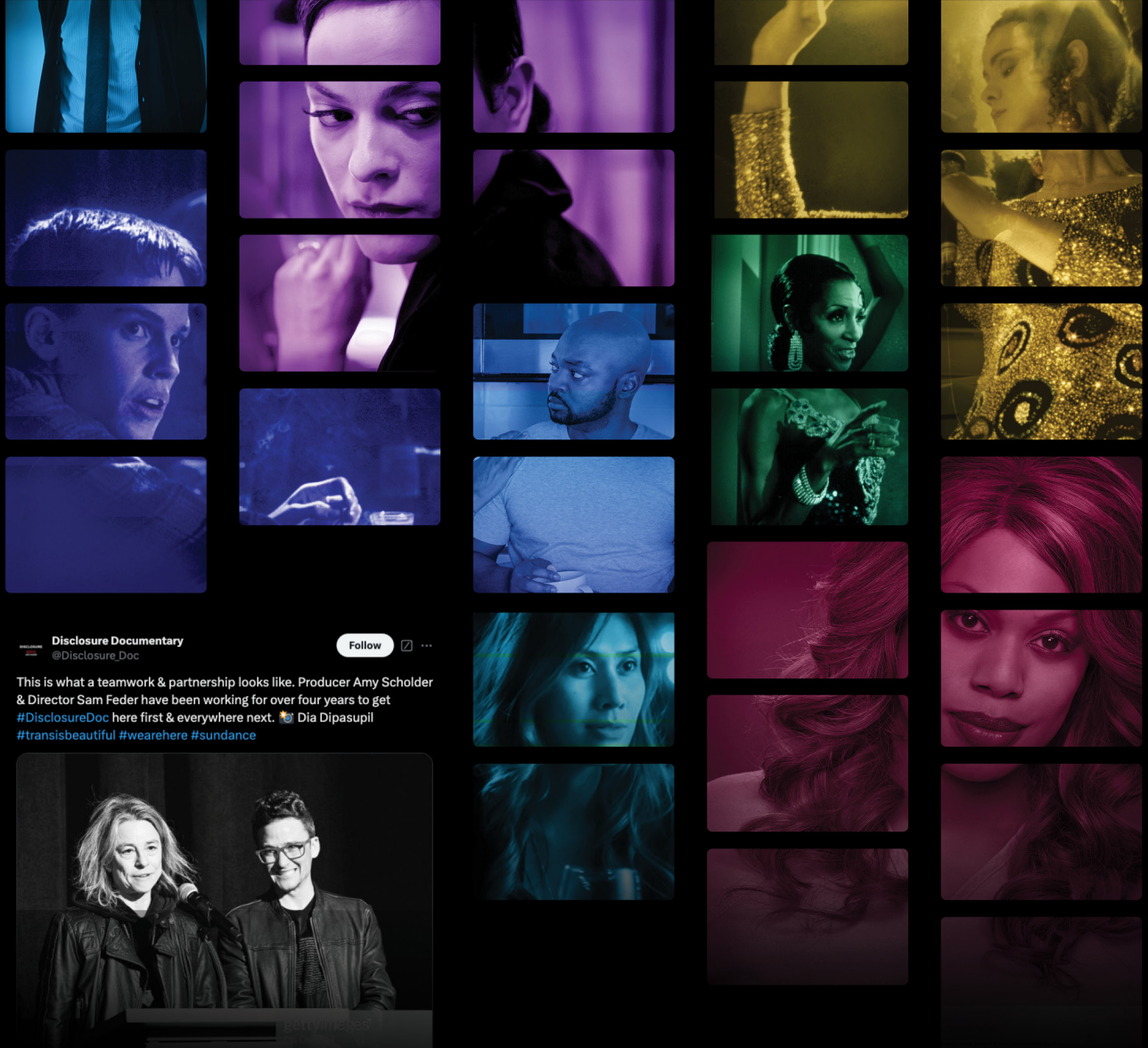
³⁷ All social network procedures are based on all tweets regardless of language because the analysis only takes into account the connections between users, not the content of the tweets.

³⁸ Only English-language tweets were used because translation to multiple languages was impractical. Sentiment and STM analyses were based on only 68,885 of the 74,792 English-language tweets due to standard preprocessing procedures to remove tweets with no substantive text to analyze (e.g., multimedia only, Twitter handles or hashtags only) or tweets not expected to contribute to the analysis (e.g., tweets that contained words that were used 5 times or less in the entire corpus).

Intercoder Reliability: Press Releases & News Stories

Table 6 summarizes each coding variable and reports on the intercoder reliability achieved.

Table 6: Intercoder Reliability Results		
Date	Enter _____ (e.g., 111123)	1.00
Document Type	☐ Broadcast Transcript ☐ Trade News ☐ Press Release ☐ Newspaper	1.00
Disclosure Mentioned	Yes/No	1.00
Country/Region of Publication	☐ UK ☐ U.S. ☐ Latin America ☐ Other: Specify _____	1.00
Major News Angle (Select only one code)	(Select only one code) ☐ Controversy ☐ Actors/Filmmakers/Other Shows/Films ☐ Disclosure News ☐ Film Watching/Screening Promotions ☐ Trans/LGBTQ Visibility, Issues, & Rights ☐ Other: Specify _____	.92
Film Description	(Check all that apply) ☐ Transgender Media Depictions/Representation ☐ Exclusion or Inclusion of Trans People in Casting & Production ☐ No Commentary about Film ☐ Other: Specify _____	.96
Valence of Commentary about Documentary	(Select only one code) ☐ Positive ☐ Negative ☐ Mixed ☐ Neutral/No Explicit Sentiment	.87



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