

Asexuality and Autochorissexualism (Identity-Less Sexuality)

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Abstract I present evidence that target-oriented paraphilias may occur in some who report no sexual attraction for others or those who identify as asexual. One target-oriented paraphilia in some asexual people is a disconnection between their identity and a sexual target/object. I name this phenomenon *autochorissexualism* or “identity-less” sexuality.

Keywords Asexuality · Autochorissexualism · Automonosexualism

Introduction

In a series of papers on asexuality (Bogaert, 2004, 2006, 2008), I questioned whether some individuals who report no subjective sexual attraction for others, a common definition of asexuality, have unusual sexual interests (i.e., paraphilias). Here (cf., Bogaert, in press-b), I describe a paraphilia that is consistent with a lack of subjective sexual attraction for others and involves a “disconnect” between an individual’s sense of self and a sexual object/target. I also present evidence that this type of paraphilia may characterize some individuals who evince no subjective attraction for others. Using Greek nomenclature—typical in the naming of sexual and other phenomena—I have called this paraphilia *autochorissexualism*. Thus, autochorissexualism is sex without (*choris*) one’s self/identity (*auto*) or “identity-less”

sexuality. It may be best viewed as an example of an alteration of typical target-oriented processes in human mating (Blanchard, 1991; Freund & Blanchard, 1993).

Evidence in favor of autochorissexualism and/or other paraphilias occurring in some people without subjective attraction is the finding that some asexual people masturbate (Bogaert, in press-a; Brotto, Knudson, Inskip, Rhodes, & Erskine, 2010). Brotto et al. found that 80 % of self-identified asexual men and 70 % of self-identified asexual women reported having masturbated. Using a national sample from Britain, Bogaert (in press-a) found that approximately 40 % of people who reported no sexual attraction for others had masturbated in the last month. Thus, a significant percentage of asexual people masturbate and this raises the possibility that self-stimulation occurs to consistent themes, either in fantasy or pornography.

Brotto et al. (2010) also provided direct evidence that some asexual people have sexual fantasies. However, the content of these fantasies was not investigated. Evidence for content/themes in asexual people’s fantasies occurs from Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), the most popular website devoted to asexuality. As reviewed by Bogaert (in press-b), these fantasies are often consistent with autochorissexualism.

One AVEN participant reported: “I almost invariably think of fictional characters. My thoughts have never involved people I know, and they have never involved myself” (Vicious Trollop, 2005).

Another states: “It’s scenes in 3rd person; I may have a generic male character which is kind of me, but it’s still separate from me, mentally watched rather than participated in” (Teddy Miller, 2005).

Still another reports: “The point isn’t voyeurism, either: the scene doesn’t turn me on because I’m *watching* it, it turns me on because it’s sexually charged (and I’m acting as an emotional leech). I may have a character that I identify more with...but it’s

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not a stand-in for me; it acts like a viewpoint character in fiction” (Eta Carinae, 2005).

As suggested by these quotes, asexual people’s fantasies often do not involve their own identities. Also, when their fantasies involve people, these individuals are unknown to the asexual person or are fictional characters; in both cases, these individuals are not directly connected to the asexual person’s real-life identity.

Given that some masturbating asexuals seek out stimulation through fantasy or pornography, arousal/pleasure mechanisms of their nervous system are engaged by this sexual stimulation. Yet, this stimulation is disconnected from their identities: It is, at least in part, an *identity-less* sexual arousal. Thus, these individuals still seem to retain a lack of *subjective* sexual attraction to others (or anything), despite physical arousal and seeking out persistent themes in fantasy and pornography. Subjective in this case refers to the *I* or the *me* in one’s identity as a person. Moreover, it might be argued that asexual people’s bodies (or more correctly, aspects of their nervous systems related to arousal) have a “sexual orientation” of sorts, but they themselves, or their identities, do not (see Bogaert, 2006, in press-b).

The clinical literature on paraphilias contains examples of similar forms of sexuality disconnected from one’s identity. These paraphilias often reflect alterations in the typical targeting process in human sexual attraction. Target processes can be argued to comprise part of a mate recognition system that animals use to seek out and choose reproductive partners (Bakker, 2003). A typical target sequence in humans can be summarized by the following sentence: “I am attracted to him/her.” In those who have alterations in typical target processing, the *I* and/or the *him/her* in this sentence do not operate in traditional ways.

An example is *automonosexuality*, in which one targets his or her sexual interests inward to oneself instead outward toward others (Rohleder, 1907). Thus, one is sexually attracted to oneself. Automonosexuality is linked to some forms of transgenerism (Blanchard, 1989, 1991; Hirshfeld, 1948). For example, a type of automonosexuality is autogynephilia, where a man is sexually attracted to himself but as a woman (Blanchard, 1989; Lawrence, 2011). I have discussed the possibility that some people who report a lack of sexual attraction have a form of automonosexuality (Bogaert, 2008, in press-b) or attraction to oneself. Autochorissexuality may be an additional target-oriented variation that occurs in people who report a lack of attraction for others. Thus, these types of target-oriented paraphilias may occur with some frequency in those who report no sexual attraction for others.

Presently, an understanding of autochorissexuality and automonosexuality in asexual people is derived from self-report, either in the form above—i.e., cases from the web-based forum

of AVEN—or from disclosures of asexual people themselves. More research is needed using different methodologies, including standardized questionnaires, developmental histories, and psychophysiological assessment.

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