

When Sexual Fluidity Is Turned Against Us

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For the first time in decades, the "Born This Way" approach to sexual identity is losing its popularity among queer folks. Many of us don't believe that sexuality is innate and stagnant. We believe that certain things, environments, and people can influence the way that we express and identify sexually. We're also beginning to believe that sexuality is fluid. It can grow and evolve over the course of one's lifetime.

In my opinion, the reason why the born this way approach to sexual orientation is falling out of fashion among queer folks is because the LGBTI movement has made huge strides since the Stonewall Riots. While there are undoubtedly homophobes out there, including our vice president Mike Pence, being queer, in general, is more accepted. We now have the right to marry, among other protections to make sure



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But during the Gay Rights Movement of the late '60s, '70s, and '80s, before the LGBTI community had any rights whatsoever, our humanity—our basic sense of personhood—was denied. Because of this, the AIDS epidemic spread and political officials/medical professionals didn't care that the virus was spreading, because it was a "gay disease". So the gay movement needed to have an immediate argument to embrace why it was okay to be gay. They needed to have a reason that straight people should care that gay men were dying at an alarming rate.

Hence the "born this way" approach to sexuality gained popularity. It illustrated that being gay is natural, innate, and there's nothing anyone can do to change that. Therefore, anti-LGBTI folks should accept and help us. The born this way approach also discouraged conversion camps and other anti-LGBTI therapies that attempted to switch a gay/queer person's sexual orientation, by revealing that it would be a futile attempt.

queer? Let's say I did. What's wrong with that?" The answer, of course, is nothing. We're living in a time where we no longer want to justify our gayness; we want to embrace our queerness.

Now, I do believe that the vast majority of gay men and women are indeed "born this way". I think there is something genetic, hormonal, or in another way biological. However, for sexually fluid folks, I can't confidently make the same claim. I could make the argument that there's a biological underpinning that allows sexually fluid people to be open, but I'm not sold that there is a "bi gene". I think upbringing and environment do play a large role. Research from Dr. Michael Bailey and Dr. Lisa Diamond, which has looked at sexual fluidity, supports the idea that sexuality is flexible and influenced by one's environment.



Unsplash/Denin Lawley

The issue now is that anti-LGBTI groups, of course, still believe that same-sex attractions are immoral. And the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific

Therapy" (SAFE-T). They're looking at some of the work from Dr. Diamond, which has illustrated that sexuality isn't immutable for all people, especially women. Never mind that Dr. Diamond never wanted her research to be used this way, as a means to "change" people's sexual orientation. She simply wanted a world that was less stringent about labels. She wanted queer folks to have the freedom to pursue relationships with people of any gender without nicely fitting into neat gay and lesbian boxes. Nevertheless, the ATSCI is using Dr. Diamond's research as justification for attempting to sway gay and bi people's attractions to be more heterosexual.

The ATSCI obviously doesn't realize, that while sexuality is fluid, it doesn't mean you can force your attractions. Sexual fluidity evolves over time and manifests itself in ways we can't predict or expect. We don't actively choose the person we're going to fall in love with. We simply fall in love. Speaking to a therapist who will shame us for our same-sex attractions won't change that.

And I can say from first-hand experience, that actively suppressing same-sex attractions does not work. I tried for years to be straight. I dated and loved many women over that time, but I was miserable while I was in denial. I'd lay awake at night in bed, crying, confused, hating myself. Only once I came out and accepted that I was bi, was I able to be happy. I was then able to love myself.



unsplash/Marie S

So fluidity does not mean you can choose to actively suppress an aspect of your identity. Nothing about the definition of sexually fluid begins to imply that.

The ATSCI new attempt at conversion therapy will be a failure. It will be damaging and harmful to gay and bi people, like all the other attempts at conversion therapy.

There needs to be a paradigm shift in the way that LGBTI people fight for equality. It should no longer be, "I was born this way". It should be, "I don't care if I was born this way, it's who I am now". Only then, can we fully embrace the notion of sexual fluidity. Only then, can we fight against the anti-LGBTI groups who are using the notion of sexual fluidity against us.



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