Gender Reveal- Brooke Stepp

**Molly:** Welcome to Gender Reveal, a podcast where we ask intrusive personal questions and hopefully get a little bit closer to understanding what the hell gender is. I’m your host and resident gender detective, Molly Woodstock.

Hey, everyone!

Thank you so much for your patience, and your incredible words of support and affirmation after my very scary, very vulnerable, mini episode about Wellbutrin, love island, and homophobia and all of that. The reception to that episode was absolutely incredible.

I am so grateful for you for being just the best community I’ve ever had, honestly the fact that y’all care more about my own mental health and like self-care than I do is deeply helpful to me finding balance in my life; and I just really appreciate you.

Anyway, this week on the show I spoke with somatic therapist and politicized healer Brook Stepp and I am so excited about this episode. We talked about so many super relevant and useful things, like finding a therapist as a trans person, supporting a friend through an eating disorder, distinguishing whether you’re a high-femme non-binary person or a woman, using pronouns as suicide prevention, and gender communism. Speaking of which please check the show notes for time-stamped content warnings for eating disorders and suicidality.

Okay, that’s all coming up, but first just a couple announcements as always. We have new stuff going on in the merch store! Our friend BoPo Lena has created a very cute, very posy design that says “Every gender is valid” with sparkles and stuff. We are selling them as shirts in pink and black, and also stickers in pink, black, and teal! I priced both the stickers and the shirts as low as I could feasibly price them so hopefully, they feel accessible to you if you want one. You also have one week left to pick-up a “Support Trans Media” shirt which is available in black and purple. If you hear some wild rattling in the background, that’s my cat Ruby, stickers of her also available in the merch store!

Speaking of supporting trans media, huge thanks of all fifty of you who joined us at Patreon.com/gender or raised donations for our back to school sticker sale! Jerry will be sending out stickers to all of our Patreons who are subscribed at the $6 a month level or higher on September 12th. They’re hoping to send those out by late September. I will also be sending out stickers and other rewards to new members, I probably won’t get to that until the end of the season, but it will happen.

Speaking of which there’s only two episodes left for this season, and just like this episode is coming out at a weird time, those episodes will also probably come out at a weird time because my whole month is super weird with travel and presentations that I haven’t started yet, but those episodes will be out sometimes this month. Then I will go back on hiatus to regroup, send out sixty Patreon rewards, finally get transcripts on the website hopefully, record like fifty new interviews, all of that stuff!

But first, we are here, in this episode, where it is time, for this week in gender.

[This Week in Gender theme plays]

Okay, this week in gender, I want to talk about the gay gene, but more specifically, is there a gay gene? Also, do we care? So, the search for a single gene that makes people gay, has been going on for decades but was brought back into the news cycle a couple of weeks ago when scientists published a paper claiming that same-sex sexual behavior, as they call it, is 33% due to a combination of genetic factors, and 67% due to social and environmental factors.

 So, first of all, what? What does that mean, secondly, I just wanted to note right of the bat, that the survey only includes, white cisgender people between 40 and 70 years old, and there is very little that I care about less than the sexual preferences of, white cisgender people between 40 and 70 years old. Also, this study wasn’t even recording whether these white cisgender people identified as gay, but rather they had had at least one same-sex, sexual experience in their life! Which feels incredibly different to me, like people have sex for a zillion different reasons, and counting how many middle-aged white cisgender Europeans fucked their fellow bros one time and using that information, to extrapolate and figure out what makes me a homosexual, is truly outrageous for too many reasons to list. Also, am I homosexual or am I bisexual, are those things different? The world may never know.

Anyways, thirdly, as many scientists and many other people have pointed out, looking for a gay gene carries so many risks that can almost arguably outweigh any benefits. Like, okay say there is a gay gene, if there is a gay gene, homophobes can say “we just need to ‘edit’ out that gay gene” or “we just need to selectively breed until there’s no more gay people”, which is eugenics, which is bad!

Okay, now say there isn’t a gay gene. Then homophobes can just say, “well people are just making a choice and they should just choose something else so let’s take them to conversion therapy”, which is bad! Neither of those things are good for they gays, and also, we aren’t even talking about a gay gene, so much the gene that makes white cisgender people bone other white cisgenders with their same genitals, one time.

Okay, but lastly and most importantly, this deeply flat study found that homosexual activity comes from a variety of genetic, social, and environmental factors, and of course it does. Some people feel like they were born gay and they feel like there is nothing they can do to change it, they’ve known it their whole life and they can’t be any other way, and that’s correct and valid. Other people feel like being gay is something that they chose, and that’s correct and valid. I’m not here to tell you how to feel. I’m not here to talk about how anyone else feels, but I can tell you that when I was younger, here I am being vulnerable again, when I was younger I heard older lesbians say that they chose to be gay and I remember thinking like, “You’re not supposed to say that out loud?” Like that goes against everything I was taught. And now, I can say that I chose to be gay, and that was the best decision, that I have ever made for myself in my entire life!

So, if you’d like to read an extremely long article about the gay genes research in the New York Times or excuse me the same-sex sexual experience research in the New York Times, I’ll will link to that in the show nuts. But also, look, it doesn’t matter whether you were born queer or become queer. It doesn’t matter whether your DNA made you queer, or whether your upbringing made your queer, or whether your environment made you queer. What matters is that you are here, and you are queer. Congratulations.

This has been, this week in gender.

[This Week in Gender outro music]

Molly: Brooke is somatic therapist and politicized healer who works with social justice movement leaders to build a world beyond capitalism and white supremacy. They believe that our relationships to bodies and to ourselves are intimately linked to our ability to show up as full people in the change work we are engaged in. Brooke is non-binary, femme, with Black and white ancestry. They believe that body image and eating disorders are 100% a social justice issue.

The way we always start the show is by asking in terms of gender, how do you identify?

**Brooke:** I identify as femme and non-binary.

**Molly:** What pronouns do you use?

**Brooke**: They/Them

**Molly:** I would love to hear what femme means to you.

**Brooke:** Yeah, so first and foremost, femme is a Queer identity and a queer experience even more than an identity. I just want start with that, what really pisses me off is when straights appropriate, straights ha-ha.

**Molly:** I love it.

[both laugh]

**Brooke:** That’s how pissed off I am, when I’m like “ahh, *straights”*, when straights appropriate femme it is like \*grunts\*, you know, when you see major retail stores like in Forever 21 and H&M have shirts that say “femme”, it’s like you do not mean that for queer folks, you know? It’s really furthering an erasure of what it actually means to be femme which, you know, has a whole history to it. I think I just want to say that to start.

And then, I think inside of queer community, one thing I notice a lot of is femme just gets to be this catch-all category for folks a lot of the time. A lot of time for folks who don’t identify as femme, as much as we hate spectrums and binaries of things, I really put myself all the way over here in a high-femme category. It’s something that I claim and it’s something that has really given me access to my truest self, you know? It’s like, this is all of the person that I never got to actually have permission to be as a younger person you know. Kind of just be like a bossy bitch more or less, that’s what femme allows me. So, when I see people kind of putting whoever into that category, I’m like, whew okay maybe we should let them self-identify right, maybe we should let them self-select. Or when people, maybe this is a little contentious, but sometimes I notice that when trans-masculine folks say, “Oh, I used to be very femme presenting” and I’m like no. No, okay I get what you’re saying, you were more feminine, you weren’t femme presenting. There’s a difference there to me that feels, really hard.

**Molly:** What is the difference to you?

**Brooke:** I don’t buy femme presenting as a category, what does that actually, mean? It’s something that someone else is defining for you, right. And again, it falling into that catch-all thing so, that’s the difference, and more feminine is the binary version. That would seem more accurate to me.

**Molly:** What feels more different to you, being a high femme non-binary person versus a woman?

**Brooke:** Yeah, that’s a good question. I mean, the easiest answer is I know I’m not a woman! I’ve never felt like one, there’s something that really feels really different about being a woman than it feels about being a genderqueer, non-binary femme. I think that’s true about probably so many of our genders, it’s like, well “how do I know I’m this?” I just know, you know? It’s weird, I think, because of masculinity or because of misogyny there’s not a lot of room for non-binary femme-ness in general. I really just feel it, a woman is not who I am.

And don’t want to degrade the category of woman, that’s really important for me not to do. It’s two things I really want to name here. One, I’m not confused about this, I’m very sure, and it might change, and that’s fine, but I’m very sure for right now. And, I’m not just trying to get away from patriarchy. I can’t get away from it anyway, I get seen as a woman person all the time.

Yeah anyway, I’m constantly having to out myself in all of this. I just get to choose when I do that and when not and I realize that’s a big privilege. The experience of erasure is just fundamentally different than the experience of oppression and trauma. I don’t identify as trans, I identify as genderqueer non-binary.

That’s all that about femme, and then I think femme to me is this hyper, *my* version of femme is getting to do things that are just incongruence. Like, I wear heels everywhere pretty much, I wear them when I’m walking through the woods, I wear them when I’m literally running for a bus, I wear them on long walks. I wear lipstick everywhere, I wear it when I train Muay Thai. I train Muay Thai which I think is a very badass thing that I do. Yeah, I know how to beat people up, it’s fun for me to do that, like, that’s femme, you know? It’s being like, “oh wait you shouldn’t look like that doing what you’re doing”, and I’m like “No, I get to do that looking however the fuck I want, doing whatever the fuck I want”, right? That feels like femme to me.

**Molly:** I love that example, that’s so good. I’ve seen you identify a few times as someone with Black and white ancestry rather than picking one to identify yourself as. I was just wondering, as someone who lives between that binary and also lives in between the gender binary, what are the experiences for you between the both binaries?

**Brooke:** Yeah that’s a big question, I guess I would say identity is not, it’s really messy. I think the trap of identity is that we have to live in these binaries. As a mixed-race person, my dad is Black, and my mom is white, there’s kind of a tightrope walking that I think has to happen and I also feel that around gender in a lot of ways. And sexuality, in a lot of ways too, I’m a queer person, I’ve dated people of all genders, and I think as a femme person and someone who dates all genders there can be a lot of erasure that happens there.

 So, I don’t have an easy answer to this question. I think it’s created a lot of hardness for me in terms of belonging, you know, like, “how do I find my place?” Sometimes when I think about identity instead of identity as a fixed category, one way I think about it is as a verb: “how do I do queerness?”, how do I queer things, how do I do femme-ness, how is femme a verb and that feels like a way to move out of that stuck feeling. Because it’s something that I actually have agency around, it’s not something that someone else is defining me around.

I think with race it’s really different, especially with the legacies of slavery; the one drop rule too and of light skin, or I’m a lighter skinned black person, I think it’s really important to name both for me, because of that. My family is both Black and white, I share both of those legacies. My Black side of the family is from The South, they’re from rural Virginia and rural North Carolina, so we have that. My white side is from Missouri and Montana, so that is there as well, and it’s like a move towards accountability and it’s also a move towards honesty.

I see a lot of mixed folks erasing one side, especially for lighter skinned folks, to erase the Black side. That’s something that feels so hard and really sad for me when people feel like they have to do that because of not belonging there or worrying that they’re claiming something they’re actually not a part of. That just speaks to the internalized stuff there so, to move out of that, which I think is just reproducing white supremacy fundamentally, to me is really important.

**Molly:** In the bio you gave to me you identified as a somatic therapist and politicized healer, and I was wondering if you could explain to everyone a little bit more what you mean by that**.**

**Brooke:** Sure, I’m going to start with politized healer first. To me, being a politicized healer means fundamentally that, one, I’m really working in my healing work, always acknowledging that social context is at the forefront of what’s shaping people’s experiences. So that’s one piece of it. The other piece of being a politicized healer is like how is my work, how is the work that I’m supporting other follks to do, how is it actually contributing to social justice, environmental justice movements? So, how is it actually creating more space for movement to be more alive, for movements to be more effective, all of that. Politicized healing is fundamentally work that actually serves the capacity of movements, and serves really dismantling capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, and all that.

**Molly:** Right! Can you talk about somatic therapy?

**Brooke:** Yeah, somatic is the way that I do that, and the word *soma-* has a Greek origin and it means “the living body and it’s wholeness”, fundamentally we move around the world in these bodies, whether we like it or not, so our bodies are fundamentally a domain of our learning, a domain of dignity, a domain of safety– they’re a domain of connection. So, because of how our bodies are interfacing the world, our bodies are really internalizing the experiences of that social context that I named.

In the somatic framework, what we really say is that healing happens through the body, because the body is the site of trauma and oppression. So, in order to actually address that, we have to really work through the body. A lot of different therapy modalities are really about insight or awareness, is being aware of the problem, and then hoping that it will change. What people from all cultures for many, many years have really known is that’s not how things work. Our good ideas really give weigh under pressure– this is confirmed by a lot of neuroscience stuff. In order to really embody our values, in order to really move toward the change that we want to be, we have to embody new possibilities that trauma and oppression don’t really let us have.

Fundamentally, that is that, and I will just say that my somatic lineage is from an organization called Generative Somatics, and I’ve been training with them since 2010. Their mission is really around offering relevant and potent politicized healing for social justice movements. That’s how I came up!

**Molly:** So I think that something that a lot cis-people misunderstand is that the higher rates of mental health issues in queer and trans people are not inherently because we’re queer and trans it is because of the way that society treats us. To me, I feel like that makes it a lot harder to treat. Because, I can have all of the positive mental attitude that I can, but if society continues to be transphobic at me, and queerphobic at me there’s only so much I can do. So, I’m curious what it looks like to try to address that in the systemic context that many queer and trans folk are in in you part of work.

**Brooke:** Yeah, totally. I’ll also just say that I’m a therapist, I’ve been given this training, I’ve been working with Generative Somatics and really have been on this path. I don’t think about it as getting this training, it’s definitely a path, a lineage, it’s at my back. But I also, you know, I went to school to be a therapist. I’m a licensed mental health counselor, and I have that educational access and privilege as part of this work too, that I come in with.

I just read this statistic recently, it’s kind of gone viral, it’s this meme a little bit, but it’s staggering. 40% of trans youth will try to commit suicide, and I just think about, well okay. What’s the impact of people just using pronouns, families being affirming to their kids? There’s a whole meme about that right now, a whole twitter post about that. It’s just so impactful, it talks about using pronouns as a form of suicide prevention for trans youth.

I just want to name that to start. Yeah, I think that half of my work, or tons of my work, is really undoing internalized oppression. Like, you know, these systems are not going to change today, and just really helping people to feel how what is happening in their nervous system is actually deeply shaped by, in this context, transphobia and sexism. So, I think that’s a huge piece of it, is actually really *feeling* how these systems live in our nervous systems.

And then, with that, now that I know this, what capacities do I actually need to develop? So I can move in the world, in a way that’s still in line with how I want to show up, regardless of what these systems are going to do. You know, kind of what we say is that, we can regenerate safety. So, you know, the world is not safe, and the world will never be safe, probably in most of our lifetimes for a vast majority of us, including queer and trans folks. But what we can do is, we can regenerate safety that comes from inside of ourselves, and it also comes relationally.

And I think that, actually doing movement work, is a huge way that we regenerate safety with each other. Because, when we’re out there doing movement work, which looks like many different things, we’re setting boundaries that we didn’t get to have, we’re making offers, we’re really saying we what were about, we’re practicing our resilience with other folks, we’re feeling deep support and connection with other folks.

So, I think those things are really how I think about the anecdote to the systems because, yeah, we have to acknowledge societally, and we also have to acknowledge to ourselves how these things live, and then can that be the platform for action.

**Molly:** It’s really, hard to find a therapist? For everyone, but I think especially for queer and trans people, especially people of color, especially queer and trans people of color, trying to find a therapists that’s actually equipped with the tools that they need to help them is really difficult so I‘m wondering if you have any tips for people who are looking for therapists for navigating that?

**Brooke:**  Yeah, totally. The first thing is, I would say, is get in there and get your body, if you feel drawn to someone then get your body in front of them and see how your nervous systems reacts in front of them. Because, that will speak volumes, that is everything. One thing about identity is, you might share tons of identities with someone and they might not actually be the therapist for you.

I think that’s really one thing to think about. Or someone might say, this is worse actually, when someone says I’m queer and trans competent, whew! Yeah, that’s really the scary thing. So, get body in front of their body, your body will tell you if you trust this person.

Of course, if you have, if you know that it’s hard for you to sit in front of other people, you probably know how that shows up in you. So, it’s like, “okay, this is my baseline and then this is how my body is reacting to this person.”

Listen, really listen to that, and then when someone says, especially someone who’s not queer or trans, says I’m queer and trans competent, you have every right to be like, “what does that mean to you? How do you enact that in a therapy relationship?” I ask, “how do you view gender affirming care, what standards of care do you use for access to gender affirming care? What would you do if I needed a letter for something” you know, you can just ask these questions.

And, if they don’t know the answer and they’re like, “I don’t know, but let me find out,” if they’re humble about it, it’s really different, right?

So those are somethings, don’t be afraid to fire your therapist, I’ll say that as a therapist. Some people are just not meant to work together and that’s fine. Finding a therapist that’s actually going to be able to be with you and your work and what you need, that’s hard so you can test people out.

You have permission to do that, and you’re always in charge too, right? That’s one thing I tell my clients, and that’s the center of my work is, how in the therapy room or how in the healing room do I keep giving back choice to the folks that I work with.

Because, our experiences of marginalization, our experiences of straight up trauma and oppression are, you don’t have any choice. That happens in small ways, like, what questions do they ask you? Do they ask you what you want to focus on, do they ask you what your goals are, you know does it seem like they have their own agenda?

Those are some things that I can think of.

**Molly:** You mentioned the nervous system a few times, and how so much of what we experience is rooted in our own body and, if we are not lucky to currently have a relationship, a professional relationship, with someone who is trained in somatics, is there anything that we can all do to help our body release some of the tension of the oppression that we’re facing every day?

**Brooke:** Yeah, totally. I think the best way to do that is connection, honestly. It’s like being among people who have similar experiences and similar values more importantly to you, so whatever that means.

But, I think there’s something that happens in our nervous systems, where they actually do let down when we are in company with people we really find resonance with. Our heart rates kind of start to match each other, and our breathing patterns start to match each other. I think there’s something beautiful about that, we have this natural mechanism built into us like, oh, okay my body knows how to be safe. My body knows how to release and surrender a little bit.

And yeah, I know connection is really fraught, too, but that is one thing that I will say is the primary way, that’s what we’re really wired to do fundamentally in our nervous systems.

That’s the most recent evolutionary system to come online is our social engagement system. That system helps regulate other systems that result in less fun stuff like fight or flight, or freeze, or dissociate responses.

I’d say that and then, any way you can move your body I think can help folks come back. I know that in my own life, movement has been a really, really amazing way to survive and it’s also been a sight of a lot of oppression, too. I grew up as a ballet dancer [laughs], and we might get to body questions.

**Molly:** You’re about to, Jesus.

[both laugh]

**Brooke:** At the same time that it was incredibly oppressive, it really taught me from a young age to have some type connection with my body when white supremacy and patriarchy certainly, and capitalism via class really told me that, I wasn’t, I could not have a, or, that kind of relationship with my body, that it was really unsafe to do that.

Moving can be stretching, moving can be swinging your arms around, moving can be walking, there’s many ways to move our bodies. What feels good.

**CW/TW: 29:29 Eating disorders**

**Molly:** You write in your bio that body image and eating disorders are 100% a social justice issue.

**Brooke:** Yeah

**Molly**: I think I know what you’re saying but I would love to hear you explain that.

**Brooke:** Yeah, well I just want to shout out to Gloria Lucas because her website is nalgonapositivitypride.com, she’s the one that that’s from. She says eating disorders are a social justice issue. I just want rep her

But yeah, I mean to me what that means is that eating disorders are fundamentally created by systems. They’re created by racialized capitalism; they are created by racialized capitalism that promotes fatphobia, and transphobia.

When folks develop an eating disorder, it’s not individual context, there’s really a whole legacy of a racialization, of a class-based violence, a gender-based violence, and size-based violence obviously that’s really behind that.

There’s this new book that came out called, “*Fearing the Black Body”,* I can’t remember the author off the top of my head1, it’s all about that. It’s about how anti-fatness and fatphobia is fundamentally rooted in anti-blackness.

Yes, that is why we have to have this broader analysis of eating disorders. Also, I’ve also worked in eating disorder treatment centers and the myth that gets taught and certainly in my own experience of an eating disorder, it’s like “oh you don’t have an eating disorder because you don’t look a certain way because you’re not a certain demographic,” and eating disorders. Are not just for thin white woman. Eating disorders exist across all genders, all races, all sexuality, you know, they’re everywhere, because social context is everywhere.

There are so many people that get erased when we don’t understand eating disorders as this social justice issue. I will also say, I’ve been an organizer since I was in my late teens; I’ve been involved in social justice movements and I’ve been queer since about that time too or out as queer. I think that there is a real way that we’re very quiet about our experiences of body and our experiences with food because we’re supposed to be so woke. It’s like “oh well we’ve already figured that out”, our communities are so accepting but, that’s not true.

Sitting with my own experiences and sitting with the folks that I sit with I know in my healing work too, the internalized shit is so deep and, the queer trans folks of color that I work with all have body image stuff. A lot of us have food stuff.

**Molly:** I’m sorry for just asking questions like, “how do we all be people!” but you seem like a qualified person to ask this question…

[both laugh]

I had an eating disorder many years ago and now I’m in pretty solid recovery, but when I see friends around me that exhibiting symptoms of behaviors that I used to have when I was in a really bad place, I never know how to react because I don’t think there was anything someone could have said to me that would have really made me stop. I sort of had to figure it out for myself, so if we see community members that seem like they might me be in a disordered eating space, do you have any advice for anything that other people can do to reach out, even just like, harm reduction?

**Brooke:** Yeah, I think one thing is to really not make assumptions about who might have disordered eating stuff. Again, it can exist across all sizes. I also want to name, as we’re on a podcast, that I’m someone with privilege who’s on a podcast talking about this right now, that’s one thing. One thing I’ve heard people say is to check in on your strong friends, so people that appear to have everything all put together, how are they keeping it all together? I think it’s the same if you would, if you were worried about friends with depression and anxiety, or drinking, it’s a curiosity, you know? Kindness, curiosity and not accusing folks of there being something. More or less being like “hey, I’ve been wondering, I’ve been noticing something about you and food. Is there anything you want to tell me about that?” if it’s appropriate. I think being really ready and available to talk, I think being willing to be met with a lot of resistance and to know it’s not about you, too.

I think that’s a really big one. And then, check in with why you’re checking in with them. Is it because of your own discomfort, or is it because you actually really want to really be there for them. Is it because you actually want to keep them safe? Yeah.

And you know, I think that it depends on the behavior and the level of safety. Like you said, people will only– or the level of safety needed– people will only change when they want to change. I think also really addressing, and this is just true in the eating disorder world in general, just really understanding what food fundamentally takes care of for people. Or how eating and these ways that might not be so choiceful, or having these relationships to our bodies that might not be so choiceful, how they’ve actually help us to survive inside of cis-hetero patriarchy, and white supremacy, and capitalism.

I think when I think about that with the folks in my life, I’m like, “Okay I see how you’re surviving this. I get it”, and then just being a safe space to land. There may not be another way survive and that’s something we really need to acknowledge, too.

**Molly:** Yeah, absolutely. Do you think that trans folks’ relationships with eating disorders and body image more broadly, are different than cis folks because of the added layer of gender dysphoria?

**Brooke:** Yeah, totally.

**Molly:** In short.

[both laugh]

**Brooke:** You know, it’s just an added layer, one thing I think about how our bodies are politicized, and what I mean by that is a little different than how I used that earlier, is “what is the social context that’s really written on our bodies?” And so racialized bodies are politicized in a certain way, right?

Like Black bodies are politicized in a certain way, queer bodies are politicized in a certain way, and trans bodies are politicized in a certain way. In some ways, we don’t have the option, when our bodies get politized in this direction onto us we don’t really have a say all the times that others see us.

So we have that layer, as non-cis people, as trans folks, I think that’s the first thing to name there. I mean, eating disorders and body image stuff is just really intense in queer and trans community. I don’t have the statistic but there is this study that came out in 2015, or something like that, that showed that eating disorders were two, three more times likely in trans folks and trans youth than cis youth.

I’ll just share that my own body story in that, I don’t think I had the words for it then, but I. think I’ve come to understand is that much of my restriction, much of my eating disorder behavior was 100% based in gender. It was like, “how can I get my chest to be smaller and smaller?” because I hated my chest. Yeah, luckily, I’ve found binders since then so, it works out.

That realization is so powerful, and so then of course we have to filter through that. There’s this gender piece, right? So, what’s the other piece, the internalized fatphobia piece, or the straight up oppressive shit coming at us that’s telling us we have to look a certain way; there’s that too.

I think it’s important to tease it out, but one thing that I think is really dangerous for queer and trans folks that are of treated more in the mainstream eating disorder world, is body acceptance, is the thing.

And, what does it mean to accept the body that is not the full sense of yourself? What would it be like for me to accept my chest? That’s just a recipe for a lot of really awful shit and pain, right? That’s not what we want to be doing, so I think the really the goal in terms working with queer and trans folks in terms of body is, “how do we affirm your gender more and more?” It’s not “how do we accept your body?”; it’s “how do you have a relationship with your body? How do you have an embodied sense of yourself so you can go and do the things that you want to do in the world so you can be the person that you want to be in the world?”

Yeah, it’s really not about accepting your body as you are, it’s “how do we affirm who you actually are in the world?”

**Molly:** I don’t know to what extent you spend time with other therapists, but I’m curious to what your experience is as a non-binary person in the world of therapy?

**Brooke:** Yeah! Well, one thing I’ll say is I have a broader community, the healing community other than therapists, I think the somatics community I find myself very at home there and that community is majority PoC, and mostly queer folks, a lot of non-binary folks are there; so I really find myself at home there.

And then, in therapist community, really who I’m in relationship with is mostly queer therapists. There aren’t too many queer therapists of color, you know, there’s some of us. I guess I really feel the folks I surround myself with are the folks I want to surround myself with and make me feel pretty affirmed.

But yeah, the broader therapist world sucks, like therapists suck. As I say like, yeah, my partner is also a therapist, my best friends are therapists; but like the broader, we’re all queer and trans, so there’s that.

Yeah, the whole therapist world in general is very white. The whole concept of therapy, of psychotherapy, comes from white Jewish Doctors in western era. It’s really a product of certain times, so I don’t always find myself really identifying with a therapist community. In grad school I hated it, it was the most un-affirming experience in my whole life that I had to really bury pretty much all of myself. My race, my marginalized experiences, certainly my gender, certainly my sexuality, and also my class experience, because I went to a private university.

There were two other cis-white gay men in my cohort of eight, but that’s pretty lucky actually. I was the only Person of Color, yeah. I do want to be clear; I do identify as a person of color; I. don’t identify as white. That’s disingenuous really of my experience

**Molly:** The way we always end the show is by asking in your ideal world, what would the future of gender look like?

**Brooke:** Gender abolition!

**Molly:** Yay!

**Brooke:**  I mean, straight up yeah. One thing I’ll say is that I’m a communist and one thing that means to me is that, a small seed communist not a big state socialist communist in the old sense of the word, but to me being a communist just really means that folks are taken care of, right? Everyone is contributing what they can, and all our needs are being met, and that there’s a fundamental different type of relationship with each other in their lived environment, too.

One thing that I think about as a communist, there is actually no way for us to know what will exist when we have communism. The way that capitalism, the way that white supremacy, the way the cis-hetero patriarchy really organizes society right now, we can’t get out of it right? It’s actually in our nervous systems, in our bones, it’s in everything we do.

So, I believe that there is a future of gender abolition, and a future of gender that we have literally no idea about. That image excites me so much, because obviously there’s so much that’s limiting right now to say the least, and we could make it literally anything that we need it to be. Or, anything that it will need to be, to actually meet human needs and meet human capacities. That’s the future of gender to me, is gender communism and gender abolition.

[*Gender Reveal* theme music starts]

**Molly:** That’s all for this week’s show. If you had a good time or if you learned something, which I certainly did, please consider sharing the episodes with your friends, your family, your community.

Also, if you have disposable income, especially if you’re cis, I would love it if you considered joining us at Patreon! That’s patreon.com/gender where for $1 a month you’ll get our weekly newsletter, for $5 a month you’ll get stickers, more money and you’ll get even more rad shit! Of course, you’ll always get our undying love and appreciation. You can also use that good disposable gender money at our merch store, bit.ly/gendermerch Where you can find BoPo Lena’s design, as well as our other designs that are still in the shop, some of which are about to leave! You can join our incredible, wholesome, slack community at bit.ly/genderslack, it is getting bigger and bigger, and it is so cute, wholesome, and supportive; I love it so much!

You can find us on Twitter, Instagram, and at genderpodcast.com. Our logo is by Michelle Leigh and our theme song is by Breakmaster Cylinder. There’s two episodes left in this season, I don’t know when they’re coming, but we’ll be back real soon with more feelings, about gender!

 [*Gender Reveal* theme music ends]

1: “*Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia”* by Sabrina Strings

\*I’m not sure what you exactly said there (minute 1:48)