



October 2023

Now We Got Bad Blood

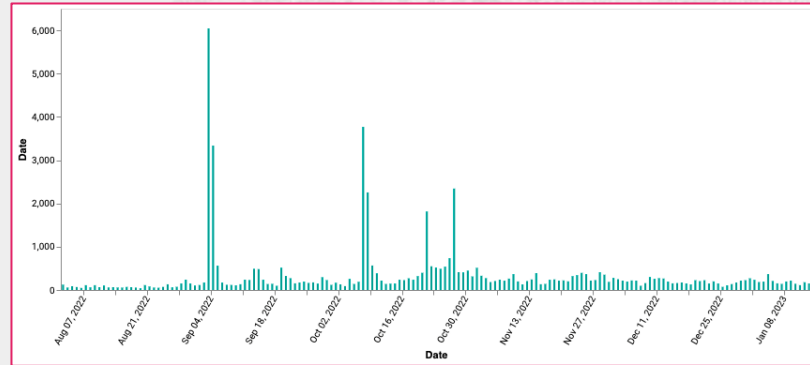
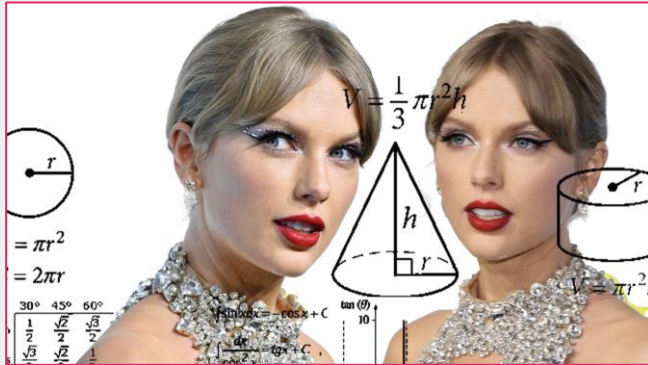
Exploring Harassment Dynamics
Within the Online Taylor Swift Fandom

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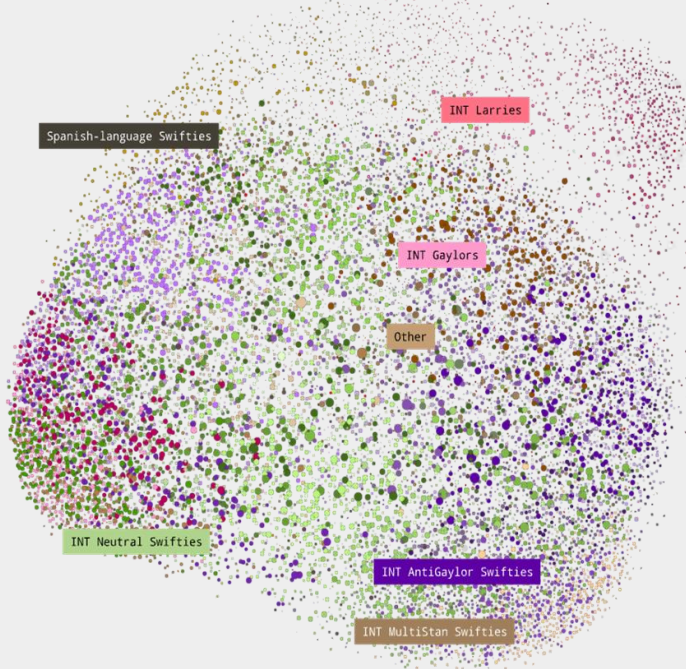
ACT I: 'We See You Over There on the Internet' (Intro)

- Midnights album speculation surprise: #Gaylor dominates online conversations among the Taylor Swift fandom
- #Gaylor: a divisive fan theory borne out of queer Tumblr around 2014, moved from Tumblr's walled garden of complex tags and a nearly inscrutable posting culture over to Twitter's mainstream
- For many Swifties, #Gaylor amounts to a malicious and false narrative about their favorite celebrity. For true believers who see antagonistic attempts to debunk the theory as homophobic attacks, it has become a pillar of their online identity. And this has resulted in polarization and targeted harassment between factions of what might have seemed a solidly monolithic community of fans

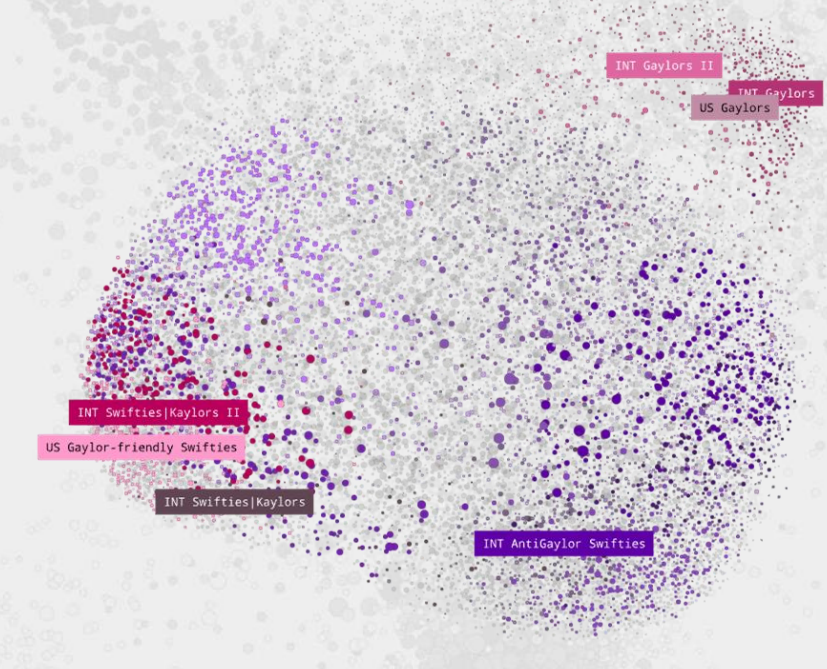


ACT II: 'Drew a Map on Your Bedroom Ceiling' (Network Analysis)

Network map showing a sample of 13,292 Twitter accounts in the Taylor Swift fandom



Map highlighting only Gaylor, Anti-Gaylor and Kaylor accounts



We created an X (formerly Twitter) followers network map of 84 influential Swiftie accounts uncovered using relevant key terms in account bios (swifties, swiftie, #taylornation, Gaylor, Gaylorswift), resulting in a network of 13,292 accounts, labeled according to their stance regarding #Gaylor discourse

ACT III: 'The Great War' (Tactics, Techniques, Procedures)

Doxxing & Harassment

The most brutal episodes between factions have featured the doxxing and outing of people behind prominent Gaylor accounts.

Brigading & Mass Reporting

Both Gaylor and Anti-Gaylor users regularly engage in coordinated hostile actions targeting specific accounts or groups of accounts, a practice sometimes referred to as brigading. Anti-Gaylors, in particular, have attempted to censor Gaylor discourse by mass-reporting influential accounts and their posts to social media platforms in an attempt to have them suspended.

Sock Puppet Accounts

Both sides of the Gaylor divide reference using multiple accounts for multiple purposes which include expanding a user's reach, lurk in private spaces, evade suspensions and bans, or harass anonymously.

Coded Language

Both communities use a constantly evolving series of coded terms and alternative spellings to avoid attracting the attention of the rival faction.

Censorship

The Anti-Gaylor community significantly outnumbers Gaylor proponents, making them the dominant force in the majority of online spaces used by Swift's fandom. Anti-Gaylor accounts have used their strength of numbers to "exile" Gaylor fans from the mainstream, banning them from subreddits and other forums.





Thank You!

