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The Reality of Gender: A Look at Transphobic Talking Points Gone Viral

It was July 2017 and two different Facebook friends of mine who are acquaintances from high school shared a video of a person named Ben Shapiro talking about “transgenderism”. Although to me he appeared to be hateful and misinformed, I could see how to others he might sound compelling. He spoke with confidence that came off as authority and with dismissiveness that managed to come off as compassion.

This video has stuck in my mind since I viewed it that summer. I wanted to find the words to contradict Shapiro, even if just for myself. As time has passed, doing so has felt more and more urgent. I see news headlines where the rights of my transgender loved ones are being threatened. Openly refusing to accept the identities of transgender people seems to be more and more acceptable. This contrasts with the political climate that existed when I started at SUNY Purchase in 2015 when the rights afforded to LGBTQ folks seemed to only increase.

I’ve known I wanted to come back to this video and address it, but to be honest the prospect of watching it again seems painful. It’s frightening to me that “Ben Shapiro DESTROYS Transgenderism And Pro-Abortion Arguments” has over 4 million views on YouTube and I’m resistant to add to its view count. However, if the YouTuber ContraPoints, who I so admire, can watch and read the amount of transphobic content that she does in order to

formulate her arguments and she's a transgender woman, surely I as a cisgender person can handle this. Okay, here I go. . .

So, Ben Shapiro's main point is that trans people have about a 40% suicide rate, the general United States population has about a 4% suicide rate and this difference can not be explained only by the fact that people deny that trans people belong to the sex category with which they identify. He refuses to refer to trans women as women and trans men as men because he sees this as lying. He believes that whatever the mental condition of "transgenderism" is, it must inherently coincide with a suicidal nature. He says "you can't sacrifice truth because some people are actually going to suffer because of the truth" which hints at another position that he doesn't outright say which is: the way our society conceptualizes gender causes trans people to suffer, but he doesn't care. He says that he wishes trans people "Godspeed" in dealing with their issue "in whatever way [they] see fit," but it doesn't involve him or the way he chooses to use language.

Shapiro cites a study from the "Anderson School at UCLA" which according to him shows that suicide rates among trans people do not change based on whether those around them accept their gender identity. The UCLA Anderson School of Management is actually a business school which has never released any studies about trans suicide rates. The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law and Public Policy at UCLA School of Law which published a study called "Suicide Attempts among Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Adults" is most likely what he's referring to. This study references the National Transgender Discrimination Survey which found that 41 percent of its trans and gender non-conforming respondents report a lifetime suicide attempt "which vastly exceeds the 4.6 percent of the overall

U.S. population”. This data is about suicide attempts not suicide rates. The Williams Institute survey asked its participants a variety of questions including who (family, friends, colleagues, classmates, strangers etc.) they were out or visible to and whether they received acceptance in various contexts of their lives. They were asked if they were bullied, harassed, sexually assaulted, or victims of physical violence at school or work and how they have been treated by doctors, landlords, and law enforcement. The study notes as one of its weaknesses that the survey had only the options “yes” or “no” when it asks about suicide attempts. This means that there is no timeline for the suicide attempts. It’s not clear whether the attempts increased or decreased in number in relation to experiences with rejection or hostility or acceptance. What Shapiro is claiming that this study proves, is not actually possible for it to prove based on its methods. It is notable however that 33% of the respondents who checked yes for “Family is as strong today as when I came out” reported that they had ever attempted suicide compared to the 57% of respondents who checked yes for “Parents/family chose not to speak/spend time with me” who reported that they had ever attempted suicide. This may not definitively prove that family acceptance of trans people reduces their suicide attempt risks but it allows a hypothesis that this is the case. The conclusion of this study is that “rejection, discrimination, victimization, and violence related to anti-transgender bias and serious mental health conditions” appear to be most strongly related to suicide attempts. It also states that their analysis suggests that the experiences of rejection etc. and mental health conditions are “interrelated” which I interpret to mean that the rejection etc. is thought to be the likely cause of the mental health issues. The fact is that in order to make definite claims about whether affirming trans identities reduces trans suicide attempts, there needs to be more research done that takes the timeline of attempts into consideration. In the

meantime however, research *does* suggest that acceptance and affirmation makes trans people's lives more livable.

Although he claims to hope that trans folks will find ways to improve their contentment with being alive, what he's actually doing is encouraging those who make trans people's lives difficult to keep it up. Members of his vast audience are bound to be the parents, teachers, employers etc. of trans people. The message he is sending is if you know or suspect that someone is transgender, refuse to refer to them in the ways they wish to be referred to. Do not encourage their delusion. The message he's sending to trans people is don't let anyone know you are trans, your gender identity will not be respected, you are delusional, keep to yourself.

After watching Shapiro's video, YouTube's suggestion algorithm served me up a video titled "There are Only 2 Genders (2nd Edition) | Change My Mind" posted by StevenCrowder. After the Shapiro video my skin was feeling thicker, so I decided to watch. This video has 6.7 million views. Crowder sits at a table set up on a sidewalk that displays a banner featuring the same words as the title of his video. He sits in a chair behind the table. There is an empty chair next to him which he encourages passers by to sit in and attempt to change his mind. In this video he has two guests at his table, his first guest is a trans women named Danielle.

In their conversation, Crowder makes essentially the same points that Shapiro does about trans suicide rates. Danielle brings up the suicide attempt rate of trans people to make the point that they need to be treated with respect. Crowder says trans suicide attempt rates are even higher than those of slaves during slavery and Jews in concentration camps during the Holocaust. He posits "are we to believe that they've been treated more poorly in modern America than American slaves or Jews in Auschwitz?" He says the only demographic trans suicide rates are

comparable to are those with severe psychiatric disorders. I'm not sure where Crowder is getting his statistics when he says that the suicide attempt rates of trans people are higher than slaves during American slavery and Jews in Auschwitz. The only information I can find online speculates about suicide rates of both of these populations during these times, the only numbers available refer to suicides not suicide attempts. I'm not sure how suicide attempt rates would've been measured in these contexts. We could assume that he has come across some information I'm not privy to and that he's correct. He mentioned the suicide attempt rates of folks with severe mental illnesses as being the only statistics comparable to trans suicide attempt rates. It's estimated that about 75 percent of people with borderline personality disorder have attempted suicide (Black 226). According to a study examining the reasons behind the high rate of suicidal ideation among those with borderline personality disorder, a "leading theory of suicide" called the interpersonal theory of suicide provides a convincing explanation (Rogers and Joiner 592). Thomas Joiner's "Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior" points to three elements that when combined lead people to attempt suicide. The first element is "perceived burdensomeness" which is "the view that one's existence burdens family, friends, and/or society. This view produces the idea that '[one's] death will be worth more than [one's] life to family, friends, society, etc.'" (Joiner). The second element is "a low sense of belonging" which is "the experience that one is alienated from others, not an integral part of a family, circle of friends, or other valued group" (Joiner). Joiner notes that "suicide rates go down. . . during times of hardship or tragedy (when people pull together to commiserate). For instance, there was a low rate of death by suicide in the U.S. on September 11, 2001, as there was the week after President Kennedy's assassination" (Joiner). The third element is "the acquired ability for lethal

self-injury” which is “acquired largely through repeated exposure to painful or fearsome experiences. This results in habituation and, in turn, a higher tolerance for pain and a sense of fearlessness in the face of death” (Joiner).

It seems to me that if people in the painful and fearsome contexts of slavery and concentration camps had lower suicide attempt rates than trans people do today a possible reason why is that these prisoners had other people to blame for their suffering besides themselves be it slave owners or nazis. Also, they were mostly in close quarters with others going through the same horrific experience. The insidious way that gender functions in our culture tends to cause people to blame themselves for the gender failings they are punished for. Throughout my childhood and teenage years, the people who most often communicated to me that my body was “wrong” for not fitting into the standards of my gender were those kindly attempting to help me “fix” myself. According to my friends it was my responsibility to remove all of the hair from my body in order to avoid ridicule. It took me until my adulthood to realize that the critiques of my body I received were cruelties that I did not deserve. Before that I had blamed my body for failing me instead of blaming my friends for being rude. I can easily see how trans folks would be more likely to blame themselves and their bodies than anyone else for the gender-based shame they are made to feel. Positioning transgender people’s gender identities as delusional products of mental illness is a way of protecting normative ways of conceptualizing sex, gender, and sexuality. To clarify, the word “sex” has to do with bodily characteristics (normally: male or female), “gender” has to do with ways of behaving (normally: masculine or feminine) and identifying (normally: man or woman), and “sexuality” has to do with sexual attraction and activity (normally: heterosexual). Judith Butler refers to these normative conceptualizations in

her book *Gender Trouble* by using the term “heterosexual matrix”. Butler describes what she means by “heterosexual matrix” in the footnotes of *Gender Trouble*:

“I use the term. . . to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. . .to characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (Butler 208).

The “grid of cultural intelligibility” are the parameters in which a person is able to “make sense” *as a person* within our society. For bodies, genders, and desires to be “naturalized” is for certain sexes, genders, and sexualities to be seen as naturally occurring and correct as opposed to un-naturally occurring and incorrect. The “hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility” are the dominant ways that gender, sex, and sexuality are talked about, thought about, and made sense of within our society. According to Butler, in order for a person to “make sense” *as a person* and be seen as “natural” and correct, one’s sex, gender expression, gender identity, and sexuality must all either fall into the category of male/masculine/man/attraction to feminine, or female/feminine/woman/attraction to masculine. When she says that bodies that are considered to make sense are “oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” she is saying firstly that males may not have female characteristics, men may not have feminine characteristics, and women may not have masculine characteristics so that the two sexes/genders may be seen as “opposites” of one another. Secondly, for bodies to be hierarchically defined is for male-ness, masculinity, and manhood to be valued as superior

and to be expected to dominate over femaleness, femininity, and womanhood. “Compulsory heterosexuality” is a term Butler gets from Adrienne Rich’s essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” which describes the ways in which women are assumed to, coerced to, and punished if they do not center their lives and sexualities around men. When Butler uses this term she is saying that in the context of heterosexual relationships which are compulsory (meaning that they are obligatory in our culture) the “opposite” and “hierarchical” aspects of gender and sex are re-enforced.

Butler writes that “. . .because certain kinds of ‘gender identities’ fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities. . .” (24). So, according to Butler, in our society anyone whose existence varies from the sex/gender/sexuality expectations of the heterosexual matrix is considered not only unnatural but unhealthy and illogical. This means that within the heterosexual matrix, transgender people, whose assigned sex (a person’s *assigned sex* is the category doctors identified their sex to fall into based on the appearance of their genitals at birth) does not “match” their gender identity, are considered to have unnatural, unhealthy, and illogical existences.

Based on the ways that they speak about gender, it’s clear to me that Shapiro and Crowder hold the beliefs of the heterosexual matrix. To Ben Shapiro, transgender identities are logical impossibilities. He spouts, “If you’re going to dictate to me that I’m supposed to pretend. . .that men are women and women are men, no. My answer is no. . . I’m not going to modify basic biology because it threatens your subjective sense of what you are.” To Shapiro, “basic biology”, which I assume means that people are either male or female, extends to the rest of the

heterosexual matrix. He assumes that all people born with penises are men and all people born with vaginas are women. According to his “logic” for features of physical sex and social identity or role to be “at odds” with each other is *wrong*. Crowder’s second guest at his table is an intersex woman named Alicia. She uses the example of her XY chromosomes, vagina, internal testes, and womanhood as a way to try to explain to him that gender and sex don’t always straightforwardly align and that there is natural variation beyond normative concepts of gender. He counters by saying that most people are born with 10 fingers and 10 toes but not everyone. He says that those who are not born with ten fingers and ten toes are anomalies and we ought not to change the way we “teach” about fingers and toes for their sake. This way of thinking keeps the heterosexual matrix in tact no matter how many contradicting examples of variation are presented. All variation is seen as developmental failure. In this way, legitimizing identities that do not align with the heterosexual matrix is seen as glorifying sickness.

Both Crowder and Shapiro focus so much on the self-inflicted violence that so many trans people experience that they are dismissing the violence that the “natural/healthy/logical” heterosexual matrix requires in order to maintain itself. Butler describes the way that those who defy the matrix are robbed of their personhood, “Inasmuch as ‘identity’ is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of ‘the person’ is called into question by the cultural emergence of those ‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined” (23). To not be considered a person is to be dehumanized. To dehumanize another is to make violence enacted against them justifiable and acceptable. In Crowder’s conversation with Danielle, she asserts her humanity and the humanity of other

transgender people. Crowder claims that he is not denying her humanity by denying her gender identity. He does not understand that within our society to consider a person's gender unintelligible is to consider them to be not a person. Miqqi Alicia Gilbert writes, "The assumed naturalness of the gender system means that anyone who violates it is being "unnatural" and so is worthy of censure. . .the transgendered in particular are in direct violation of these rules and ought not be permitted to thrive, if, indeed, they are allowed to exist" (94). The existences which Gilbert identifies as being not allowed can be "not allowed" through the method of denial through speech, through the method of exclusion in bureaucratic or social settings, or through the method of physical violence. Shapiro says that trans folks do not become suicidal because "people are mean to them", and implies that their high suicide attempt rates are inherent. However, he fails to address the extent to which the non-normatively sexed/gendered are violently punished for their variation within our culture and why that might be. Shapiro and Crowder fail to see that their reinforcement of the heterosexual matrix encourages this violence. Both of them claim they do not actively wish violence upon trans people, and I believe them. However, supporting the continuation of normative ways of conceptualizing gender enforces gender-based violence whether they like it or can see it or not.

Although I've encountered many references to violence directed toward transgender and gender variant people in my reading, I hoped to find statistics to support my claims about this and I could not find them. According to a 2017 article from the American Journal of Public Health called "Data Sources Hinder Our Understanding of Transgender Murders" which states that "transgender people face frequent experiences of discrimination, violence, social and economic marginalization, and abuse across the lifespan. . .in the United States there is no formal

data collection effort that can be used to describe the nature, frequency, or extent of transgender homicides” (Stotzer). A main reason why this data is not available is that transgender statuses are usually not included in police records.

Shapiro and Crowder claim that shifting the way we think about gender for the sake of the wellbeing of a social minority would not make sense and that it’s more important to keep “reality” intact as it is. I am reminded of an episode of the radio show *99% Invisible* titled “Curb Cuts”. This episode explains the phenomenon of “the curb cut effect”. The activism of disabled Americans, particularly those who use wheelchairs, which do not make up a large portion of our population has shifted “reality” for the majority. Curb cuts, the indented part of a sidewalk when it meets a road, were not always a normal part of American life as they are today. Attaining this change came with disruption. Disabled activists made noise and disrupted order in the name of making changes to our society in a way that would allow them and those they represented to integrate better into daily living and active functioning in this society. What resulted is that we all benefit from curb cuts. There are less places to trip and people have an easier time walking with strollers, dollies supporting heavy objects, and rolling suitcases to name a few benefits of the curb cut for *everyone* not just those who use wheelchairs. This is called the curb cut effect. The idea is that making the world more accessible for disabled people (the minority) makes the world better for all of us (the majority) in often unexpected ways. This applies to the possibility of shifting the “reality” of gender for the sake of more effectively integrating a minority of people into our society. I wonder how Shapiro and Crowder’s points about truth and reality apply to the example of curb cuts. Would they say something like “sidewalks meet roads with 90 degree angles. That is what a sidewalk is and what it always has been, that is just reality. A

sidewalk is not a ramp and a ramp is not a sidewalk. We can't sacrifice reality because a few people are going to suffer. Most people can easily step off a curb, why make things complicated?" In reality, things are always complex. The way we engage with that reality is modeled and molded by us for the sake of easier functioning. Yes, categories are useful and can steer us away from confusion but when a minority makes it known that the way reality is being shaped through categorization is making their lives unlivable, I believe it's the responsibility of a compassionate majority to shift categorization. Miqqi Alicia Gilbert uses the term "bigenderism" to refer to the normative conceptualizations of sex and gender which dictate that only two sex/gender categories exist and everyone must fit into one of those categories (Gilbert 97). According to Gilbert, bigenderism "affects every individual and causes stress and anxiety for a multitude who would not consider themselves gender diverse" (Gilbert 97). If bigenderism (which I consider to be an interchangeable term with "the heterosexual matrix") causes stress and anxiety for people who are not transgender, I believe changing the way we conceptualize gender for the purposes of including the transgender minority in society would have a curb cut effect of alleviating the gender anxiety of the majority. I have certainly noticed gender anxiety in my own cis-gendered life and in the lives of my cisgender loved ones and acquaintances. Some examples: is she pretty enough? Is she too loud? Are her hands too big? Is he muscular enough? Is he too emotional? Is he tall enough? Will she be able to have children? Will he make enough money?

If changing our conceptualizations of sex and gender would be beneficial to the majority of people within our society, why do Shapiro and Crowder hold so tightly on to normative conceptualizations? A statement Crowder makes to Danielle about parenting speaks to his investment in the heterosexual matrix/bigenderism. He tells her that statistics show that children

are much better off when they have a mother and a father. What I gather is that he is saying children benefit from having one male parent and one female parent. According to the Cornell University Public Policy Research Portal, research that claims children with gay parents are worse off utilizes children who had a parent enter a same-sex relationship after separating from a different-sex parent. The stress of parental separation is detrimental to the wellbeing of children not gay parentage. The large majority of research shows that children of same-sex parents fair just as well as children of different-sex parents (“What Does Research Say About Well-Being of Children with Gay Parents?”). The facts about this are beside the point (but nevertheless important to state). Shapiro also expresses concern for the wellbeing of children if normative conceptualizations of sex and gender are abandoned. He says that explaining to his young daughter that she can change her gender would be damaging to her. I wondered what would be so damaging about this concept for this child, but now I think I see the answer. Shapiro’s daughter learning what transgender means would threaten his value system. The fact that both Shapiro and Crowder reference their concern for the wellbeing of children in their defense of the heterosexual matrix/bigenderism leads me to believe that they are proponents of “traditional family values”. Traditional family values are all about the preservation of the nuclear family which has a masculine male father and a feminine female mother. Within the setting of the traditional nuclear family, the purpose of sex is procreation. Any sexuality or gender that does not conform to this ideal is seen as immoral and unhealthy for society as a whole. Natalie Wynn who makes YouTube videos under the username “ContraPoints” touches on this concept in her video about degeneracy. Wynn is a self-described “leftist propagandist” and a connoisseur of cyber-conservatism. I’m including somewhat of a lengthy quote from her video because I think

it's excellent and right on the money. She has a special interest in fascism and she can be a bit crass so bear with her:

So for fascists and identitarians everything that doesn't contribute to the greater cause of white procreation is degenerate. And individual fascists differ on what those things are. Most of them agree that homosexuality is degenerate because, apparently, gay people can't raise children. Fascists venerate nuclear families of one dominant white male and one subservient white woman, because they view this situation as the perfect factory for churning out clean-cut heterosexual white kids. And if you soften the emphasis on whiteness you get basic social conservatism. . . a lot of rightists have realized that in the 21st century, the social conservative position is not very cool. So what they do, is they say of course they have no problem with individual homosexuals, what they have a problem with is 'the gay agenda'. What they have a problem with, essentially, is queerness. Now, what is queerness? . . . in its most generic sense it means that you have some kind of weird sex thing, so either your gender's all fucked up or you have creative taste in sexual partners. . . so social conservatives and even a few fascists claim that they're willing to tolerate gay and transgender people, but only if you shut up about it, conform to straight society, and try to act as normal as possible. What they can't stand is loud, non-conformist queerness because think of the children. To fascists, the pursuit of individual happiness must be subservient to the health and success of the race.

(ContraPoints)

It's particularly relevant that Wynn describes the conservative ideal of the nuclear family as having a "dominant" father and "subservient" mother. This points to the fact that this ideal of

traditional family values has a large stake in preserving compulsory heterosexuality as well as gender-based oppression.

Judith Butler believes that compulsory heterosexuality's existence is dependent on the "coherence" of the gender binary. The "gender binary" is the idea that there are two and only two genders (man/woman) that align with two sexes (male/female). The idea of the gender binary is part of the systems of the heterosexual matrix and bigenderism. Butler explains:

The institution of a compulsory and naturalized heterosexuality requires and regulates gender as a binary relation in which the masculine term is differentiated from a feminine term, and this differentiation is accomplished through the practices of heterosexual desire. The act of differentiating the two oppositional moments of the binary results in a consolidation of each term, the respective internal coherence of sex, gender, and desire.

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Butler is saying that heterosexuality is socially enforced but thought of as natural and its enforcement in turn enforces the idea that male/masculine/man and female/feminine/woman are opposites and that both categories should have alignment within themselves. This means that without the gender binary, where two genders are considered to be separate, compulsory heterosexuality would no longer "make sense". If heterosexuality requires that there be two opposite and coherent genders, if it turns out that "normal and healthy" human existences do not actually naturally fit neatly into that binary, heterosexuality stops seeming quite so natural.

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert agrees with Butler's idea that heterosexuality is an institution and that it requires the solidity of the gender binary in order to stay coherent. They consider bigenderism to be "a cornerstone of heteronormativity, insofar as it carries with it the implication

that the two genders are intended to partner heterosexually.” Heteronormativity is an aspect of compulsory heterosexuality which assumes that people are and should be straight. Gilbert writes, “indeed, bigenderism and heteronormativity are symbiotic: heterosexuality relies on the assumption that an individual’s genitals are in accordance with their gender appearance, and bigenderism ensures that categories are demonstrative” (Gilbert 98). This means that heterosexuality and bigenderism feed into each other and rely on each other in order to make sense and be maintained. On a practical level, it’s difficult to be sure whether or not one is experiencing normative heterosexual attraction in day-to-day life if sex category cannot be accurately guessed based on the way someone looks, dresses, and acts.

If you’ll recall from earlier, an aspect of compulsory heterosexuality is that sex/gender is hierarchically defined. In Kate Bornstein’s book *Gender Outlaw*, they identify that gender-based oppression and normative concepts of gender are interconnected. They use the term “bi-polar gender-system” which means the same thing as heterosexual matrix/bigenderism. They write:

In the either/or gender class system that we call male and female, the structure of one-up, one-down fulfills the requisite for a power imbalance. It became clear that the reason that the bipolar gender system continues to exist, and is actively and tenaciously held in place, is that the bi-polar gender system is primarily a venue for the playing out of a power game. It’s an arena in which roughly half the people in the world can have power over the other half. Without the structure of the bi-polar gender system, the power dynamic between men and woman shatters. (Bornstein 107)

Their idea here is that upholding gender-based oppression where feminine/female/women get the short end of the stick is the main reason the gender binary is a concept that is held onto in our society.

Judith Butler notes that feminists have re-enforced normative concepts of gender in order to have a political movement with a clear “subject” to seek justice for. She suggests that this re-enforcement actually furthers gender-based oppression: “Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? And is not such a reification precisely contrary to feminist aims? . . . What relations of domination and exclusion are inadvertently sustained when representation becomes the sole focus of politics?” (Butler 7-8). According to her, “the category of women” as it exists within the heterosexual matrix should be called into question in order to avoid carrying restrictive gender/sex/sexuality expectations into the effort to end gender-based oppression. Her point is that some people who suffer from gender-based oppression were not born with vaginas and some are masculine. The fact is that the way that gender-based oppression operates is as diverse as each individual. She believes that strictly categorizing people on the basis on sex/gender is not ever helpful and will always be oppressive even when the motivation behind doing so is liberation.

Miqqi Alicia Gilbert agrees that normative conceptualizations of sex/gender/sexuality perpetuate gender-based oppression: “Bigenderism and heteronormativity ensure that the world is divided into woman and man, and sexism sees to it that woman is undervalued and man overvalued. Eliminating the categories themselves is one way of eliminating the sexism that depends on them. There may be other ways to achieve feminist ideals, but the banishment of

bigenderism and heteronormativity also eliminates homophobia and transphobia” (Gilbert 98). They are suggesting challenging gender as a whole in order to have the most liberatory feminist politics possible.

So, Shapiro and Crowder want to preserve normative conceptualizations of sex, gender, and sexuality for the sake of traditional family values for the purpose of preserving compulsory heterosexuality and gender-based oppression which preserves what they consider to be the ideal context for procreation and parenting which is apparently more valuable to them than relieving the pressures of strict gender expectations on the majority of people *or* protecting a minority of people from violence. They blame transgender people for threatening the “natural/logical/healthy” status quo. Here’s the thing: transgender people are not a monolith. They are as differing in their politics as anyone else. There are those who “shut up about it, conform to straight society, and try to act as normal as possible” and those who embody “loud, non-conformist queerness.” Pointing a finger at them and drawing negativity is incredibly irresponsible. They get enough of that as it is.

I believe that shaking things up when it comes to sex, gender, and sexuality would be beneficial to our society. However, the onus of this disruption should not be placed on the shoulders of transgender people. Each individual should be able to choose how much they stick their neck out for the sake of easing or ending gender-based oppression. Changing minds and changing systems will require the efforts of people whose existences are not challenged within our current gender reality.

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