

The Right Way To Be LGB Or T?

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Abstract

Back in 2009 I asked the the question if there were a right way to be LGB Or T. As I consider the personal difficulties of my past few years, especially those difficulties relating to community orthodoxies externally imposed on me by others, I find myself revisiting the idea behind my now four-year-old question. And [...]

Article

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[Figure] Image: One Way sign

The questions from that old post I still believe are worth contemplating are these: Is there a right way to be gay? To be lesbian? To be bisexual? To be transgender? By that I mean, are there universal constructs that many in these subcommunities of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community embrace as models for the entireties of their subcommunities?

Well, I'm not as immersed in the gay subcommunity as perhaps I should be to know what the gay "universal" constructs are, but I am aware of some "universal" models in the lesbian and bisexual subcommunities.

For example, in the lesbian subcommunity, there's some typing in play, with labels like lipstick lesbian, Chapstick lesbian, femme, fierce femme, blue jean femme, pillow queen, butch, soft butch, stone butch, dyke, andro-dyke, sporty dyke, power dyke, bulldyke, diesel dyke...we could go on and on with lesbian labels -- and that's not even getting into the womon-born-womon and radical feminist labels that are often connected to separatist lesbianism.

Per a certain orthodoxy of being lesbian, it seems though, you must be able to be subcategorized into a recognized subtype of lesbian to be a true lesbian.

And for a second example I'm familiar with, in the bisexual subcommunity I know there are some who want to impose a 50-50 rule for attraction to the "opposite sex." That, meaning that one is equally attracted to those who identify as male, and those who are identified as female. In this model of

bisexuality, if let's say one is attracted more to women than men, then one isn't considered a true bisexual because one is "supposed" to be equally attracted to men and women.

In other words, there are some in the broader LGBT community who want to impose universal standards of what it is to be lesbian, gay, or bisexual on broader communities, and deviation from these standards isn't acceptable or "allowed."

In the trans subcommunity of the LGBT community, as well as in the T folk who don't consider themselves as transgender or part of the LGBT community -- we have similar kinds of orthodoxies. Among the trans orthodoxies there are those who could be identified as trans who seek to impose standards of "the best" way one is to identify, and the "right" way one is supposed to transition...and even if one is actually a transsexual or not.

In my transition, I've had classic transsexuals tell me I should reconsider transitioning because they don't consider me to be a true transsexual, as well as trans men and transsexual women tell me to "hurry up and transition already." In these cases, trans people (or people self-identified as classic transsexuals, women of transsexual history, etc.) appear to have embraced constructs of what it is to be transsexual and/or transgender, and have attempted to externally impose a model of what it is to be transsexual and/or transgender on me.

And, of course, it's not just me that they attempt to impose their models on, but on the entire trans community -- or trans subcommunity of the LGBT community.

To quote my friend Gwen Smith from a few years back:

*It's okay to have a construct that works for oneself. The problem is when you impose it, unwillingly, on others... We should be the *last* to impose constructs involving identity or expression on others.*

And yet "we" do impose constructs on others in and out of our own subcommunities and communities.

The "should" I wish I could impose on our broader community is the one of embracing the diversity of people and experiences within all of our broader communities and subcommunities. Embracing our differences while searching for our commonalities -- those are "shoulds" I could live with.

But then, I'd be imposing my construct of the perfect LGBT community on everyone too.

Enh, whaddoya'do?

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