

**GL vs. BT:
The Archaeology of Biphobia and Transphobia
Within the U.S. Gay and Lesbian Community**

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[From the Journal of Bisexuality \(2004\) 3, 25-55](#)

"What will it take
for the gayristocracy to realize
that bisexual, lesbian, transgender and gay people
are in this together
we can and will
move the agenda forward.

But this will not happen
Until public recognition
of our common issues is made,
and a sincere effort to confront
biphobia and transphobia is made
by the established gay and lesbian leadership
in this country."

--Lani Ka'ahumanu (Speech delivered at the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, 1993)

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I am reminded of my first, puzzling experience with "transphobia." Having grown up as a very straight and narrow white heterosexual male, I had no experience with the "GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) community." Until I came out at the age of 35, I viewed my longstanding transsexual impulses

as a sick fantasy that had to be contained at all costs, and assumed (and hoped) that it would go away at some point. When my marriage broke up in 1997, I realized it was time to transition. I looked for a new place to live. A friend of ours, a gay man, offered his apartment as a place to stay until I found a place of my own. I liked him, and thought myself very lucky to have him as a friend. Who better to speak to about these very difficult issues? I was rather incautious. Having someone to listen (who would not run out of the room screaming) was an aphrodisiac. I told him freely of my plans, not dreaming of anything other than ecstatic acceptance, and was surprised to see shock register in his face. He was gracious about it, but clearly he thought he was offering his apartment to a straight man. The idea of hosting “a transsexual” in his fashionable New York City apartment building, who would parade around in women’s clothes, was not at all what he had in mind. I slowly realized that my presence was embarrassing to him, that he did not wish to know me, and that the sooner I was out of there, the better. Years later, someone told me of his disparaging description of me displaying my new-found femininity “proud as a peacock.” After a number of minor humiliating incidents, I left, and my attempts to contact him were not returned. I still like him, and wish it weren’t this way, but this was to be only the first of a number of unsatisfactory contacts and misunderstandings with the “GLBT community.”

One could say that he that had a “problem” (meaning, in common parlance, a psychological problem) with “transphobia” (fear of transgenders). To locate this issue within the psychology of an individual, however, is wholly unsatisfactory to an understanding of this phenomenon. This is not a bad person. He is urbane, witty and intelligent, and went out of his way as best he could to avoid insult or injury to me at a very difficult time in my life. I say without irony that he saved my life. The two of us, however, were in the grip of social forces far beyond our comprehension. When a significant portion of the population start to have the same “psychological problem,” it is time to call out the sociologists.

I. The Nature of Biphobia and Transphobia

A. *The Myth of “GLBT Community” Togetherness*

The “GLBT community” (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) appears monolithic. The quadratic formula of “GLBT,” adding together several second-order elements to create a single defined community, suggests communal interests. This is the understanding that most heterosexuals in the U.S. seem to have. Such a community of interest makes sense because homosexuals have long been subjected to heterosexist prejudice. Yet, like most social phenomena, the situation is far more complex than it seems at first glance. The very creation of the “GLBT” acronym suggests that gay and lesbian and bisexual and transgender are each clearly defined, separate and mutually exclusive categories – not one and the same. When one begins to examine this “community,” one finds evidence of this separateness, for internecine struggles seethe beneath the surface, calling into question the idea of a “GLBT community.” While many gays and lesbians feel that “bisexual” and “transgender” are simply names for parts of their own community, others actively reject the idea that bisexuals or transgenders are part of their community, seeing them as entirely separate and distinct. Heterosexism against bisexuals and transgenders exists not only in the straight community, but in the gay and lesbian community as well. Some feel, as we shall see, that bisexuality and transgenderism are detrimental to the social and political acceptance of gays and lesbians. This curious phenomenon has been called “internalized homophobia” by some, meaning an irrational fear and dislike of other homosexuals. (Fone 2000:6, Sears and Williams 1997:16) This presumes, of course, that bisexuals and transgenders are, in fact, “homosexuals.” Others use neologisms such as “biphobia” and “transphobia,” meaning an irrational fear and dislike of bisexuals and transgenders. The need for such terms belies the idea that there is a single monolithic “GLBT community.”

The difference between “homosexual” and “GLBT” is elusive to many U.S. Americans. The above paragraph and its plethora of specialized terms would have made little sense to most U.S. Americans (except

a few specialized psychiatrists and psychologists) in 1950. I suggest that most U.S. Americans mark intense personal and political struggles. The divisions between gay and lesbian and bisexual and transgender are far deeper and more significant to each other than to those outside. Where do these divisions come from?

Until the 1990s, there was little need to distinguish between different groups within the homosexual movement. The differences between gay/lesbian and bisexual/transgender were of no practical consequence until the attempt came in the late 1990s to marry them together in a “GLBT” marriage of convenience. The purpose of this marriage, of course, was political advantage through a community of interests. Bisexuals and transgenders, however, include all sorts of groups with radically unconventional lives: polyamorites, pansexuals, sado-masochists, Radical Faeries, drag queens, she-males, heterosexual crossdressers, working-class transvestite prostitutes, gender benders, genderqueers. Many of these bisexual and transgender people have little in common with the modern construction of middle-class gay and lesbian identities. When leaders of the U.S. GLBT movement began to confront the inconsistent interests of the bisexual and transgender people with whom they were now allied in the “GLBT movement,” they were faced with a political problem. Having included bisexuals and transgenders in the coalition, how could they at the same time argue that GLBT people are “just like you,” wanting the same middle-class lives as other U.S. voters (with the single exception of a same-sex partner) while being required to politically embrace polyamory and a man in a dress?

The placement of bisexuals and transgenders last in the GLBT acronym (or LGBT, as many prefer) is not accidental. It is frequently thought that gays and lesbians are natural allies with bisexuals because all share victimization from a narrow view of sexuality. Some gays and lesbians, however, have a narrow view of sexuality themselves, along with the rest of society. Questioning whether a photographer can capture on film a “bisexual wedding” or “bisexual family” as easily as a “lesbian wedding” or a “gay family,” one writer noted that bisexuality challenges our monosexual culture’s assumption that sexuality can be identified by appearance or by the gender of one’s partners. (Trnka and Tucker 1995) When I attended a bisexual women’s support group at the New York City Lesbian and Gay Community Center in 1999, I learned for the first time of the mythology of bisexuals amongst the gay and lesbian community. I was shocked to discover that bisexuals are looked down upon by gays and lesbians, that it is thought that they enjoy same-sex encounters as a temporary diversion, that they will return to their “real” heterosexual orientation sooner or later, deserting same-sex partners, and that they are getting the best of both worlds by denying their gayness to avoid societal prejudice.

One could argue that only a small portion of the gay and lesbian communities have heterosexist ideas about transgenders and bisexuals, that these are not sufficiently serious issues about which to speak, and that we should concentrate on our alliances. While there is no data of which I am aware regarding the size of the problem, there are serious personal and political consequences for bisexuals and transgenders, as we shall see. We will not repair our divisions by ignoring them and attributing them to psychological aberration. In this article, I examine the concepts of “biphobia” and “transphobia,” attempting to begin an “archaeology” of the concepts. I specifically refer to archaeology in the Foucauldian sense. C.G. Prado describes such “archaeology” as an investigation of professional disciplines and expert idioms. It discounts received wisdom and reconstructs the obvious and natural as suspect. It then searches out the discontinuities that mark shifts between conceptual frameworks. It is not a search for “Truth” but for what counts as truth in particular fields of knowledge. (Prado 1995:29) Such a study allows us to look at two specific concepts, “biphobia” and “transphobia,” to see how they came to be used to describe intra-group prejudice within the GLBT population in the early 21st century United States, and to demonstrate the social forces and historical meanings that allowed and required such usage. “Biphobia” and “transphobia” not only offer an inadequate understanding of contemporary events, but also contribute to the internecine conflicts of those who might otherwise be standing shoulder to shoulder in a heterosexist world that grants them but little quarter.

B. Discrimination As Disease

“Biphobia” and “transphobia” sound like psychological problems. “Phobia” is a Greek word meaning “fear” or “flight.” Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary defines “phobia” as “an exaggerated, usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object, class of objects, or situation.” As a combining noun-form, it is also defined as “intolerance or aversion for,” giving the example of “photophobia,” an intolerance to light.” (Merriam-Webster 2003) Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary does not include “biphobia” or “transphobia.” It does, however, define “homophobia” as “irrational fear of, aversion to, *or discrimination against* homosexuality or homosexuals.” (Italics supplied) In fact, the term may first have been used in print in a psychological context. The word was used in 1971 in an article entitled “Homophobia: A Tentative Personality Profile,” in *Psychological Reports* (Fone 2000:5). A year later, George Weinberg’s book *Society and The Healthy Homosexual* defined it as “the dread of being in close quarters with homosexuals.” The term has been integrated into the social sciences, used by activists, policy makers and the judiciary. (Sears and Williams 1997:15) Yet its current usage has expanded it far beyond the coiner’s initial intent, so that it is applied to any act that discriminates against homosexuals, in stark contrast to other phobias in the dictionary, such as “agoraphobia” and “claustrophobia,” which are defined as “abnormal dread of” being in open or public places, or closed or narrow spaces.

Some have divided homophobia into several parts, such as personal, interpersonal, institutional and cultural. (Ochs 1996:221) Homophobia’s origins, motivations, functions and measurement have been studied. (Sears and Williams 1987) Yet conflating fear, prejudice and discrimination and medicalizing it into a “phobia” seems to give it a legitimacy that “racism” and “sexism” could never have. How did a disease descriptor come to characterize discriminatory conduct? Clearly, “biphobia” and “transphobia” are different from what we commonly refer to as “phobias.” Speaking of them as “phobias” is as inappropriate as calling racism “racephobia.” Such a usage changes prejudice, the attribution of negative characteristics to a group, and discrimination, the exclusion of such a group from the benefits of society, into a psychiatric illness, a sickness over which the sufferer has little control. It contributes to such injustices as the “gay panic defense,” in which a defendant accused of murder defends on the grounds that the victim’s homosexual advances frightened the defendant, thereby excusing the killing.

“Biphobia” and “transphobia” are unrelated to psychiatric and psychological definitions of “phobias.” Phobias are a significant medical and social phenomenon. According to a study by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), between 5.1 and 12.5 percent of Americans suffer from phobias. (American Psychiatric Association 1992) This means that between 13 million and 32 million people in the U.S. had phobias in 1992, of an U.S. population of approximately 250 million in 1992. Psychiatrists and psychologists have developed a number of treatments for victims of phobias. The following paragraph describes the position of the American Psychiatric Association Joint Commission on Public Affairs and the Division of Public Affairs on treatments for phobias. (I note that the pamphlet from which it is drawn, “Let’s Talk Facts About Phobias,” states that it is not necessarily the position of the American Psychiatric Association.) The following surreal thought exercise demonstrates the distinction between medical definition of “phobias” and “biphobia” or “transphobia.” Imagine this as a treatment for biphobia or transphobia:

Psychiatrists find the most effective and longlasting treatment for specific phobias is a behavior therapy called exposure, which relies on exposing the person to the feared object or situation. The two most common methods of exposure are systematic desensitization and “flooding.” In both, the patient meets with a trained therapist and confronts the feared object or situation. By confronting rather than fleeing the object of fear, a person becomes accustomed to it and can lose the terror, horror, panic and dread he or she once felt. Systematic desensitization is a more gradual form of exposure therapy. In a

series of steps, the patient first learns relaxation to control the physical reactions of fear. Then he or she imagines the feared object, works up to looking at pictures that depict the object or situation, and finally actually experiences the situation or being in the presence of the feared object. During “flooding,” on the other hand, the person is exposed directly and immediately to the most feared object or situation. He or she stays in that situation until his or her anxiety is markedly reduced from its previous level. In general, this requires about two hours per session.

(American Psychiatric Association 1992) Is the answer to biphobia and transphobia no more than a simple matter of people going off to therapy to spend a couple of hours with a bisexual and a transsexual to overcome their irrational fears? I suspect not. Biphobia and transphobia are not good descriptions of the phenomenon of heterosexist prejudice against bisexuals and transgenders, and are particularly inappropriate in the case of heterosexist prejudices within the GLBT community. I suggest that gays and lesbians who discriminate against bisexuals and transgenders are reacting to political and social pressures, not psychological ones.

C. Political Consequences

At this point in the argument, the conflict appears to be nothing more than a disagreement about names and categories: how are bisexuals and transgenders related to gays and lesbians? Yet this dispute has serious real-world consequences. In several years up to and including 2001, a bill entitled the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (“ENDA”) had been proposed a number of times in the U.S. Congress, the goal of which is to prohibit job discrimination against gays and lesbians. It has not yet been re-introduced at the time of this writing, but it likely will be. Its principal organizational backer, the Human Rights Campaign (“HRC”), a D.C. lobbying group, now estimates that there are enough favorable votes in Congress to make passage possible in the near future. It is more likely a matter of when, rather than whether, such a bill will pass. Gay activists are ecstatic about getting to this stage of political development.

Not all GLBT people are so ecstatic. Some are concerned because the legislative protection is phrased in terms of “sexual orientation”, rather than “sexual preference,” and deliberately does not include “gender identity.” “Sexual orientation” applies to one’s choice of sexual partner, and does not apply to one’s gender presentation. Thus, it is not clear whether the “sexual orientation” language would protect a transgender person who has been fired for wearing the clothing of the opposite sex. Furthermore, the term “sexual orientation” implies that one is oriented in a particular sexual direction by a force or forces outside the will of the individual. It stands in direct opposition to the term “sexual preference,” which implies that sexuality is a matter of choice. The displacement of “sexual preference” by “sexual orientation” is not a matter of linguistics, but of politics. When bisexuals, lesbians, gays and heterosexuals are placed under the rubric of “sexual preference,” sexual *choices* are represented. When placed under the rubric of “sexual orientation,” then bisexuality stands out as a failure of orientation or a dual orientation, a product of confusion, promiscuity or indecision.

At the same time, it is assumed that there is no need to demarcate the social space held by bisexuals in political figurings. “Gay political groups often protest that there are no ‘bisexual issues,’ that bisexual rights are subsumed under gay rights, and that bisexuals will be liberated and accepted fully once gay rights are won.” (Hutchins 1996:241) In fact, although bisexuals share many issues of discrimination concerning their same-gender relationships with lesbians and gay men, they are also discriminated against because they are bisexual – specifically because they upset the dichotomies in a polarized world. In addition, it needs to be understood that polyamory (multipartner relations), pansexuality (openness to all forms of sexuality) and other forms of responsible nonmonogamy are being pioneered by bisexuals. While bisexuality cannot be

equated with polyamory and pansexuality, if bisexuality were to be valued distinct from gay and lesbian issues, this dimension would then need to be added to the current social debate about domestic partnership and same-gender marriages. (Hutchins 1996:241)

Bisexuals are also subject to community exclusion and invisibility. The addition of the term "bisexual" to "gay and lesbian" in the titles of political groups, community centers, pride marches and other arenas is often a subject of bitter debate. For example, Northampton, Massachusetts has long had a parade for the gay and lesbian community, but the suggestion that bisexuals be included in the parade caused several years of strife during which the Northampton gay and lesbian community, like many others around the country, fought over whether to include "bisexual" in its Pride March title. In fact, it was added in one year, and was so controversial that it was deleted the next year. (Hutchins 1992)

The political conflict between gays/lesbians and bisexuals/transgenders can also be found in the attempts to claim historical territory. Prior to 1890, the terms "homosexual," "gay," "lesbian," "transgender," "transsexual," and "transvestite" did not exist. Can past historical figures correctly be described as "gay" or "bisexual" or "transgender"? Who gets to say whether a cross-dressing man who had sex with both men and women was "gay" or "bisexual" or "transgender" or whatever? Marjorie Garber notes that Sappho, Socrates, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, King James I of England, and Marie Antoinette had liaisons with both women and men. (Garber 1995:14) Joan of Arc, Queen Christina of Sweden and King James cross-dressed. Even today, there are questions as to what marks a bisexual or transsexual person versus a gay or lesbian person. Why does this matter and what is its social meaning? These are not issues of phobia – these are issues of politics and political consequences.

Thus, we begin to see the nature of the problem: there are social and political forces that have created a split between gay/lesbian communities and bisexual/transgender communities, and these forces have consequences for civil rights and community inclusion. "Biphobia" and "transphobia" are a result of these social and political forces, not psychological forces causing irrational fears in aberrant individuals.

II. Roots of the Conflict

How did "biphobia" and "transphobia" begin in the gay and lesbian community? Undoubtedly there are psychological elements, but a purely psychological, ahistorical explanation ignores the longstanding context of the issue that allows for the phenomenon. The GL vs. BT split is especially surprising because distinctions between gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders developed rather recently in history. Until the 1950s, those now called "transgender" were classified as homosexuals by everyone, including the physicians who specialized in their treatment, and it is only in the past fifty years or so that transgender has been theorized as different in kind from homosexuality. "Bisexuality" as a concept (though not as a practice) began in the 1960s and emerged as a recognizably separate identity in the 1970s, but it is still subsumed within the larger context of "sexual orientation," today's phraseology for "homosexuality." Many in US society today still consider bisexuals and transgenders to be homosexuals, no different from gays and lesbians. Yet sometime in the past century, bisexuals and transgenders started to become separate from homosexuals, being gay or lesbian became more acceptable than being bisexual or transgender, and a split developed between gay/lesbian and bisexual/transgender. When one looks at the specific ways in which homosexuality was constructed in the West, these results are clearly foreshadowed.

A. The Construction of Homosexuality

While a basic sexual drive seems to exist instinctually in most human beings as a matter of nature, the forms of sexuality seem to be socially constructed. Foucault is famous for championing the idea that, as of

the 19th century, “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species.” (Foucault 1980:43) This insight is useful (albeit strongly contested, e.g., Karras 1999a, b), but insufficient to explain why we now have four separate species (gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender) in the homosexual community, and why there is a fault line between gays/lesbians and bisexuals/transgenders. For this, we must look into the specific historical context of the construction of homosexuality in the West.

Early texts, including Greek and Roman sources, speak of same-sex desire, but do not categorize persons solely by the sex of their partners. There was no single identity, which linked all men who engaged in same-sex acts. Indeed, adult patrician males were expected to have sex with both boys and women, who were passive and expected to be so. Homosexual behavior was not limited to some subculture that had distinct tastes for men only. (Cantarella 1992:216) Significantly, mirroring the distaste for effeminacy of much of modern gay male and patriarchal culture, and the separation of what we now call “transgender” culture, Greek texts satirized effeminate males, and both literary and legal texts suggested it was unmanly behavior to accept a passive role in sexual intercourse after passing a certain age. (Fone 1998:11-15) Also in keeping with patriarchal culture, women were believed not to have sexual feelings, and with the exception of the poetry of Sappho, little was written or understood about female same-sex acts. It was assumed not to exist, its various forms were secret and did not inform the public perceptions of same-sex relations. (Cantarella 1992:78, Traub 1994:62, Spencer 1995:8, Fone 2000)

By the fourth century, the male same-sex acts that had been so public were forced to go underground, creating a tension between secret identity and public identity, between “passing” or “assimilating” (as a non-sodomite or non-homosexual) versus being open about one’s sexuality, either to potential partners or to the public, by declaration or behavioral style. Those who wished to engage in such practices risked strong social condemnation and severe judicial punishment. In keeping with earlier ideas, it was believed that any man who was led astray, rather than a distinct subgroup of men who had inclinations towards men only could indulge in same-sex behavior. However, there is evidence that, beginning in the twelfth century, this belief began to change, and the contrasting belief that there was a certain type of man who engaged exclusively in same-sex behaviors slowly began to arise. Those who engaged in same-sex behaviors were beginning to be designated as “sodomites.” (Fone 1998:92) Nonetheless, it was “passive” homosexuals who received the brunt of the condemnation, leaving in place an ethic in favor of the masculine. (Cantarella 1992:221) Passing as the opposite sex occurred fairly frequently, however, and while it was also forbidden, it was rarely punished, as it was not considered, in and of itself, a sexual crime. (Dekker and van de Pol 1989) It does not appear that there was any necessary linkage in the public mind between cross-dressing and sodomy until the eighteenth century.

By the eighteenth century, the public understanding was that same-sex acts were connected with effeminacy and cross-dressing, that those who engaged in same-sex acts did so exclusively, that same-sex acts were confined to a specific group of people, and that the propensity towards such acts was inborn. (Fone 2000:232, Norton 1992:9) Despite this linkage between male same-sex behavior and effeminacy in the public mind, most men who engaged in same-sex behavior rejected effeminate practices and role-playing. (Fone 1998:198) The public conception of homosexuality coincided with a growing concern with effeminacy that appeared in England in the eighteenth century. (Greenberg 1988:388) Boys typically wore girl’s clothing until they were sent away to boarding school. Men’s clothing was frilly in the Elizabethan Age. However, clothing became more sharply differentiated from the 1770s on. (Greenberg 1988:390) There were diatribes against fops and dandies. By the nineteenth century, men no longer dared embrace in public or shed tears. Concerns about effeminacy periodically boiled over during the ensuing years with regularity. (Greenberg 1988:490)

The nineteenth century scientific crusaders, Ulrichs and Hirschfeld, furthered the linkage between homosexuality and gender by theorizing homosexual men as “hermaphrodites of the mind,” with male bodies

and female souls, though not without opposition. (Fone 1998: 440) In 1910, Magnus Hirschfeld coined the term “transvestite” to refer to one who prefers to wear the clothing of the opposite sex, to distinguish it and separate it from the phenomenon of homosexuality. Hirschfeld first mentioned “psychic transsexualism” in passing in 1923, but it was not accepted until popularized by Dr. Harry Benjamin in the 1960s. (Pfäfflin and Junge 1998)

Thus, from the nineteenth century unitary conception of homosexuality there developed two concepts: “sexual orientation” (sexual object choice) and “gender identity” (sexual self-identification as male or female). This scientific rationalism and medicalization of homosexuality confirmed it as a unitary, monolithic phenomenon. This created a monosexist (exclusively same-sex) “homosexual identity,” and a corresponding tension between identification as homosexual, on the one hand, and passing as heterosexual and/or engaging in heterosexual relationships.

The sex/gender dichotomy was deepened when, in the mid-twentieth century, homosexuality was separated into distinct male and female forms, each of which had different stylized behavioral styles, and distinguished from cross-dressing and effeminacy. This formed a gender divide, and corresponding tensions with bi-gender intermingling and gender ambiguity. After World War II, there were furtive movements towards political action, but these were largely separated along gender lines. The Mattachine Society, an organization for gay men, was established in 1950. The first openly lesbian organization in the US, the Daughters of Bilitis, was established in 1955. These accommodationist groups encouraged gay people to “act normal” and fit in (lesbians belong in dresses, gay men don’t), and recruited prominent “experts” like psychiatrists and psychologists to comment on homosexuality. (Wikholm 2000)

In the context of the counterculture of the 1960s United States, the “sexual revolution” permitted these separate populations to exist openly and to enter into the arena of state politics. The struggle to obtain social acceptance and civil rights pitted these groups against one another. Gays and lesbians campaigned for acceptance by suggesting that they were “just like you,” but with the single (but extremely significant) exception of partners of the same sex. This fueled the tensions between accommodationist tendencies in the gay/lesbian community and gender ambiguity. It was perceived that gender ambiguity (echoing the Greek disdain for passivity) that channeled the stigma of illegitimacy. It was not surprising, therefore, that some homosexuals sought to lessen the stigma of homosexuality by rejecting the stigma of “inappropriate” gendered behavior.

These historical circumstances led to four areas of tension: monosexism versus bisexism, gender accommodationism versus gender ambiguity, open homosexual identity versus passing as heterosexual, and a gender divide versus bigender intermingling. Transsexuals and bisexuals violated the tacit social understandings of the homosexual community in the U.S. both by failing to pass and passing too much. Bisexuals were disparaged because some were “passing” as straight through embrasure of heterosexual practices and heterosexual privilege, thus violating the monosexist idea of a “homosexual identity” and the idea that being gay or lesbian was an organic and/or psychological orientation towards only the same sex. They were also looked down upon because they violated cultural norms of sexual behavior through such practices as polyamory and pansexuality, thus violating the monosexist idea that they are “just like you”. Transsexuals, and later transgenders, were disparaged because some were “passing” as straight through embrasure of stereotypes of gendered behavior, i.e., effeminacy for MTFs and hyper-masculinity for FTMs, and embrasure of heterosexual practices and privilege by identifying their same-sex practices as heterosexuality, thus rejecting homosexual identity. They were also looked down upon because they violated cultural norms of sexual behavior through gender ambiguity, visible androgyny and genderqueerness, thus violating the accommodationist idea that they are “just like you”. The resulting split has been attributed to “biphobia” and “transphobia,” rather than social and political forces.

B. The History of Transphobia

When the story of Christine Jorgensen was published in 1951, debates began amongst these groups as to the proper response. In the first case study of Jorgensen, published in 1951 by her endocrinologist, he referred to her "homosexual tendencies" (Meyerowitz 2002:171). Jorgensen herself, however, specifically distinguished her condition from homosexuality, referring to the prevalent theory of transsexuality as "nature's mistake," in which a woman is trapped in a man's body. (Jorgensen 1967, 2000:114). She takes pains to distinguish her situation from "a much more horrible illness of the mind. One that, although very common, is not as yet accepted as a true illness, with the necessity for great understanding." This "horrible illness of the mind" is a reference to homosexuality. In this way, she attempts to avoid the severe mid-century stigma of homosexuality, as did many transsexuals of the time. (Meyerowitz 2002: 183-184) Jorgensen's endocrinologist later changed his mind, deciding that Jorgensen's condition differed fundamentally from homosexuality, and many other prominent scientists and doctors agreed, provoking intense controversy. (Meyerowitz 2002: 171) The importance of this controversy can only be understood in reference to the extreme intensity and pervasive ubiquity of the stigma of homosexuality up to the 1950s. Such extremis provokes compassion for Jorgensen's attempts to distinguish herself from homosexuality, and empathy for those who saw her as an opportunist who condemned homosexuals in order to earn the acceptance of straight society.

There was a vigorous debate in the U.S. homophile movement of the 1950s as to whether homosexuals should embrace Jorgensen. Some gay men and lesbians denounced those who felt themselves to be of the opposite sex, criticizing them for acting like "freaks," bringing disrepute to those gays and lesbians trying to live quietly within heterosexual society. (Meyerowitz 2002:179) Such attitudes were prevalent within the gay and lesbian community at the time. (Meyerowitz: 2002:185) Meyerowitz relates one such debate from 1953:

In 1953, for example, ONE magazine published a debate among its readers as to whether gay men should denounce Jorgensen. In the opening salvo, the author Jeff Winters accused Jorgensen of a "sweeping disservice" to gay men. "As far as the public knows," Winters wrote, "you were merely another unhappy homosexual who decided to get drastic about it." For Winters, Jorgensen's story simply confirmed the false belief that all men attracted to other men must be basically feminine," which, he said, "*they are not.*" Jorgensen's precedent, he thought, encouraged the "reasoning" that led "to legal limitations upon the homosexual, mandatory injections, psychiatric treatment – and worse." In the not-so-distant past, scientists had experimented with castrating gay men.

(Meyerowitz 2002:177) Meyerowitz portrays the tension between homosexuals and transsexuals as based upon the tension between passing and openness, what she terms "gender transgression," suggesting that it may have derived from class differences and differing class tolerances for "swish" and "butch." (Meyerowitz 2002:178) She notes that some gays and lesbians associated gender transgression with undignified and low-class behavior, while "fairies" and "butches" were more readily accepted in working class communities. She also relates a survey from the 1960s that found that more than two-thirds of a sample of almost 300 gays and lesbians in the homophile movement considered those who asked for sex-change surgery to be "severely neurotic." (Meyerowitz 2002:183)

Kay Brown of Transhistory.org ("Transsexual, Transgender and Intersex History") has set forth a long chronology of the ejection of those whom we now know as "transgendered" from gay organizations starting in the 1970s, and the following material is drawn from her website. (Brown 2001) She notes that transgendered people played pivotal roles in gay organizations of the late 1960s and early 1970s, including

the Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activists Alliance (“GAA”). While the original goals included complete acceptance of sexual diversity and expression, by the early 70s the gay men’s community returned to the assimilationist strategy as the lesbians turned to separatism and radical feminism. There seemed to be no room for transgendered people in either camp. (Brown 2001) For example, in 1971 the GAA wrote and introduced a bill to the New York City Council to protect homosexuals from discrimination. The bill did not include any explicit protection for transsexuals.

In early 1970’s, Beth Elliott, a founder and active member of a number of gay and lesbian organizations, was Vice-President of the San Francisco chapter of the Daughters of Bilitis. Brown describes the events as follows:

Late in her term of office her transgender status became a point of contention at the West Coast Lesbian Conference, where she was outed and vilified for being a MTF transsexual. The complaint was that Beth Elliott had insinuated herself into a position of power over women as a patriarchal man, a propagandist ploy that was to become common when attacking other transgendered people. At the conference she was forced to stop her music concert due to the catcalls from the audience by women that knew nothing more about her than that she was transsexual. She was required to sit through a popular vote of the attendees to determine whether they would let her finish her set. In the weeks and months to follow she was further vilified and even betrayed by women who had once called her friend. The treatment she received led her to become “stealth” for many years after.

In 1973, during a gay rally, a well-known transgender activist was followed on the stage by a lesbian separatist who denounced transgenders as men who, by “impersonating women”, were exploiting women for profit. Later in the 70s, lesbian separatists made an issue of the presence of lesbian-identified transsexual women in their movement. Central to the conflict was a transsexual recording engineer working at Olivia Records. Lesbian separatists threatened a boycott of Olivia products and concerts. On the edge of profitability, the company eventually fired the engineer. Attempts to exclude transsexuals also characterized the 1977 San Francisco Gay Pride Parade.

Two years later, Janice Raymond, a lesbian academic, wrote *The Transsexual Empire*, a book based on her doctoral dissertation. (Raymond 1979) Raymond argued that the phenomenon of transsexuality was created by fetishistic males who sought to escape into a faux stereotypical femininity, with the connivance of male doctors who thought that femaleness could be medically created and homosexuality medically vitiated. Although “male to constructed female” transsexuals claimed to be against the stereotyped gender system by virtue of their escape from stereotypical masculinity, they in fact added force to the binary system by merely escaping from one stereotype to another, or at most mixing together different stereotypes, rather than advocating true gender freedom. They were not political radicals, as they claimed, but reactionaries seeking to preserve a stereotypical gender system that was already dramatically changing due to the political action of 60s and 70s feminists and gays. Transsexuals were, according to Raymond, sheep in wolf’s clothing.

Henry Rubin argues that the creation of a separate transsexual identity and community emerges in the 1970s in the U.S., when it was made repeated clear that butch lesbians were no longer welcome within the lesbian feminist movement. (Hemmings 2002:92).

The blatant lack of regard for transgendered identities can also be found in gay rewriting of history. For example, Dr. Alan L. Hart was born October 4, 1890 as a female named Alberta Lucille Hart. After graduating from the University of Oregon Medical College in 1917, Hart consistently presented a male

persona to the world for four and a half decades until his death in 1962. In the 1920s, Hart consulted a psychiatrist, underwent a hysterectomy and changed name to Alan L. Hart. The majority of Hart's biographers insist upon viewing the doctor as a woman in disguise, without regard for Hart's self-identification as a man, medical treatment and legal documentation. (O'Hartigan 2002)

In his 1976 book, *Gay American History*, for example, Professor Jonathan Ned Katz categorized Hart as "clearly a lesbian, a woman-loving woman [who] illustrates only too well one extreme to which an intelligent, aspiring Lesbian in early twentieth-century American might be driven by her own and her doctor's acceptance of society's condemnation of women-loving women." O'Hartigan also refers to Pat Califia's statement that "Katz's book 'is unfortunately tainted with a heavy dose of transphobia.'" She also brings up Katz's footnote in his *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* about an unpublished paper: "*Transsexualism*": *Today's Quack Medicine: An Issue for Every Body*, and noting his statement "An historical study needs to be made of the medical and autobiographical literature on 'transsexualism'; it will, I think, reveal the fundamentally sexist nature of the concept and of the associated medical treatments." O'Hartigan also sets forth, disapprovingly, an explanation for referring to Hart as female by Susan Stryker: "As an historian favoring 'social construction' approaches to questions of identity, I have reservations about using the word 'transsexual' to refer to people before the mid-20th century who identify in a profound, ongoing manner with a gender that they were not assigned to at birth."

It is against this backdrop that, in the early 1990's, the term "transgender," a neologism with an unclear meaning, began to be included in the GLB coalition. The term was used as an umbrella term referring to transvestites, crossdressers, transsexuals, and other gender-variant people, who seemed to have similar and interlocking interests with gay men and lesbian women, and that had caught the imagination of the public through sympathetic portrayals of transsexuals such as Christine Jorgensen, Renee Richards and Wendy Williams. Originally, the term "transgender" was intended by its coiner to refer only to certain non-operative transsexuals, but later mutated to refer to anyone whose gender performance varied from the norm. This more open meaning, however, conflicted with the goals of the coalition builders, which was to capture public sympathy by appealing to an image of homosexuals as people "just like" the majority of U.S. voters, middle class people (or people with middle class yearnings), who held steady jobs, had long, loving relationships with partners of the same sex, and who wanted the same lives that the majority of U.S. voters wanted. As a result, some gays find themselves agreeing with straights who see in transgenders an assault on normative reality, as in the following diatribe thinly veiled as humor:

There's something a little annoying about transgendered people insisting that they be called whatever sex they want to be called. . . Like so many transgendered people, Califia is like a bush resenting the grass for not calling it a tree. Well, if you've got bush and no trunk, are you really a tree? Before all the MTF (male-to-female) transgendered people flick their compact mirrors shut and take up their pitchforks (with matching handbags, of course), I'd like to point out that there's a reality that exists outside of ourselves. If you wear brown and insist that I call it red because you say so, then you're asking me to skew an objective reality to your liking. Enrolling people into in an illusion unsupported by facts seems manipulative to me. . . So for all the Pattys, Pats and Patricks out there, you go boys/girls/TBA. Just don't back over us with your whoop-ass mobile because we didn't get your pronoun right. (Alvear 2003)

At the same time, some transgenders pass as heterosexuals and reject homosexual identity by calling their sexual relations heterosexual. The reaction of the gay and lesbian community, predictably, has been an attempt to limit the inclusion of transgenders. This reaction, which is often called "transphobia," is not a result of a psychological "phobia," but a result of the previously identified tensions between

accommodationism and gender ambiguity, and between homosexual identity and “passing.”

C. The History of Biphobia

In the 1960s, homosexuality began to be referred to by a number of terms, including “alternative lifestyles,” “sexual preference” and “sexual orientation.” Each of these had political connotations. “Alternative lifestyles,” a term connected with the counterculture of the 60s, connoted sexual freedom, if not free-for-all. “Sexual preference” connoted the right to choose one’s sexuality, rather than having it imposed by a heterosexist and monosexist society. “Sexual orientation” implied that one’s sexuality was inborn or fixed early in life, and is not subject to change. Furthermore, as noted in the introduction, the term “sexual orientation” implies that one is oriented in a particular sexual direction by a force or forces outside the will of the individual. It stands in direct opposition to the term “sexual preference,” which implies that sexuality is a matter of choice. When bisexuals, lesbians, gays and heterosexuals are placed under the rubric of “sexual preference,” sexual *choices* are represented. When placed under the rubric of “sexual orientation,” then bisexuality stands out as a failure of orientation or a dual orientation, a product of confusion, promiscuity or indecision.

Until the 1970s, however, there was little need to define the precise boundaries of “homosexuality.” While the groups had different origins, their common goals united them despite the differing interests that militated for separation.

The gay movement, heady with the sense of liberation following Stonewall, could afford to be utopian, and pronounced the goal of “free[ing] the homosexual in everyone.” Gay theorist Dennis Altman argued that the gay movement would bring “the end of the homosexual because “gay liberation will succeed as its *raison d’etre* disappears.” Such language and priorities created a climate in which bisexuality was not particularly problematized, though the only people calling themselves bisexual at that point were swingers and free love advocates. (Udis-Kessler 1995)

However, the balance changed, narrowing the homosexual movement to gays and lesbians. A separate category was needed, and “bisexuality,” first discussed as a concept in the 1960’s, was employed to demarcate the space. (Highleyman 2003) Though pockets of bisexual organizing were visible as early as the 1970s, and the “National Bisexual Liberation Group” was founded in New York in 1972, local groups did not begin connecting regionally and nationally until the 1980s. (Tucker 1995:3, 11) The bisexual movement of the 1970s to early 1980s organized around the principles of visibility and support. (Tucker 1995:1)

Bisexuals, who comprised both men and women, desiring both men and women as sexual partners, represented a problem in this schema.

Udis-Kessler also notes that bisexual movements are often gender specific. Much of bisexual history is bisexual women’s history, many bisexual activists are women who formerly identified as lesbian feminists, and bisexual women’s groups often have mailing lists ten times the size of bisexual men’s groups. Tensions between lesbian and bisexual women are understood as much more problematic than tensions between gay and bisexual men, caused by the politics of lesbian separatism. (Udis-Kessler 1995)

Bisexuality was seen as a sexual libertinism, politically and emotionally uninvested, rather than a political choice. (Hemmings 2002:74) Bisexuals were seen as privileged as non-homosexuals and stereotyped as amoral hedonistic disease carriers and disrupters of families, indecisive and promiscuous. (Ochs 1996:217) In 1987, bisexuality emerged in the mainstream press as a symbol of unbridled

promiscuity, threatening heterosexuals with the “gay plague” of AIDS. The bisexual was portrayed as “a homosexual posing as a heterosexual,” as “amoral as regards sexual candor,” less apt to feel the guilt that a gay man might “going both ways.” Newsweek featured “bisexuals” on its cover, suggesting that bisexuals were becoming the “ultimate pariahs of the AIDS crisis.” (Weinberg 1995:205)

In the gay and lesbian community, it was widely assumed that bisexuals are confused about their sexual identity, and that bisexuality was a pathological state. From this point of view, ‘confusion’ is literally a built-in feature of ‘being bisexual.’ As expressed in one study:

While appearing to encompass as wider choice of love object. . .[the bisexual] actually becomes a product of abject confusion; his self-image is that of an overgrown young adolescent whose ability to differentiate one form of sexuality from another has never developed. He lacks above all a sense of identity. . . . [He] cannot answer the question: What am I?

There was persistent pressure on bisexuals from the gay and lesbian community to relabel themselves as gay or lesbian and to engage in sexual activity exclusively with the same sex. It was asserted that no one was *really* bisexual (Weinberg, Williams and Pryor 1995)

In addition to this invalidation of bisexual identity, bisexuals face invisibility. (Tucker 1995) It is very difficult to find historical sources documenting bisexual history in any detail. Bisexuality doesn't really exist, bisexuals are really gay, and yet they are confused, can't make commitments or have mature relationships. (Sumpter 1991) As a middle ground, bisexuality is frequently demonized for supporting and generating fixed oppositional structures of sexuality and gender, and is dismissed in both epistemological and ontological terms. (Hemmings 2002:1) Within the gay and lesbian community, there are many monosexist assumptions:

- ☐ Assuming that everyone you meet is either heterosexual or homosexual.
- ☐ Automatically assuming romantic couplings of two women are lesbian, or two men are gay, or a man and a woman are heterosexual.
- ☐ Assuming bisexuals would be willing to “pass” as anything other than bisexual.
- ☐ Expecting a bisexual to identify as heterosexual when coupled with the “opposite” gender/sex.
- ☐ Expecting a bisexual to identify as gay or lesbian when coupled with the “same” sex/gender.
- ☐ Thinking bisexual people haven't made up their minds.
- ☐ Believing bisexuals are confused about their sexuality.
- ☐ Using the terms “phase” or “stage” or “confused” or “fence-sitter” or “bisexual” or “AC/DC” or “switchhitter” as slurs or in an accusatory way.
- ☐ Feeling bisexuals just want to have their cake and eat it too.
- ☐ Thinking bisexuals only have committed relationships with “opposite” sex/gender partners.
- ☐ Assuming that bisexuals, if given the choice, would prefer to be within an “opposite” gender/sex coupling to reap the social benefits of a “heterosexual” pairing.
- ☐ Expecting bisexual people to get services, information and education from heterosexual service agencies for their “heterosexual side” (sic) and then go to gay and/or lesbian service agencies for their “homosexual side” (sic).
- ☐ Thinking that bisexual people will have their rights when lesbian and gay people win theirs.

(Ka'ahumanu and Yaeger 2000)

A particularly striking example of biphobia occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Northampton, Massachusetts, a town renowned for its large concentration of lesbian and gay people and its atmosphere of sexual freedom. The town had held a lesbian and gay pride march for many years when, in

1988, members of the Valley Bisexual Network approached the Northampton Lesbian and Gay Pride March Committee, requesting that the name be changed to the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Pride March. The five or six members of the committee unanimously agreed to change the name for 1989. The overall community response was overwhelmingly negative. A vote was again held for the 1990 march, which retained the name change. The vote was denounced in the local lesbian press. An announcement was circulated in the lesbian community, making it clear that one was expected to choose between the lesbian “we” who have “created a community we care deeply about and are in danger of seeing . . . made invisible” and the bisexual interlopers. At the next meeting, attended by forty or fifty people, a clear majority confirmed the decision to revert to the former name, omitting “bisexual” from the title. (Hemmings 2002:66)

Hemmings underlines the fact that the debates about the inclusion of the term “bisexual” in the march emerged as a result of a conflict within the lesbian and gay community, not outside it. In the view of those who wished to include the term, its inclusion demonstrated that bisexuals were considered part of the core of lesbian and gay community, in need of allies, rather than being allies. In the alternate view on which its later exclusion was premised, the attitude towards bisexuals demonstrated a policy of “political affiliation,” based on the assumption that they are not part of the community. Bisexuals are then seen as claiming lesbian space that is not theirs. In the words of one writer, “We lesbians have worked long and hard to create safe communities for ourselves. Bisexuals are welcome to, and should do, the same. But do not try to grab what we have created.” Yet those arguing for the inclusion of *bisexual* in the title of the march do so on the basis of “group unity inclusion,” rather than the desire to create a bisexual community separate from the lesbian and gay community. This has created an ambiguity in the use of the often-used term *community*. For example, one committee member stated, after the 1990 march “The lesbian and gay community gets on very well with the rest of the community.” Does this refer to bisexuals, or heterosexuals? Does reference to “bisexuals” demarcate a space inside the lesbian and gay community, or outside it? (Hemmings 2002:71)

Another issue that must not be overlooked regarding biphobia is the fact that the term “bisexual” is not gendered. Bisexuals comprise both men and women. The lesbian “reclaiming” of the 1990 march was consistently viewed in terms of territorial rights, where lesbian territory is understood as a space free from men. A triumphant editorial in the local lesbian press was entitled “Take Back the March Night.” A connection was clearly being drawn between violence against women protested in Take Back the Night marches and bisexuals. This link was made more explicit in a “note to the editors” of the Valley Women’s Voice that read, “The following statement on lesbian occupied territory was in part sparked by the recent controversy in Northampton, MA surrounding the 1990 Gay/Lesbian Pride March.” The authors linked the Pride March debates with the rape of a woman following the Take Back the Night march in the same year, arguing that both marches will remain symbolic until the community becomes “LESBIAN OCCUPIED TERRITORY,” which is the only space that “can offer long-term protection from men, and create alternative women’s culture free from the violence of heterosexuality.” In the context of this lesbian separatist spirit, the inclusion of bisexuals was seen as intrusion. (Hemmings 2002:77)

The experience of Northampton was not unique. Hemmings notes that the lesbian and gay community in San Francisco marginalized bisexuals by omitting bisexual involvement in events, publishing letters of complaint from bisexuals under disparaging headings such as “Bis *Feel* Left Out.” In 1984, the San Francisco Bisexual Center closed. According to Hemmings, this was centrally because of its continued emphasis on nonmonogamy, group sex and SM (sado-masochism, now often called the “leather” lifestyle) as political expressions. The crowd booed the bisexual contingent in the 1985 San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Parade. (Hemmings 2002:157-159)

Concerns about bisexuals and bisexuality remain alive and well in the gay and lesbian community. In speaking about a recent survey about the disclosure of homosexuality by patients to physicians, a gay columnist noted that it found that the bisexuals surveyed disclosed less often than the gays and lesbians

surveyed:

That leads to the conclusion that for some purposes, it can be important to disaggregate gays, lesbians and bisexuals (to say nothing of transsexuals) and not talk of them as if they were a unitary "community" or have more in common than they actually do. . . . In other words, bisexuals face discrimination only because they sometimes behave like homosexuals.

But despite the identity of interests, there are important differences at the psychological and personal identity level. It seems clear from survey research that bisexuals understand their sexuality far differently from lesbians and gay men, and handle disclosure and relationship issues far differently, as the medical survey mentioned earlier suggests. . . . The question gays may then ask is how seriously these self-described bisexuals take their same-sex tricks, dates and relationships, or more fundamentally, how seriously they take the homosexual component of their sexuality.

Such findings suggest troubling obstacles for gay activists on a range of issues, from efforts to reach bisexual men with HIV information to attempts to solicit bisexual support for same-sex marriage. They also remind us that in many ways the recently coined "GLBT community" is more a semantic artifact or political term-of-art than anything like an actual community. (Varnell 2003b)

Such views reveal great discomfort in the gay and lesbian community with bisexuality and bisexual inclusion. Nonmonogamy, polyamory, pansexuality, and SM conflict with the middle-class gay/lesbian claim of being "just like you." At the same time, bisexuals comprise two sexes, unlike the gay community or the lesbian community, threatening to homogenize and dilute homosexual identity. Many bisexuals also have social privileges because they can pass as straight. The reaction of the gay and lesbian community, again predictably, was an attempt to limit the inclusion of bisexuals. This "biphobic" reaction is not a result of a psychological "phobia," but a result of the historical tension between homosexual identity and passing, between monosexism and bisexism.

III. Conclusion: Too Queer And Not Queer Enough

Are biphobia and transphobia examples of phobias – irrational fears? No, because such heterosexist attitudes are all too rational, and they mirror the social tensions inherent in the historical formation of the U.S. homosexual identity. The gay and lesbian communities have worked long and hard to have same-sex desire be seen as an orientation, rather than a preference, a viable, open and healthy identity alternative to heterosexuality, rather than a stigma to be hidden. The path to this end has largely been gender appropriateness and accommodationism, with the significant but single exception of same-sex preference. Political progress has been won by the argument that gays and lesbians are "just like you," albeit with the minor exception of sexual orientation. Bisexuality, with its escape hatch marked "heterosexual desire," is viewed as assuming that homosexuality is something to be avoided, constituting a step back into the closet. Thus, in this view, being bi is a way of being gay or lesbian in denial. Ochs describes this as the "aristocratization" of gay and lesbian identities, and cites as reasons for this phenomenon the psychological difficulties of coming out as gay or lesbian and the need to fight heterosexism. (Ochs 1996) She attributes biphobia to prejudice and invisibility, similar to Garber. (Garber 1995:89) Such a heterosexist view would analyze a bisexual man's identity by saying "you are not bisexual, you are a gay man who has not yet reconciled with his gayness, who thinks he needs an out into the safety of the straight world." Thus, gay men and lesbians, who have been designated "queers" by a world unforgiving of social difference, find bisexuals insufficiently willing to step out of the closet, stop "passing" for straight, take the consequences of being "queer," and in so doing recoup the rewards of changing society to accept people of non-heterosexual

orientations. Bisexuals must learn to accept their essential “queerness.”

Marjorie Garber notes her discussion with a gay male theorist regarding her work on bisexuality, *Vice Versa*. This theorist expressed some concern about what a fully theorized bisexuality would do to the project of gay and lesbian studies. Gay and lesbian studies have sought to describe homosexuality not as the “other” of heterosexuality, but as a locus for cultural critique, social reevaluation and change, but now perhaps bisexuality would repolarize hetero- and homosexuality. Gay and lesbian studies have also famously claimed the cultural production of figures such as Virginia Woolf, Oscar Wilde, and Anne Rice – what if we now had to recontextualize them as bisexual? (Garber 1995: 28) Yet they had both opposite-sex and same-sex relationships. Both Harry Hay, founder of the Mattachine Society, and Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, had long relationships with opposite-sex partners as well as same-sex partners, but are rarely considered bisexuals. (Garber 1995:74) Reconceptualizing gay history as bisexual history could erase homosexual identity.

Transgenders, too, have stepped into the safety of the closet. They also erase gay and lesbian identities by becoming, literally or figuratively, the opposite sex, creating or attempting to create heterosexual identities by their inconvenient insistence that “gender identity” has nothing to do with “sexual orientation.” One lesbian writer described transsexuality this way: “Gays and Lesbians have struggled for decades to be able to name ourselves and to BE ourselves. But now in our own community we are expected to applaud Dykes rejecting womanhood and embrace men taking it over.” (Dobkin 2000) To a transsexual man, it would say “you are not a transsexual man, you are a lesbian woman who has mutilated herself in order to change a woman-loving woman into a more acceptable figure.” Some within the bisexual and transgender community see in these attitudes an attempt to reconfigure bisexuals and transgenders into gays and lesbians gone wrong, to erase bisexual and transgender identities, and to absorb the differences into a greater gayness.

An example of this heterosexist attitude can be found in the recent reaction of some gays to two recent court rulings in favor of transsexual marriage. Here is one gay columnist's reaction:

Both cases will be cited as gains for GLBT rights. The New York Times quoted Lynne Gold-Bikin of the American Bar Association as saying of the Florida case, “This is a major victory for alternative lifestyles.” But you have to wonder.

It is not clear how the Florida ruling affirms any “alternative lifestyles.” The whole focus of the case was the effort by a transsexual male to prove that he should not be viewed as a woman in a same-sex relationship, but a nice, normal heterosexual guy in a heterosexual marriage – in short, that there was nothing “alternative” about his life or his lifestyle at all.

And far from benefiting gays and lesbians in any way whatsoever, the ruling conspicuously reaffirmed opposite-sex, heterosexual marriage as normative and exclusionary.

Ironically, the Florida transsexual's case was argued by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) which won by convincing the court that its client, although born a woman and married to a woman, was not female and therefore not a lesbian. How this supports lesbian rights is obscure.

. . . So gay and lesbian people gain nothing from heterosexual transsexuals being able to marry. But transsexuals, all transsexuals, would gain from gay

marriage. (Varnell 2003a)
i.e., just like mainstream America. Bisexual websites, however, teem with nonmainstream positions, such as polyamory and polysexuality. Transgenders include many flamboyant drag queens, drag kings, male and female impersonators, androgynes, gender benders and genderqueers. These elements contradict the claim that gays and lesbians are "just like you," and must be culled, in the opinion of many, in order to have a successful campaign of acceptance by the larger society.

As "homosexuality" became increasingly more accepted, freeing itself from shame with the 1968 Stonewall Riots, and the 1974 declaration of the American Psychiatric Association ("APA") that homosexuality was not a mental disorder, the more accepted homosexual elements began to agitate for more social tolerance and civil rights in law. In order to do so, like any political creation, it had to drop the lead weights represented by the less accepted and frankly unacceptable elements of the group, particularly effeminate transsexuals and promiscuous bisexuals. Transsexuality and transgenderism are still considered mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association. Homosexual rights groups, while committed in principle to inclusion of all homosexuals, including bisexuals and transgenders, began to be led by the more politically savvy gays and lesbians to espouse a platform that, consciously or unconsciously, served the interests of the normative homosexual elements, but not necessarily bisexuals or transgenders. Over time, the "GL" portion of the platform became increasingly acceptable to the population at large, both through increased education and desensitization of the public and by disavowing the more unacceptable elements of the movement. At the same time, this political success fueled a separatist culture, which bisexuals and transgenders threatened to dilute and homogenize.

The movie "Flawless^{*}" (1999) contains a fictional scene in which drag queens and transsexuals confront gay Republicans regarding the gay pride parade. While fictional, the scene accurately portrays the tensions described here.

Gay Republican #1: Thanks for meeting with us gentlemen. We've been discussing this year's gay pride parade, and we felt that it would be important, well, a good idea, to show a united front...

Gay Republican #2: Synthesis I believe.

Gay Republican #1: Right, we felt as gay republicans, we thought it would be a really good idea if we could all come together and show the world our *likenesses*, not our differences. To celebrate the, um...

Gay Republican #2: ...synthesis...

Gay Republican #1: ...right, synthesis...

Transsexual #1: You're very good. Sorry, go ahead.

Gay Republican #1: We could march together as a united brotherhood....

Transsexual #2: What about the sisterhood, honey?

Gay Republican #2: ...march on foot, no floats.

Transsexual #3: Yeah, you think if you have no floats we won't do drag because we can't march in heels. Well, let me tell you something, honey. We can march to Lake Titicaca and back in stilettos.

Gay Republican #1: Hey let's just calm down then.

Transsexual #1: Aren't you guys the same group that raised a shitload of money and gave it to Bob Dole's campaign and he sent it back, didn't he?

Gay Republican #2: No, no, that's because he would have lost support of the Christian right.

Transsexual #1: Exactly, because you're gay. You're gay, that why he sent it back. Aren't you ashamed? All right, listen, you are right. We *are* different, but not in the way that you mean. We're different because you are all ashamed of us, and we are not ashamed of you. alright, because as long as you get down on those banana republican knees and suck dick, honey, you're *all* my sisters and I love you, I do. God bless you and fuck off.

As Hemmings notes, bisexuality and transsexuality are both abstracted as the middle ground of sexual and gender culture. "Within contemporary queer and feminist terrain, both are understood to embody both the worst aspects of heterosexuality and the best of queerness." They are seen, on the one hand, as heterosexual apologists, and, on the other hand, as transcending stereotypical oppositions. They are traitors, insufficiently feminist or queer, yet also positioned at the cutting edge of debates about gender, sexuality and political meaning. (Hemmings 2002:99)

From these historical circumstances, one can begin to see the outlines of the emerging split between "GL" and "BT." It involves a classic case of political conflict of interest, which nonetheless appears to us, looking ahistorically at individual experiences, to be a psychological phenomenon specific to certain aberrant individuals within the gay and lesbian community, called "biphobia" or "transphobia." This is not to deny that florid phobias never have as their subjects bisexuals and transsexuals, but it is my instinct to restrict such terms to the far end of the spectrum where, along with fear of germs or public places, one starts wearing gloves and a mask and stays home to avoid contact with the open sky.

As we have seen, the historical circumstances of the construction of homosexuality in the U.S. created power relations, which called both for a more inclusive grouping and, at the same time, for a more exclusive grouping. These power relations created the four different groups of which the homosexual community are composed, assigning them different identities, different resources, different spaces in the political sphere. It is these social constructions that created the environment for identity politics within the homosexual community. To the extent that this identity politics has created prejudice and discrimination within the community, it might be more accurate to call it "heterosexism" or "internalized heterosexism" rather than dividing the community even further by referring to "biphobia" and "transphobia", as if bisexuals and transgenders are outside of the community. I understand the argument that "biphobia" and "transphobia" are useful terms because they label phenomena different in some ways from "homophobia." However, to so define them is to demarcate different spaces inhabitable only by those who are thereby indelibly marked as "not one of us." I prefer to go with Rust's understanding: "Heterosexism refers to the whole constellation of psychological, social and political factors that favor one form of sexuality over another." (Rust 1996:26) Prejudice in gay and lesbian communities against bisexuals and transgenders is heterosexism because it is an accommodationist attempt to disavow these more "radical" forms of sexuality. As Riki Anne Wilchins (1997:15-17) has noted of this phenomenon of identity politics:

Alas, identity politics is like a computer virus, spreading from the host system to any other with which it comes in contact. Increasingly, the term has hardened to become an identity rather than a descriptor. . . . The result of all this is that I find myself increasingly invited to erect a hierarchy of legitimacy, complete with walls and boundaries to defend. Not in this lifetime But at some point such efforts simply extend the linguistic fiction that real

identities (however inclusive) actually exist prior to the political systems that create and require them. This is a seduction of language, constantly urging you to name the constituency you represent rather than the oppressions you contest. It is through this Faustian bargain that political legitimacy is purchased.

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