

SKEETER



BITES

BY SKEETER SANDERS

It's been slightly over six years since I took the occasion of my 40th birthday to come out of the closet as bisexual after living exclusively as a gay man for 20 years. And those six years have proven to be far more liberating than my first coming-out in 1978 — and at the same time, very sobering.

It's been liberating in that I have acknowledged my capacity to fall in love with and have a fulfilling relationship with virtually anyone, regardless of whether the other person is male, female, or transgendered. To put it another way, whereas most people's relationship circle of vision is either 90 or 180 degrees, mine is a full 360.

But it's also been sobering in that I've come to realize the incredible lengths that some in the queer community, particularly gay men, will go to "prove" that "we were born this way" and that there are only two basic sexual orientations — hetero and homo.

Particularly galling to me has been the search what has become known as the so-called "gay gene," a search based on the theory that one's sexual orientation is determined long before one is born.

The reason for this theory — and the effort to prove it — is obvious: if solid evidence can be found that sexual orientation is genetically determined, homophobes' insistence that it's merely a lifestyle choice that can be reversed would be thoroughly discredited once and for all.

I firmly believe that we don't choose our sexual orientation any more than we can choose the color of our skin. Having said that, I nonetheless believe that the

search for the elusive "gay gene" is a colossal waste of time and resources, for scientists will inevitably have to confront these questions:

*If homosexuality is genetically determined, then how do you explain the existence of bisexuals — unless there's a separate "bi gene" floating around in their DNA?*

If homosexuality is genetically determined, then how do you explain the existence of bisexuals — unless there's a separate "bi gene" floating around in their DNA? For that matter, why is all this "gay gene" research focused exclusively on gay men? Where are the bi men? Where are the lesbian and bi women?

Why do so many gay men feel threatened by the notion that sexual orientation is not set in genetic concrete but is, in fact, fluid? After all, what about all those previously heterosexual men who have come out either bi or gay in the 30 years since Stonewall?

Could this discomfort be because bi men are likely to endure far less virulent homophobia than exclusively gay men? Could it be because lesbians and

bi women are also likely to encounter far less virulent homophobia than gay men?

Let's face it: there is overwhelming statistical and anecdotal

evidence that homophobia is far more prevalent among men than among women. Opinion polls by Gallup, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Blade* and a host of others show a clear gender gap in public support for queer civil rights — women are far more supportive of our rights than men are.

Conversely, not only are male opponents of queer civil rights far more numerous than female opponents, they're much more violently passionate about it. Indeed, statistics kept by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Community United Against Violence, and other agencies that monitor anti-gay violence show the vast majority of such incidents are male-on-male.

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# Op-Ed

Out in the Mountains

a lot of straight men get turned on by the thought of two women getting it on with each other but are totally repulsed by the thought of two men doing the same thing?

The answer by now should be obvious: homophobic straight men are sexist in the first place — they equate gay men with women. In their minds, all gay men are sissies (and even many gay men ridicule drag queens and Radical Faeries for the same reason).

More importantly, they often regard sensitive straight men who aren't macho as "sissies," too. It's no accident that many of those

long-haired straight male hippies in the '60s were branded "faggots" because they dared to reject being macho. Even Tom Leykis, an unabashedly liberal radio talk-show host, regularly brands such sensitive straight males "pussies" on the air.

Homophobia, the irrational fear of homosexuality, is inextricably rooted in the fear of the feminine. There's simply no way to get around it. It's time that we attack directly the machismo that feeds on it. ▼

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