

Toronto Aces & Aros: Discussion Notes: Grey and Demi Identities – Tuesday, December 13th, 2022, 7-9pm, Virtual

Around 10 participants

Introduction

- Land acknowledgement and respect guidelines
- Introductions: Name, pronouns if comfortable sharing, any access needs, topics you'd like to cover, icebreaker: If you could dye your hair any colour, with zero effort and zero consequences, what colour would you pick, if any?

Discussion

Q: What does the grey area mean to you?

- Demi aro - never experienced romantic attraction without being friends 1+ years. Idea of experiencing romantic attraction towards stranger is strange - it's a progression of friendship
- Online dating seems strange
- Able to ask queer folks how and when they start feeling attraction to people - spectrum is important to this person because when they were questioning, there wasn't an idea of an umbrella, it was ace or het

Q: Do you identify as anywhere along the "grey area" of the ace and/or aro spectrum?

- Greyromantic, only experiencing romantic attraction rarely and weakly – doesn't usually act on it
- Demi - theoretically want sex, romance, intimacy, but if not actively attracted it's not a huge thing, no libido
- Definitely asexual and sex repulsed - doesn't think that will change. Thought demi was the default. Moving further towards aro side than allo side.
- One person has a theory that more people would identify as demisexual if it was more known and more accepted
- "liminal space" is frustrating = invalidation from allos and gatekeeping from ace and queer
- Related to hypothesis: "Demi is normal" - probably a lot of people don't associate demisexuality with attraction but think it's about choices, behaviour - that it "just means you don't sleep around"
- Someone who experiences attraction to a person might feel rejected if the other person takes longer to possibly experience attraction - narrows the dating pool
- A comic that helped one person: "Demi" by Jess Sheridan, found at <http://jess-sheridan.com/sequential-art/demi/>
- One person wants cuddles and romance but is not attracted to their husband or any person

- When speaking to other people, find out that more people are within the aro/ace spectrum than we think - many people just go along with normative relationships because they don't know there are other options - this person is now able to explore what they were taught vs what they want
- One person asks: Might be attracted to person but not want to do anything, is that demi?
 - Led to a discussion of other labels
 - Resources shared:
 - A (probably incomplete) list of labels along the ace and aro spectrums: <https://www.asexuals.net/asexual-spectrum/>
 - A visual infographic about the ace and aro spectrums: https://www.reddit.com/r/asexuality/comments/slcguk/a_visualization_of_the_asexuality_spectrum_v3/
 - No pressure to pick a label, and it's still valid even if it changes over time

Q: Did a grey area identity affect how you came to an ace and/or aro identity? Did it make it more difficult to find an identity that fit you?

- Greyromantic and experiencing some level of attraction made it difficult to think they may be aromantic at all
- With the confusion around demi and whether most people are demi, it made it harder for this person to figure out whether they were asexual at all - discovering the demi label made them realize that it wasn't "the norm" and that they're ace
- One person thought something was wrong with them when finding out what their peers were doing
- Finding demi label was a lightbulb moment for one person

Q: How has this identity affected your personal relationships, such as romantic and close platonic relationships?

- Weak romantic - just don't get into relationships
- Worry about being lonely - totally valid, one other person finds surrounding self with ace and aro communities to be helpful.
- One person can fall in love with a friend without ever wanting sex, but for the other person, they see no sex and assume no romance
- One person finds that a lot of people wouldn't consider a romantic relationship without sex, but they DO validate a sexual relationship without romance - so they do separate them, but only in one way. This person has come to terms with the idea that attraction will likely never happen for them - and if it did, how would they even fit it in their busy life?

Q: How has this identity affected your relationship to the ace and/or aro community?

What about to the community outside of ace and aro identities?

- Gatekeeping from ace community
- One person questions each new queer label they add to themselves - am I actually this, or am I just trying to make myself more queer to avoid the gatekeeping?
- One person had queer and gay friends stop being friends because of their ace identity, and these 'friends' tried to convince them that they were a closeted gay person - and straight people say "what do you mean romance without sex"

- One person has always felt affinity to queer community - feels like a safe space for people who aren't "conventional" - but feel conflicted because if they were in a relationship, it would be coded as heteronormative, and they don't want to be in a queer safe space - so demi label was helpful
 - However they feel uncomfortable taking up space in "LGBT+" calls for art because they haven't faced the same discrimination, for example
 - Discussion about how queer community is moving away from gatekeeping based on whether you've faced discrimination, and more towards the joy experienced by embracing identity

Q: How do grey and demi identities affect the idea of normativity?

- Hope it smashes idea of normalcy, nobody fits into cookie cutter of normal
- Just the fact that we exist and share our existence in whatever way and to whatever extent we feel comfortable doing so - this helps to share the idea that there are other options out there

Other

- Discussion branched out to "What is creative nonfiction?"
 - Basically any nonfiction writing that uses elements of storytelling (such as plot or characters) that are typically found in fiction
 - Example shared of one type of creative nonfiction is the Hermit Crab Essay – taking any form of writing (such as a shopping list) and having it embody the message that you're trying to convey.
 - Popular example of this is "We regret to inform you", found here: <https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/455/we-regret-to-inform-you>
 - One member's own example: <https://qtmag.ca/issues/flirt/the-quick-start-guide-to-dating-your-biromantic-demisexual> - they took the idea of "pairing mode" from their headphone instruction manual and applied it to their identity