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SPEAKERS

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- C** Cortland Stone 00:10
- In the aftermath of the Parkland shooting, survivor David Hogg made a solemn vow: never again. Since emerging as one of America's most recognizable gun control activists, the Hill of August 20, 2018 notes, Hogg plans to run for Congress in the 2026 elections, which has gun lovers losing their shit. But rather than protesting his public events or making conspiracy videos, extremist alt-right activists have devised something much more disturbing. The Daily Dot of August 18, 2018 introduces America's most provocative female gun toting mascot: Daisy Hogg. The Daily Beast of August 29, 2018 explains: Yes, alt-right activists are circulating gender swapped images of David Hogg's face onto the bodies of bikini models and porn stars, and even photoshopping her wielding fire arms. She's prompted comments like, "if only I could love someone as much as Daisy loves her guns." Gross. David Hogg has been a target of conservative backlash since emerging as a leader in the national movement to stop gun violence. But as an epidemic of school shootings builds momentum towards gun control the alt-right is feminizing their opponent into a hero they idolize. Leaving us to ask how is the alt-right using Daisy Hogg to combat David Hogg's gun control politics?
- C** Cortland Stone 01:56
- To answer, we'll turn to Anna Cornelia Fahey's article, French and Feminine: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 Presidential Race, published in the 2007 Journal of Critical Studies and Media Communications. Fahey analyzes how

media narrative sought to delegitimize presidential candidate John Kerry, by rhetorically feminizing him, strategies we'll explore with Daisy. So first we'll look at Fahey's model, apply her method before finally drawing implications behind a repulsive all too familiar strategy.



Cortland Stone 02:35

In the 2004 presidential race Fahey noticed something peculiar. The Bush campaign and its supporters consistently linked visual representations of presidential candidate John Kerry, to stereotypical French qualities to make him seem feminine, and therefore less qualified to be president. Fahey calls this rhetorical strategy "French-ification." She's a rhetoric scholar, not a creative writer. It entails the combination of two strategies: crafting the emasculated body and ascribing the feminine persona. Initially, crafting the emasculated body, reimagining the subject as overtly feminine. Fahey explains, "in September 2002, Bush announced his post 9/11 national security strategy that included an imminent attack on Iraq, while Kerry was comparatively apprehensive and nuanced. Because the French denounced this proposed invasion, American politicians and pundits often framed France as cowardly and feminine." So the Bush campaign used France as a vehicle to reframe Kerry into a feminized body: Fifi. The Bush campaign used Fifi, a French poodle, as a feminine avatar for Kerry. Literally a bitch framing him as too weak to lead America in a time of war. Next, ascribing the feminine persona, assigning a body its feminine qualities. Fahey argues, once the portrait was complete it needed a feminine personality, like Kerry's apprehension over the US proposed invasion of Iraq. The NRA described Fifi as indecisive, which as Fahey notes, is a gendered, feminine trait. Through Fifi, conservative columnist, George Will, described Kerry's politics as "wobbly and prancing around the issues" and his demeanor as "fancily clipped for show." The characterization of John Kerry as this girly dog maintains the male hegemonic narrative wherein women are unfit to lead. John Kerry's French-ification was a mix of silly and downright demeaning, but today, the alt-right's taking this strategy to another level. Images of Daisy Hogg accompanied by unnerving comments are circulating for gun forums, men's rights blogs, moms' basements, and other hubs for alt-right activity. So let's apply Fahey's model. Initially, the alt-right is de-legitimizing David Hogg's gun control politics by crafting his emasculated body. While the Bush campaign used France as a metaphorical vehicle to reframe Kerry's politics, alt-right trolls' use of gender swapping apps has taken a not so subtle approach. Emasculating David by visually imposing a transgender identity. All iterations of Daisy Hogg are basically David's face imposed onto the bodies of mostly scantily clad women and views David as a woman. The alt-right insinuates her politics aren't as important as her body. Through this feminine avatar, the alt-right promotes ownership over David Hogg's body, and by extension, his political opinions. Next, the alt-right is de-legitimizing David Hogg's gun control politics by

ascribing the feminine persona. The images the alt-right has chosen to represent David already overtly sexualize him, but it's their comments and image descriptions that crystallize Daisy's femininity. Several commenters write of Daisy, "she adores us and she's the perfect waifu." Whatever the hell that is. The rare comments not focused on her body, focus on how submissive she is, and how she acquiesces to the needs of men. Unlike David, she's not judgmental. She accepts them and their gun loving ways. The alt-right reimagines David into a woman they admire, but not because they respect her. They idolize Daisy because she knows her place. Understanding how Fahey's French-ification applies to the alt-right's use of Daisy Hogg, let's return to our research question. How is the alt-right using Daisy Hogg to combat David Hogg's gun control politics? By projecting David through a misogynist persona with complete opposite political views the alt-right is able to dismiss gun control as a weak, feminine position that can be molded and controlled. This prompts two implications. Initially, the alt-right's use of Daisy Hogg reinforces justifications for violence. As Fahey argues, this rhetorical strategy may seem trivial, but its end goal is to punish feminine identity and everything associated with that. So as the alt-right spreads the idea that David is not man enough because he supports gun control they encourage their predominantly misogynist following to think of gun control as weak, feminine and deserving of aggressive retaliation. The Southern Poverty Law Center of February 5, 2018 notes, it's exactly this rhetoric that is pervasive in the manifestos of Elliot Rodger, William Atchison, and Alexandre Bissonnette. All self identified alt-right mass murderers who preached about their hatred of women. Ultimately, Daisy Hogg is the rhetorical product of a community indoctrinating men into believing if someone supports a weak, feminine position, they deserved to be permanently silenced. Finally, the alt-right is using Daisy Hogg to promote ownership over transgender women's bodies. The aforementioned Daily Dot explains, "for many circulating images of Daisy the fact that she transitioned from David is part of the appeal." As Medium of July 18, February 18 furthers, "their fascination with Daisy is consistent with our culture's rampant fetishizing of trans women, and Daisy's idolization only reinforces that they are only valued as sex objects." The spread of this dangerous fetish is especially threatening because according to the National Center for Transgender Equality 46% of transgender women have been sexually harassed or abused after denying sexual advances made by right wing men. In essence, Daisy Hogg spreads the already pervasive attitude among alt-righters: being transgender is an open invitation to be assaulted. After looking at Fahey's model, applying her method, and drawing implications, a rhetorical phenomenon like Daisy Hogg warrants more attention. As David continues to advocate to making our schools safer through gun control, it's clear there will be many trying to de-legitimize him and they'll resort to anything to gun him down.