

# Who Are “We”? Where Sexual Orientation Meets Gender Identity

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**ABSTRACT.** In recent years, there have been sometimes contentious discussions about whether or not transgender people and the issues of concern to them should be included in lesbian, gay, and bisexual groups. This paper argues that, both historically and cross-culturally, transgender people have been the most visible minority among people involved in same-sex sexual practices. As such, transgendered people have been emblematic of homosexuality in the minds of most people. Thus, the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and queer people are inextricably bound up with those of transgendered people and should be addressed together in LGBT groups. [Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH E-mail address: <getinfo@haworthpressinc.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> 2002 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]

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The Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists (AGLP) faces a challenge which has been faced by many gay and lesbian organizations over the past several years. You have before you a challenge to your identity as an organization. Who do you represent? Who are your mem-

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bers and who is your constituency? Who is in your group and who is not? Are you going to expand your self-definition to include transgendered people and their concerns? Where does sexual orientation meet gender identity? Is the common ground large enough to make it work?

What I would like to suggest to you is that the common ground is large. Indeed, there is much overlap between the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer communities and trans communities. It is my belief that although many of you may not identify yourselves as having very much in common with trans people, many of your allies, and most of your enemies, see lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people's interests as being almost the same, if not identical, to those of trans people. I hope to show you that, in many ways, they are right.

Other organizations that have tackled this issue have not always found that it has been easy for them to figure out what is the right thing to do. After much soul searching, most of the major organizations that support gay, lesbian, and bisexual civil rights have decided to include gender identity and transgendered people in their mission statements. In September 1997, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force amended its mission statement to include transgendered people (National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 1997). Similarly, in September 1998, PFLAG voted to include transgendered people in their mission statement (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, 1998). In April 2000, three transgendered activists were included as featured speakers at the Millennium March for Equality in Washington DC (Matz, 2000).<sup>1</sup> More recently, in March 2001, the Human Rights Campaign, which calls itself "America's largest gay and lesbian organization," amended its mission statement to read:

HRC is a bipartisan organization that works to advance equality based on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity, to ensure that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans can be open, honest and safe at home, at work and in the community. (Human Rights Campaign, 2001)

If AGLP decides to likewise amend its mission statement, it will be joining with many of its lesbian, gay, and bisexual sisters and brothers in recognizing that transgendered people are also part of our very large and very diverse family.<sup>2</sup>

Before beginning the main part of this paper, I'd like to explicitly state how I use some of the basic terms of the discussion. I realize that

this will be a review for some readers, but please bear with me for the sake of clarity. When speaking of sexual orientations and gender identities, we rely heavily on presumed common assumptions about the meanings of certain basic words. For example, when we speak of same-sex sexuality, do we mean the same thing as when we speak of same-gender sexuality? And what exactly is same-sex sexuality for people who live in intermediately-sexed bodies or who live between genders? How do we define ourselves and others? What qualifies someone as having the basic entrance requirements to be counted as one of “us”? And who exactly are “we” anyway?

When I use the word “sex,” I refer to no more and no less than a social status usually determined at the time of birth and on the basis of genital appearance. People may be female, male or intersexed. You’ll note that I said that I regard sex as a social status. This point becomes especially salient for transgendered (and intersexed) people in that their social and legal sex status can be determined by virtue of legislation, by virtue of the opinions of medical practitioners, by virtue of legal opinions, or by the fiat of government bureaucrats. And no matter what any authorities may say, there will always be those people who refuse to accept that a person may ever change their sex, no matter what they may go through. Thus, although sex is commonly understood to be a biological reality, it is, in many ways, very much the result of largely invisible social negotiations. We engage in social and legal wrangling to decide what actually counts to qualify one to be able to legitimately claim membership in a particular sex category.

When I use the word “gender,” I also refer to a social status, this time based on the convincing performance of femininity or masculinity; the most common gender statuses being woman (girl), man (boy), and transgendered. Gender is what we see and deal in most of the time in everyday life. Although common sense says that men are men because they have male genitals, and that women are women because they have female genitals, we rarely ever know these intimate details about the women and men in our lives. What we do know is that when we see someone who looks and acts and sounds like a man, we assume that he is also male. When we know someone who looks and acts and sounds like a woman, we assume that she is female. Consider the people with whom you interact in any given day. You see women and men. You assume that they are correspondingly female and male. How many of these people have you actually seen naked? You don’t really know what their genitals look like, do you? And when the clues do not all add up neatly, sometimes we see transgendered people, but more often than not

we just try a little harder until we can make gender sense of the situation—“Oh he’s really a raving queen,” or “she’s just a big butch dyke!”

“Transgender” is a relatively new word. It was originally coined by Virginia Prince in the early 1970s to refer to people who lived full-time in a gender that was not the one that usually went with their genitals (Prince, personal communication). In the 1990s, the word was taken up by a variety of people who, in their own ways, transgressed usual sex and gender expectations. It has now come to have quite a broad meaning. For many people, the term transgender includes a wide range of sex, gender, and sexual expressions which may include heterosexuals, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, queers and transsexuals.

Most people who identify themselves as transgendered, however, feel that they do not fit well as either women or men. They may feel that they are neither women nor men, that they are both women and men at the same time, that they are male women, female men, or some other kind of unique gender. Sometimes people’s transgenderism is invisible to others because they conform well to the gender expectations of their natal sex, or because they conform well to the gender expectations of another sex and so pass unnoticed as the gender of their choice. Sometimes people’s gender seems unremarkable because they are transsexed and they very effectively transform their sexes as well as their genders. However, many transgendered people are visibly transgendered because of their lack of gender conformity, because the ways that they express their genders do not match well with what others expect.

Some lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer activists and theorists have made the point that simply not being heterosexual is a kind of gender transgression. They see heterosexuality as such an integral and socially compulsory part of what it means to be a woman or a man in most societies, that to defy the expectation of heterosexuality is to be transgressive of gender norms. From this perspective, some people have made the argument that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people are gender outlaws, even when they, for all intents and non-sexual purposes, look and sound and act like straight people. However, I think that most gender-conforming homosexual or bisexual people would balk at being called transgendered just because they are homosexual or bisexual. Indeed, even a great many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people who engage in seriously principled rebellion against gender stereotypes, spurn the label transgendered.

At the same time, there are many ways that the two kinds of identities overlap. Many lesbian-, gay-, bisexual-, and queer-identified people readily identify as transgendered. It is also quite common that people

who later come to call themselves transgendered or transsexed sojourn for a part of their lives in lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer communities before they come to know themselves as transgendered or transsexed (Devor, 1997b). And there is a small, but far from negligible, number of people who only come out as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer after they begin to live their lives as transgendered people.

Indeed, in recent centuries, the kind of people who have been most consistently singled out as homosexual and bisexual have often been those people who have been the most obviously transgendered. The most feminine of men and the most masculine of women have epitomized homosexuality and bisexuality, whether or not they had ever even had any same-sex interests, whether or not they themselves so identified. Thus the people who have most defined homosexuality and, to a lesser extent, bisexuality have most frequently been those among us who have been the most gender transgressive. This may be an image that many in gay pride and lesbian-feminist movements have worked hard to dispel, but the fact remains that, in the minds of most people, homosexuality and bisexuality continue to be strongly associated with cross-gendered behavior.

It probably is more than a serendipitous coincidence that during the same years that the term transgendered has developed some currency, the term “queer” has also been gaining a foothold as a prideful identity. The postmodern identity category of queer has become a haven for people who feel that other existing sexual orientation identities are too restrictive to capture their feelings about themselves and about the people who excite them. Queer provides an identity hook for those people whose sexes and/or genders are transgressive and whose sexual desires and/or sexual practices fall outside of more conventional terms. To be unthinkable, to be unspeakable, to be un-namable is to be socially invisible. As transgender does for transgressively gendered people, the term queer provides a social location for people whose sexuality may be transgressive because of their sex, because of their gender, because of their sexuality, or because of any combination of the above.

So, who are “we”? What is it that brought each of us to a gathering in New Orleans of the Association of Gay and Lesbian Psychiatrists? My understanding is that we were there that day because we share an identity as either lesbian or gay or bisexual. But what does it mean to share such an identity? I would guess that for most of us it means that we feel that there is something about our sexuality that defines us as particular kinds of human beings, that our involvement in homosexuality—what-

ever form that may take for each of us—to some extent defines who we are. But what exactly does it mean to be homosexual?

The word “homosexual” only entered the English language in 1869 (Bleys, 1995). This idea, that one’s sexuality might define one as a kind of person, is only a little over 130 years old. It was only at the end of the 19th century that sexologists began to try to scientifically define people in terms of their sexual practices and desires. Prior to that time, the general understanding in western societies was that everyone was capable of sexual morality and of sexual sinfulness. However, toward the end of the 19th century, the idea began to take hold that certain people might be understood to have some kind of innate defect which predisposed them to abnormal sexuality. As this idea took hold, sexuality became increasingly medically and legally defined.<sup>3</sup> Homosexuals (and heterosexuals) came into existence as distinct types of people at this time (Weeks, 1989).

Theorists whose ideas were popular at the time proposed that there was something physically (or perhaps spiritually) inborn about homosexuals which made us the way we are. Even before the term homosexual came onto the scene, we were more commonly identified as “inverts.” What came to be known as homosexuality was seen as simply a natural outgrowth of a deeper underlying and predisposing condition called “sexual inversion.”

Inverts were broadly defined to include anyone who did not perform their gender in the expected way: men who liked to look and act as women, women who liked to look and act as men. It was presumed that in order for a man to be willing to assume a receptive role in sexual relations with another man, he had to be, in some important ways, woman-like. Similarly, for a woman to desire another woman sexually, she had to have something about her that was part man. Indeed, it was an openly homosexual man, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs,<sup>4</sup> who, in the 1860s, first characterized inversion as a “woman’s spirit in a man’s body” (Bleys, 1995, p. 157) which is how we often hear transsexualism described today.

However, in the Victorian mind, only the gender inverts in same-sex relations were the actual homosexuals. The women and men who had sex with them were just regular people who were participating in the usual way. They were women who were being seduced and overpowered by masculine suitors. They were men who were relieving their sexual needs with conveniently available feminine partners. Thus, the modern concept of homosexuals as a kind of people was, from the beginning, defined in terms of what we now call transgenderism.

Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, published in 1905, shifted this conceptualization to some degree. Freud's introduction of the idea of sexual object brought about a better recognition of the fact that a man might be masculine in his everyday habits while being "feminine" in his sexual preferences. Thus, homosexuality began to be used more widely as a distinct description separate from "sexual inversion." However, this idea was not so readily applied to lesbianism. It would be at least another decade before a similar distinction was seen to function among women. In any event, the heterosexist idea persisted that all intimate relationships were comprised of one masculine and one feminine partner (Chauncey, 1989).

These concepts were not simply imposed upon us by sexologists and legal experts. They served to reinforce growing communal identities among small groups of people who welcomed the possibility of defining their lives in terms of their sexual orientation. As has happened several times in more recent memory, many of our people who were in search of ways to name themselves were more than willing to make use of labels not originally of their own choosing (Doan, 1998).

One notable example of this process was the publication of Radclyffe Hall's novel, *The Well of Loneliness* (1928/1986), in which Hall attempted to gain sympathy for the plight of female inverts. First published in 1928, declared obscene for its sympathetic treatment of female homosexuality, and banned in England shortly thereafter, the book became probably the single most widely-read "lesbian" novel of the 20th century.<sup>5</sup> More than any other publication, *The Well of Loneliness* almost single-handedly defined lesbianism for a half-century, until lesbian-feminism came onto the scene in the 1970s (Newton, 1984). The novel's autobiographical protagonist, Stephen Gordon, was a gender-inverted female who wanted to be a man. Although in the 1970s lesbian-feminists rejected this characterization of lesbianism, it continues to have power today. Thus, one of the most enduring images of lesbians in the public mind, and in many of our own, remains that of the "man-nish woman."

But Stephen Gordon, or Radclyffe Hall, and many of the others claimed as emblematic of lesbian and gay life have also been claimed by transgendered people of today as their own predecessors (Prosser, 1998; Boyd, 1999). Certainly, those who have a "woman's spirit in a man's body" or who are "women who want to be men" are more commonly known today as transgendered.

So, who, exactly, are "we"?



One of the slogans popular in the early years of contemporary “gay pride” movements said “We are everywhere.” It was meant to emphasize that homosexual people were just like heterosexuals in that we moved through every walk of life, that we came in just as many varieties as did straight people. Back then, this was radical stuff because most homosexual people were in the closet. Most lesbian, gay, and bisexual people were integrated into straight society and were passing as straight people so that they could hold onto jobs, live in decent housing, not lose their kids, not get beaten up by marauding bands of young men.

The slogan, “we are everywhere,” was a call to pride. It was a call to counteract the shame that homosexual people had been living under for far too long. It was an attempt to say that homosexual people were more diverse than the few people who were unable to hide the ways that they were different from the mainstream. It was an attempt to show the straight world that we weren’t all drag queens and bull dykes. We attempted to build our pride by turning away in shame from our most visible sisters and brothers, the people who had been taking the heat for all of us. In claiming our pride, many of us turned our backs on the transgendered among us.

To help us to develop our pride, gay pride advocates set out to find homosexual people everywhere. We searched for our history and we searched for our far-flung relations. We searched in other cultures both contemporary and historical to find people like us so that we would not feel isolated and stigmatized. We searched for ancestors and for cultural cousins and we found plenty of them. But our search was complicated by the question of who qualified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer in another time or place. Is it fair to translate our culturally specific concepts of what it means to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer to other social locations? Is it sufficient to use the concept of same-sex sexuality as a marker rather than the more culturally specific concepts of homosexuality or lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer? These are questions that I will leave to others to solve. Instead I will simply say a bit about who has been claimed in these efforts to find others like us.

When we have gone looking for examples of people like us in diverse contemporary cultures, we have often found a type of same-sex sexuality which in many ways seemed more straight than not. In other words, in many places around the world today, the people we claim as homosexual or bisexual can be called that more on the basis of their physical sexes than on the basis of their genders. They are homosexual on the basis of the facts of their bodies but they are straight on the basis of the facts of their genders. The individuals involved may have similar kinds



of genitalia but they live in very differently gendered lives. That is to say that they may be homosexual, but they are heterogenderal (Pauly, 1974).

For many people in North American lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer cultures, as well as for many people in others parts of the world, homosexuality still continues to be attributed most definitively to those people who are most easily seen to be transgendered. Nonetheless, when transgendered people live in far-away times or places, we in North America continue to have a strong tendency to claim these people as part of our “we” (Blackwood, 1999).

When we claim as our cousins a wide array of people who engage in same-sex sexuality in cultures around the world, clearly, just as is the case when looking for historical predecessors, it is unlikely that the significance of same-sex sexuality is the same in other places as it is in our own bedrooms. Nonetheless, we have searched and we have claimed to have found “homosexuals” in cultures all over the world. In books which are nominally about homosexuality one can find descriptions of people who could easily be called transgendered. For example, the Hijras of India who are usually castrated males and who dress and act mostly as women (Nanda, 1986).

We have claimed to have found homosexuality in Samoa among transgendered males known as fa’afafine. Locally they are seen as a third gender who are attracted to men and to whom men are attracted. In Samoan culture, the men who have sexual relations with fa’afafine are regarded simply as regular men, whereas the fa’afafine are seen as people who act “in the way of a woman,” which is the literal translation of fa’afafine (Wallace, 1999).

In Mexico, those males who alter themselves to make themselves most feminine in appearance are known as vestidas in recognition of their transgendered tendencies. At the same time, they are also understood to be homosexual, whereas their masculine male sexual partners are not commonly thought of as homosexual (Prieu, 1998). Similarly, we claim as homosexuals Brazilian males, known as travestis, who physically feminize their bodies and who engage in same-sex sexuality with conventionally-gendered men. In both countries, such people are the ones who are also the most likely to be singled out for hate crimes and brutality (Klein, 1998).

When you look at who have been claimed as the historical predecessors of the people we in North America now call lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer, you find a wide and interesting mix of people who generally fall into four types. Few of these people, until very recently, were exclu-

sively involved in same-sex sexuality. Their sexual lives were generally made up of a combination of heterosexual and homosexual sexuality. In other words, what we now call bisexuality. All of these people have been named as having been our forebears. All of them have contributed to the understanding that we share in defining us as members of a collectivity—a collectivity that clearly has been built upon a foundation that includes those people who we today know as transgendered.

One type of people commonly cited among historical examples of homosexuality are people who, as much as was possible in their times, attempted to live their lives as a gender other than what their sex typically indicated. These are people who might today be called transgendered.

A second type among those claimed as our ancestors are men and women who were conventionally gendered and engaged in same-sex sexuality. Men who were initiators of same-sex sexuality and women who were receptive to the advances of other women were generally considered, in their own times, to be “normal” men and women.

A third type of people were those who were not obviously transgendered in their everyday lives, but who inverted gender norms by taking on an atypical role in same-sex sexuality. Included in this type are males who were receptive to same-sex sexuality and females who were initiators of same-sex sexuality.

Finally, people have also been claimed as our predecessors on the basis of their intimate, romantic same-sex friendships whether or not there was any indication of same-sex sexuality having taken place between them (Halperin, 2000).

When we look at the classical world of Greece and Rome, we find that we have claimed as our ancestors masculine men and feminine women who enjoyed sexual relations with people of their own sex. We also find that we have claimed as our own those clearly transgendered men and women who dressed and acted as effeminate men and masculine women (Halperin, 1989). Along with them we have also inherited the attitude expressed by Chrysostom, a fourth-century Christian, who said of men who have sex with men: “If those who suffer it really perceived what is being done to them, they would rather die a thousand deaths than undergo this . . . For I maintain that not only are you made into a woman, but you also cease to be a man” (Talley, 1996, p. 399).

From medieval Arab cultures, we have claimed conventionally gendered men who engaged in same-sex sexuality as well as effeminate homosexual males who dressed, acted and spoke like women (Rowson, 1991). In pre-modern Europe, underground male homosexual sub-cul-

tures developed in London and Cologne which were to last six centuries. In 15th century Florence, as many as one-third of the male population were arrested for the crime of sodomy, wherein older men generally made use of younger and less socially powerful males (Johansson and Percy, 1996). Most of the men who engaged in same-sex sexuality in these times and places were conventionally gendered and differed more by class and age than by gender; however, there were also a subset of males who acted as women. We have claimed them all as our gay ancestors.

There exist records from the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries of females involved in same-sex sexuality who were brought before European courts of law for the crime of sodomy. In each of their cases the charge of sodomy was made because they dressed themselves as men, entered into marriages with women partners and were accused of having had sexual relations with their wives using a dildo (Dekker and van de Pol, 1989; Murray, 1996). The conventionally gendered women in these partnerships were not generally considered to be transgressive in their own times. However, they have been claimed as lesbian predecessors by our contemporaries. The females who lived as men have been claimed both as ancestors of today's lesbians (Bennett, 2000) and as forebears of today's female-to-male transgendered people (Devor, 1997a; Feinberg, 1996).

Throughout Europe and the Colonial Americas, male same-sex sexuality continued to be officially severely sanctioned during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries; however, it was usually tolerated so long as it followed patterns which simulated proper class and gender relations, i.e., socially dominant males using younger, socially weaker males for their sexual pleasures. Such sexuality seems to have been widely practiced (Talley, 1996).

During the same period, the tradition of romantic friendships among women grew and thrived. While it is unknown whether these women actually engaged in same-sex sexuality, these women, too, have been claimed as forebears of today's lesbians (Faderman, 1981).

We also have laid claim to people who practiced same-sex sexuality in aboriginal cultures throughout the Americas. Most of the people who have been identified in this way have been people whose same-sex sexuality was incidental to their transgenderism. Although there are indigenous names for such individuals in their own languages, they have been called berdache by western anthropologists. Within their own cultures, such people were generally not seen as engaging in same-gender sexuality but rather as having made a gender change which rendered their re-

relationships sexually straight. However, they too have been claimed as lesbian and gay. For example, Jonathan Katz's classic book, *Gay American History* (1976), contains a lengthy chapter devoted to "Native Americans/Gay Americans 1528-1976."

With the advent of movements for Lesbian-Feminism and Gay Pride in the 1970s, we began to work to transform Victorian notions which equated gender inversion with homosexuality and bisexuality. Lesbian-feminists worked hard to overturn the idea that lesbians were all masculine women who really wanted to be men. We promoted the image of lesbian women as so completely women-identified that we were not even interested in men at all (Radicalesbians, 1970). The idea was floated that "feminism was the theory and lesbianism was the practice." We neither wanted to be men nor wanted to be involved with women who wanted to be men. Many lesbian-feminists went so far as to denounce and reject lesbian women who continued to enjoy butch and femme ways of life (MacCowan, 1992; Cordova, 1992). Oddly, to the eyes of most people, the politically correct lesbian-feminist "uniform" of the time looked remarkably manly.

Not long after, gay men started moving more towards a glorification of masculinity and threw embarrassed glances over their shoulders at those gay men who continued to enjoy drag or who moved through the world being "obviously gay." A macho image of gay "clones" became popular in many urban areas in an attempted break from Victorian ideas of gay men as women's souls trapped in men's bodies (Levine, 1998).

Over the last decade or so we have seen a proliferation of sexualities being asserted with pride. Under the rubric of queer sexuality, we have seen postmodern sensibilities come to the fore as more and more people come forward to claim their right to be whatever their hearts and groins tell them to be. We have begun to see the emergence of transsexual lesbians, of trannyfags and the men who love them, of lesbians and gay men who enjoy sex together, and of dyke daddies who live out their fantasies as SM gay men. But the old ideas have not faded away in the bright light of new postmodern thought.

Wherever we turn, we see that the late 19th and early 20th centuries were when our vernacular ideas about homosexuality and bisexuality being a kind of sex/gender inversion were formed. These foundational ideas have stayed with us in many forms. Social change is uneven. It can be seen to progress in some areas whereas it can be simultaneously regressive in others. Social changes can be rapid and profound among one segment of a society whereas your neighbors may remain completely unaffected by forces which have been immense among your own peo-

ple. What seems like old news to us can be revolutionary for our co-workers. How we see ourselves may be very different from how others see us.

So, who are “we”?

There are two main approaches used today to define who we are. Probably most of you reading this subscribe to both, to one degree or another. On the one hand, many people see us as being defined by our biology. Strong arguments have been put forward in the past decade or so in which the case has been made that there probably is some kind of biological underpinning for homosexuality and bisexuality. In other words, “we” were born this way (De Cecco and Parker, 1995). This is not a new idea. The scientific techniques used to research and support such claims may be new, but the argument itself is as old as Plato—we have no choice. We are a natural part of biological diversity.

Another approach to understanding what we have in common, what binds us together as a “we,” is the idea that we share a common culture and heritage. That we are a people, an ethnic-like group who have a vernacular, common ways of walking and talking, a flag, a history, and a range of cultural institutions (Murray, 1998). Central to our sense of ourselves as a people are our struggles to find and hang onto our pride in the face of the force of still-rampant homophobia. A big part of what defines each of us, and a big part of what holds us together, are our ongoing struggles to maintain pride in a world which far more often entreats us to feel shame.

Which brings me back once again to the question of what is it that we have to feel ashamed about and how is that shame built into our bones? Who do the homophobes use as object lessons to keep the rest of us in line? Who is it that the homophobes attack the most viciously so that the rest of us will know where we had better not go? And who was it that you, yourselves, first identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer as you were first coming out? And who is it that you are most ashamed of when you are confronting your own internalized homophobia?

Transgendered people have long been on the front lines taking the heat and the abuse for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people, whether or not they themselves have identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. The fact remains that biological theories of inversion are still very much with us. Our own gay scientists actively promote such biological theories because they find scientific merit in them and because they find political promise in them (LeVay, 1993). But when you pick apart the assumptions underlying biological theories of congenital homosexuality, what you find is transgenderism. What you find is the idea

that we are the way we are because there is something biologically transgendered to us. Gay men have something female-like in them. Lesbians have something male-like to them. The same for bisexuals. This is what most members of the public believe. This is what many of us believe.

Furthermore, what is it that we are saying about ourselves when we claim that what makes us a “we” is our common culture? Is that culture specific to our small circle of friends? Is that culture only North American? If you subscribe to the idea that we do have a history and that we do have a cross-cultural presence, what is it that defines us together in that common culture? We do not all hail from the same land. We do not all speak the same language. We do not all have the same skin color or the same gender. What, then, is it that binds us together in a common culture? Why is it that so many of us believe that we can use our gaydar to locate our own kind in diverse situations? And who do we find first and most easily if not the transgendered among us? Is it not our gender transgressiveness that marks us most distinctively as we move in the sea of heterosexuals among whom we generally live?

Not all transgendered people are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer in their sexuality. Not all transgendered people identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer. Not all lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer people are visibly transgendered. Not all lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer people identify as transgendered. Yet, our issues are inextricably tied together. So long as we can be scared back into making ourselves respectable by denying the transgendered among us and within us, we are living with shame—not with pride. So long as we can be shamed into not standing with those who take the beatings and the abuse that allows us to live “beyond the closet” (Seidman, Meeks and Traschen, 1999), we tread a very dangerous line.

It is our responsibility, and our only real protection, to stand with the most vulnerable among us. Just as the advancement of a society can be judged by the way it treats its most vulnerable members, just as feminists learned to resist lesbian-baiting, we too must resist the temptation to self-congratulatory pride. To grasp at a freedom which can only be gained by averting our eyes from those among us who challenge our comfortable lives is to trade in illusion.

I leave you with a familiar quote from Martin Niemöller, a German Protestant minister who was a leader of the church’s opposition to Hitler and the Nazis:

When Hitler attacked the Jews I was not a Jew, therefore I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the Catholics, I was not a Catholic, and therefore, I was not concerned. And when Hitler attacked the unions and the industrialists, I was not a member of the unions and I was not concerned. Then Hitler attacked me and the Protestant church—and there was nobody left to be concerned. (Niemöller, 1968, 31636)

Who are “we”? The choice is yours.

## NOTES

1. The involvement of transgendered people in the 2000 Millennium March on Washington did not occur without attendant difficulties. Much of the planning took place without the inclusion of transgendered people. The transgendered speakers, Jamison Green, Dana Rivers, and Riki Anne Wilchins were not allowed to speak for the agreed upon allotment of time (Matz, 2000).

2. Editor’s Note: After Dr. Devor’s presentation at the AGLP meeting in New Orleans, the AGLP membership, at its annual business meeting, overwhelmingly voted to add language inclusive of transgendered individuals to AGLP’s charter.

3. Approximately 1000 works were published on homosexuality in the ten years between 1898 and 1908.

4. Editor’s Note: See Ulrichs, K. (1864), *The Riddle of “Man-Manly” Love*, trans. M. Lombardi-Nash. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994.

5. In the 1960s it was still selling over 100,000 copies a year in the US alone.

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