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### Asexuality

Asexuality is the lack of sexual attraction toward others, or low or little interest in or desire for sexual activity. It may be considered a sexual orientation or the lack thereof. It may also be categorized more widely to include a broad spectrum of asexual sub-identities. <sup>[1]</sup>

Foucault says that a related assumption about sexuality is that sexuality is not only something one does, but an identity, or something one is, usually biologically.

While scholars of sexuality have theorized the social constructions of sexuality and sexual identity, there remains a relative paucity of academic literature exploring the identities and experiences of people who do not experience sexual attraction or desire. Individuals, who identify as asexuals, challenge the notions of the ubiquity of sexuality and present a unique opportunity to explore the negotiation of identity and desire. Asexuality, a relatively recent emergent sexual identity, has been developed with the aid of internet technologies which have allowed for the formation of community by otherwise geographically isolated individuals. <sup>[2]</sup>

Asexuality is different from celibacy and abstention from sexual activity, which are behavioral and generally motivated by factors such as an individual's personal, social, or religious beliefs. Sexual orientation, unlike sexual behavior, is believed to be "enduring". Some asexual people engage in sexual activity despite lacking sexual attraction or a desire for sex, due to a variety of reasons, such as a desire to pleasure themselves or romantic partners, or a desire to have children. <sup>[1]</sup>

Donna Williams in her book *Somebody Somewhere* writes about her asexuality, which she describes as the lack of sexuality. She explains how she learned to feign and perform physical attraction and sexuality without having any desire, because she had accepted society's view that 'having no sexual feelings was extremely abnormal' and feared that other people might find out she was asexual. She says that people can't imagine that as a normal state anyway and nobody's talking about it because the lack of it is meant to mean there's something even more abnormal. <sup>[3]</sup>

Asexuality is not a new aspect of human sexuality, but it is relatively new to public discourse. In comparison to other sexualities, asexuality has received little attention from the scientific community, with quantitative information pertaining to the prevalence of asexuality low in

numbers. S. E. Smith of *The Guardian* is not sure asexuality has actually increased, rather leaning towards the belief that it is simply more visible.

There is significant debate over whether or not asexuality is a sexual orientation. It has been compared and equated with hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD), in that both imply a general lack of sexual attraction to anyone; HSDD has been used to medicalize asexuality, but asexuality is generally not considered a disorder or a sexual dysfunction (such as anorgasmia, anhedonia, etc.), because it does not necessarily define someone as having a medical condition or problems relating to others socially.

The initial study that gave empirical data about asexuals was published in 1983 by Paula Nurius, concerning the relationship between mental health and sexual orientation. Results showed that asexuals were more likely to have low self-esteem and more likely to be depressed than members of other sexual orientations; 25.88% of heterosexuals, 26.54% bisexuals (called "ambisexuals"), 29.88% of homosexuals, and 33.57% of asexuals were reported to have problems with self-esteem. In a 2013 study, Yule et al found that asexual male participants were more likely to report having a mood disorder than other males, particularly in comparison to the heterosexual participants. The same was found for female asexual participants over their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>[2]</sup>

## References

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- [3] Kim Eunjung, (2011), *Asexuality in Disability Narrative*, DOI: 10.1177/1363460711406463