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Gender Discrepancy in Asexual Identity: The Effect of Hegemonic Gender Norms on Asexual Identification

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Gender Discrepancy in Asexual Identity:
The Effect of Hegemonic Gender Norms on Asexual Identification

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Asexual - “someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction” (Mardell 2016).
Not to be confused with lack of romantic attraction.
Can be an umbrella term for all identities on the asexual spectrum.
Cited at 1% of the population (Wellsing 1994), but reported high as 4% of individuals aged 18-24 (GLAAD 2017).

Identifying Asexuality

- Asexual Census data for gender distribution, sex assigned at birth.
- Twelve, 15-45 minute, semi-structured interviews.
- One hour focus-group discussion.
- Data analyzed using a modified grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss).
- MAXQDA to code data for recurring themes.

Methods

- Little attachment to gender norms, especially related to masculinity
- Do not want to be sexualized according to outward presentation
- Pressure to conform to sexual standards, especially before discovering asexuality

Do masculine stereotypes dissuade individuals from identifying as asexual?

- Asexuality is often not considered compatible with masculinity
- Social pressure to be masculine — (hetero)sexually active
- Less communication about identity — less likely to learn about asexuality

How do gender expectations affect individuals identifying as asexual?

- Lower stigma for not having sex, sometimes expectation that feminine people do not want/desire sex
- Greater communication/discussion of identity — more likely to be exposed to asexuality
- For genderqueer people: exposure to identities from queer community

In Progress

- Further analysis of interviews
- Coding and analysis of 600+ collected surveys
- Completion of discussion and conclusion of honors thesis paper

Future Work

- Account for more variables such as race, country, age, etc.
- Greater depth of recording individual experiences
- Capture perceptions of non-asexual identifying people of how asexuality fits with gender norms.

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