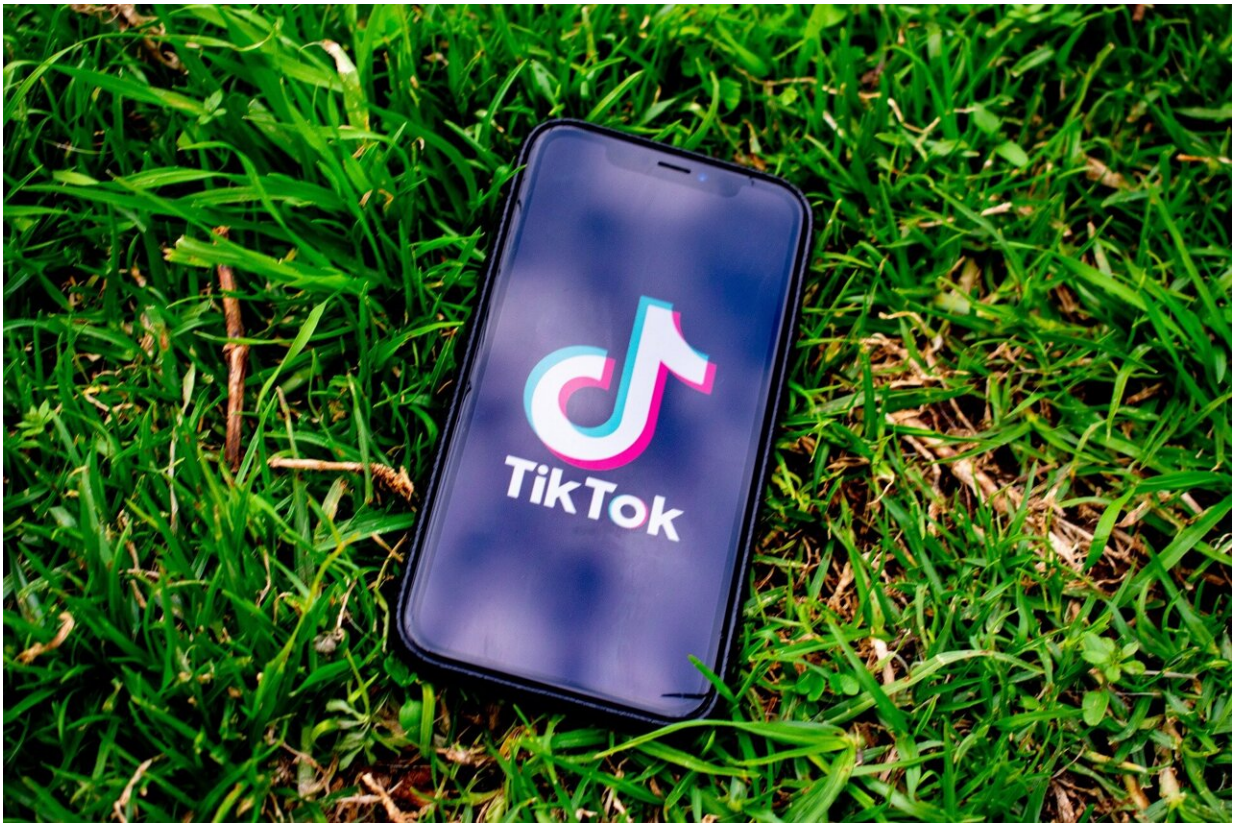


# How a TikTok user can influence discrimination against trans people

August 5 2024, by Sandra Baltazar Martínez

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

"Super straight" is a new term, coined by a TikTok user in 2021, that asserts one is "naturally" and "inherently" not attracted to transgender people. This new sexual identity attempts to distance super straights

from being seen as transphobic while still enacting transphobia, or discrimination or violence against trans people.

In a paper [published](#) in the *Bulletin of Applied Transgender Studies*, UC Riverside's Brandon Andrew Robinson, chair and associate professor of the Gender and Sexuality Studies Department, analyzes dozens of Reddit discussions documenting how, in this moment of trans visibility, some people are ignoring social and [cultural factors](#) when talking about biological sex, "born this way" ideologies of sexual identity, and personal preference discourses to construct heterosexuality as superior.

But gender, sex, and sexuality are not simple definitions nor identities. They have deep, complex, socially constructed roots. Robinson's research situates these "super straight" discourses and strategies within white supremacist history.

Robinson analyzed over 200 online discussion threads on Reddit—the seventh most visited site in the United States and the 19th most visited site in the world. Robinson discusses this "Western invention" of sexual identities and demonstrates the repercussions still seen today.

"Before heterosexuality gets coined, white colonizers and imperialists justified violence, genocide, and colonization on Indigenous communities and people in the Global South because the colonizers saw people of color as having expansive expressions of gender and sexuality that went against the Eurocentric gender binary and the man-woman-reproduction nuclear family norm," Robinson states in the paper.

"Through the [transatlantic slave trade](#), the Eurocentric gender binary also gets constructed in and through whiteness, whereby Black people became ungendered—seen as not having a gender but only seen as a slave—and whereby only white people were seen as being a man or a woman."

In the 19th and 20th centuries, heterosexuality became classified as an identity and cultural ideal alongside white supremacist sciences, such as craniometry or measurement of the cranium, and eugenics, a set of beliefs and practices undertaken to "improve" the human genetic makeup.

White colonizers, Robinson said, defined what and who was attractive, sexually desirable, and civilized. They also ignored social, cultural, and environmental factors that inadvertently shape a person.

"It is no coincidence that heterosexuality and homosexuality get invented at the same time as the end of slavery and the beginning of Jim Crow," Robinson said.

"As biological models of race were being undermined, new models of classifying desires were formed where both interracial desires and homosexual desires were constructed as 'abnormal' sexual object choices. Homosexuality—like interracial relationships—was seen as a threat to the perceived decline in white reproduction."

Reddit threads—some included as many as 10,000 comments and went back as far as five years—allowed Robinson to cite conversations that exemplify the white supremacist ideology and transphobia. They often found that posters keep changing the goalposts when their logics are contested.

Reddit poster DeltaMx11 stated, "No, because I shouldn't be shamed for my sexuality. I have as much of a right to be not attracted to a transgender person as a gay man has a right not to be attracted to a woman or a lesbian has the right not to be attracted to a man. I have no personal problem with [transgender people](#), but I cant force myself to be attracted to a biological man with a female brain."

In analyzing this comment, Robinson writes in the paper that the notion of a "female brain" was a 19th century endeavor to link personality traits with scalp morphology. It is also rooted in the eugenic sciences that tried to justify the difference between women and Black people in comparison to white men.

"That is, this notion of a female brain was used by eugenicists to try to justify [gender](#) inequality," Robinson said. "For DeltaMx11, this logic is used to both justify their non-desire for trans people and to establish this non-desire as an inherent, biological sexuality."

**More information:** Brandon Andrew Robinson, Super Straights: Heterosexuality, White Supremacy, and Transphobia without Transphobes , *Northwestern University* (2024). [DOI: 10.57814/h378-vc92](#)

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