

Chapter 2

Erasing Invisibility: Asexuality in the Media

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ABSTRACT

Asexuality is one of the lesser-known LGBT+ identities. Despite this, some asexual representation has begun to enter the mainstream media in the United States. Reviewing not only LGBT+ representation, but also LGBT+ activism of the past shows how representation has advanced, but also how far it has to go. Several tropes have emerged in asexual representation that need to be addressed. Reviewing the very little representation for asexuals shows there are many opportunities for media to tell new, better stories about LGBT+ individuals. Overall, the author advocates for not only more diversity in asexual and LGBT+ representation, but for identities to not be the main character trait.

INTRODUCTION

With the continued morphing and growth of the LGBT+ acronym, many are unaware that the A is not for ally but for asexual. Asexuality is a relatively new identity on the LGBT+ front, with only limited research currently available and even less representation. The most common definition of asexuality is a person who experiences little to no sexual attraction. It is not a conscious choice, such as celibacy. Even without sexual desire, romantic relationships are possible. A human being will have a romantic and sexual orientation. There are many identities on the asexual spectrum, but this chapter will focus primarily on asexuality. As asexuality

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emerges into the mainstream, the identity needs robust and diverse representation in the media to combat the lack of visibility and stereotypes that surround asexuality.

Representation has positive benefits for individuals, especially for members of minority groups. In a study about LGBT+ representation, McInroy, and Craig state, “Participants highlighted that television creates a common dialogue that is widely accessible and can contribute to opportunities for meaningful understanding” (2017, p.38). While the quality of these representations can vary, representation is still important for individuals searching for identity. Asexuality as an emerging identity in the public eye has begun to see representation but has many hurdles and tropes to overcome in creating strong representation in media. Asexual representation in diverse, authentic, and timely media would strengthen not only the asexual community but the LGBT+ community as well.

WHAT IS ASEXUALITY

How underrepresented is asexuality? One nickname for asexuality is the “Invisible Orientation”. A popular description of asexuality is a lack of sexual attraction/desire for anyone. But like most identities, asexuality is a spectrum, not a static position. There are many different aspects of asexuality not explored in this chapter that should be mentioned. In addition, it is important to separate sexual orientation from romantic orientation. Below are the identities that fall on the asexual spectrum (Pasquier, M, 2018).

Sexual orientations:

Asexual – not sexually attracted to or desiring sexual relationships

Greysexual- experiences sexual attraction minorly

Demisexual- experiences sexual attraction only through a strong emotional bond being established

Romantic orientations:

Aromantic – not romantically attracted to or desiring romantic relationships

Greyromantic- experiences romantic relationships minorly

Demiromantic- experiences romantic attraction only through a strong emotional bond being established

The author acknowledges that sexual and romantic identities evolve rapidly, and the above definitions are as of 2022. In addition to orientations, sex repulsion can play a part in an asexual identity. Some asexuals are repulsed by sex and avoid it

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