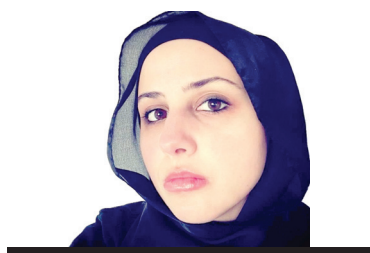


COLUMN

Asexuality deserves recognition

Content creators: all sexual identities should be part of the conversation



Amani Hamed
STAFF WRITER

Disclosure: words in purple are defined in glossary.

As an **aromantic asexual**, I feel neither romantic nor sexual attraction to other people.

Now, you may be wondering why you're reading about someone who doesn't experience sexual attraction in an issue about sex. The answer is that exclusion of narratives like mine from conversations surrounding romance, sex, relationships and consent is damaging.



Someone said, from that silly joke, 'oh, this seals it, I am somewhere on the ace or aro spectrum.' I started sobbing. This kid realized who they were because of some silly joke that I posted.

CJ George
SJSU junior and behavioral sciences major

In a society that revolves around **heteronormativity** and **allonormativity**, asexual people often feel invisible. We're given the message that romantic and sexual attraction are an intrinsic part of being human and our experiences and feelings aren't just invalid, they're wrong.

Asexual people are infantilized, pathologized and erased. We face obstacles to acceptance not only in heteronormative spaces but even within the queer community.

Luckily, asexual people, or aces, are finding community

online and seeing more representation in media thanks to ace and queer content creators.

Cody Daigle-Orians, now famously known on social media platforms TikTok, YouTube and Twitter as "Ace Dad," didn't discover his own asexuality until he was 42 and married. His husband introduced him to Tumblr and though he had known asexual people in the queer community, he hadn't read much about it and had been identifying as gay.

"It was on Tumblr where I was reading people talk about their experience of asexuality and getting a deeper understanding of what that meant," Daigle-Orians said in Zoom call.

Now, he said his acceptance of his asexuality strengthened his marriage and his other relationships. Daigle-Orians and his husband are **polyamorous** and call their relationships with their other partners a "constellation."

He said everyone's happy and sharing their authentic selves.

As a **homoromantic asexual**, Daigle-Orians enjoys talking about relationships and asexuality on his TikTok account "Ace Dad Advice."

Daigle-Orians said asexuality isn't a liability and compared it to being a feature rather than a bug.

"It's a feature and I have these people in my life who also see it that way and who treat me with love and respect and kindness," he said.

CJ George, San Jose State junior and behavioral sciences major, not only discovered they were asexual and aromantic, they helped their queerplatonic partners discover their own asexuality.

Asexual and aromantic people

are slowly getting more visibility in TV with the help of shows including Bojack Horseman and Steven Universe.

George said in a Zoom call. "I want to be more than friends' has always rubbed me the wrong way. Why is being friends considered less than?"

Daigle-Orians stressed that every relationship requires communication and respect.

"Every relationship is a negotiation, whether you're ace or allo, it's a complex negotiation of your wants, needs

and boundaries," he said. "Asexuality isn't going to stop you from having a relationship that you want. Your asexuality doesn't limit you."

Julie Sondra Decker began reading

that with asexuality as if it means abstinence," Decker said.

Asexual people have been thought of as newcomers, a recent addition to the queer community.

Though asexual people may not face much of the terror visited on our LGBTQ+ siblings, asexual people face harassment, intimidation, erasure, discrimination and "intentional interventions in our lives trying to make us be different," Decker said.

Queerness and belonging in the queer community, Daigle-Orians and Decker agree, shouldn't be defined by oppression.

"It's not like you have a punch card of how much oppression you have to have shown that you have endured before you're allowed to have support," Decker said, "We're not taking from finite resources, we're acknowledging that we're all harmed by heteronormativity."

CJ George said they have connected with fellow asexual Spartans through the LGBTQ+ Discord channel and enjoy

posting about asexuality and aromanticism on social media.

Recently, they posted a joke on social media and someone responded by saying that they felt seen and they now knew they identified strongly with being on the ace or aro spectrum.

"Someone said, from that silly joke, 'oh, this seals it, I am somewhere on the ace or aro spectrum.' I started sobbing," George said. "This kid realized who they were because of some silly joke that I posted."

Cody Daigle-Orians said he sees his social media connection to the asexual community and his position as an ace elder, someone who can give advice and talk about relationships and life experiences, as paying younger asexuals back for being vocal on social media and helping him recognize his own asexuality.

"I see this work as paying back what I was given by young people in the community who knew a lot more than I did and shed light on my understanding of myself," Daigle-Orians said.

Julie Sondra Decker said she enjoys seeing messages from people who realize they're asexual or aromantic after seeing her videos on YouTube or reading her book.

"It's wonderful, because there's so much relief in those comments," Decker said. "Usually, people have struggled for a long time, wondering what's wrong with them."

Asexual people are shrugging off the invisibility that's hindered us in self realization for too long.

In being proud, in making ourselves visible, we are finding community, fighting hetero/allonormativity and claiming our space in conversations about sex, gender, boundaries, consent and relationships.



But, George said the lack of representation of platonic friendships or queerplatonic partnerships is annoying.

"It definitely feels kind of weird, saying 'we're just friends' or 'getting friendzoned,'"

Glossary of terms related to Queerness

Asexual: a person who feels little or no sexual attraction

Aromantic: a person who experiences little to no romantic attraction

Homoromantic: a person who is romantically attracted to members of the same gender

Alloromantic: a person who experiences romantic attraction

Allosexual: a person who experiences sexual attraction

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities; includes the often implicitly held idea that heterosexuality is the norm and that other sexualities are "different" or "abnormal"

Allonormativity: the idea that all people are allosexual — that is, that all people experience sexual attraction

Polyamorous: people who have the desire for multiple consenting intimate relationships at the same time