Student

Mrs. Payne

English 1010

13 November 2017

Skirting the Issue of Gendered Equality Summary and Review

In society, there are a certain set of unwritten rules regarding clothing choices for men and women. Certain clothes are seen as masculine, and others are seen as feminine. When people step outside of these gender norms, others can be shocked, surprised, and even angry. But is this really the case?

In the article “I Wore Men’s Heels, and No One Even Cared,” published in the magazine *Teen Vogue*, editor Dan Shinaberry tells about his experience of breaking gender norms by wearing men’s heels in crowded New York City for a photo shoot. He explains, even though he is “often the first one to advocate for gender non-conformist fashion,” he has trouble owning those ideals in public. As the day of the shoot came and he arrived in his “hoodie, kilt, and heels,” he still found himself apprehensive and worried about the “social barriers” of fashion.

According to Shinaberry, as he stood in the park waiting for the shoot to start, the creative director asked some passing skateboarders if they would like to be in a few pictures. His anticipation grew more as he worried about what the kids would think of his outfit. After a few quick photos, the skateboarders rode off with a fist bump, a “’thanks, bro,’” and not a single glance downward. Shinaberry claims he realized that societal pressures were causing him to have so much anxiety over this one little thing, when in reality there was “no look, no glare, no stare.” No one cared that he wore heels.

So Shinaberry seeks comfort, resolve, and validation in the fact that he was not judged by the skateboarders he took some pictures with. Ah, good for him; feeling special because a couple of fourteen-year-old kids didn’t think he was an idiot for wearing heels. The problem is Shinaberry uses the actions of a small handful of random people to make the blanket statement “gender norms truly are . . . a social construct that the next generation is boldly rejecting.” That’s a very large generalization. So, great; a few skateboarders in New York City were open-minded. What bearing does that have on the kids on a hockey team in Minnesota? Why does their opinion count for the kids in a rural farming community in Texas?

The problem is the fact that his experimental photo shoot took place in downtown New York City, one of the most accepting and culturally diverse cities in the world, let alone the country. His clothing would have prompted a much different response if his photo shoot was in, say, a rural area of the Midwest. His conclusion that nobody cared what he wore was heavily influenced by the unique culture of a place that is not a good representative of the rest of the country or the world.

Lastly, Shinaberry claimed “gender norms aren’t truly real.” He argues they are merely a “social construct that the next generation is boldly rejecting.” The very kids he would have pegged to judge him for his choice of clothes turned out to be some of the most forward thinking people out there. In his words, “everyone will finally realize: gender-specific dressing is BS.”

The only problem is “gender-specific dressing” is not total BS. Shinaberry’s claim “gender norms aren’t truly real” is false. If gender norms weren’t real, then he wouldn’t be so worried about walking around in public wearing a kilt and high heels. If gender norms weren’t real, he wouldn’t see wearing heels as a significant occurrence in his life and something worth writing about. But then again, the reason he is writing is not to win over people who believe men shouldn’t wear heels. Shinaberry’s goal is to fortify the resolve of his readers who have chosen to wear clothing traditionally associated with those of the opposite sex, and to help all of his readers be a little bit more progressive in their thinking about gender norms.

Gender norms are an issue. If people want to wear something not traditionally in-line with their gender, there is no one to stop them. They are following their own conscience in choosing their own clothes, regardless of society. However, just because they are choosing to dress like they are does not mean anyone else in society has to change the way they dress. Everyone is free to choose, and as such everyone should choose to wear the clothes most comfortable and fashionable for them individually.