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2024

### A+: A Film by Asexuals for Asexuals

Gabi Benintendi  
*Syracuse University*

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*A+*: A Film for Asexuals, by Asexuals

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

Gabi Benintendi

Candidate for Bachelor's Degree of Fine Arts  
and Renée Crown University Honors  
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Honors Thesis in Acting

Thesis Advisor: Ricky Pak, Assistant Professor of  
Acting

Thesis Reader: Thom Miller, Associate Professor and  
Assistant Program Coordinator of Acting

Honors Director: Dr. Danielle Smith, Director

## **Abstract**

*A+* is a narrative short film, shot on digital, co-written and starring Gabi Benintendi. The story follows Daphne Greco, a high school junior who hopes she, as many others do at her age, will be asked to the junior prom by her longtime crush and close friend. However, after one distressing health class Daphne comes to realize she might not experience relationships in the same way that her friends, peers, and own brother do.

This film explores asexuality; the A part of the acronym LGBTQIA+. The project began in reaction to the lack of asexual representation created by asexual artists on television and film. The writers of this film, Bea Nowsinki and Gabi Benintendi, leaned on their own experiences in discovering their asexuality and wanted to emphasize the importance of self-discovery and the value of all connections in one's life, especially the ones that are not romantic or sexual.

## Executive Summary

*A+* is narrative short film about Daphne Greco, a junior in high school anticipating her junior Prom. She is currently enrolled in a health class which is on its sexual education unit. She is in this class with brother Charles “Arlo” Greco and her crush/best friend, Oscar. While in sex ed she realizes that she seems to experience and think of sex far differently than her classmates. In her confusion, she goes to Arlo for advice, but he tells her that she just needs to take things at her own pace, and it will come to her eventually. Unsatisfied with this answer, Daphne anonymously asks her health teacher, Mrs. Tank, about disinterest in sex. Mrs. Tank explains the term asexuality to the class and Daphne begins to think she may identify with the label.

Not long after, Oscar makes a move and kisses her while they are hanging out. After it happens, Daphne is still thinking about being asexual and begins doing some research. Right after, Oscar asks her to prom. Daphne is both excited and nervous about any expectations he may have for the night. While getting ready for prom, Daphne explains to Arlo that she believes she is asexual and comes out to him. Arlo reassures her that it will be okay and that she is perfect as she is.

Daphne descends the stairs and sees Oscar waiting for her. He gives her roses and asks her if she wants to be his girlfriend. She explains that yes, she would, but that she recently accepted her asexuality and needed to tell him before entering a relationship. With that new information, Oscar explains that he would no longer want to pursue a romantic connection, but that it will not affect their platonic relationship in any way. They go to prom together as best friends and the film ends.

We created *A+* as a reaction to the lack of asexual representation in television and film. There are few examples of asexual media made by asexuals, and for asexuals. We took our own

lived experience and combined it with what the asexual community wanted to see on film. We distributed a Google Form survey to online asexual forums to understand what asexual narratives were missing from media today. Considering our own experiences, along with those survey results, we created a film that encapsulates all the joys, isolations, and complexities of this identity.

While filming, I got to explore how it feels to be an asexual actor performing as an asexual character, a chance I may never have again. It was emotionally taxing as well as rewarding. It was cathartic for me to reclaim this narrative as an asexual person. I hope that it can be an inspiration to other asexual actors and artists to go make their own work and stories. That is our best hope for good, holistic asexual representation in the long run.

## Acknowledgements

I want to, firstly, thank the crew and cast of *A+*. Taking 4 days of your time to travel through snow and sleet to make this film come together is beyond appreciated. Everyone came to the project with incredible energy and passion, and I could not have asked for better collaborators.

A special thank you to Ricky Pak for being my advisor and part of this project from the beginning. I could not have asked for a better support system and your advice was invaluable to bringing the project together and keeping me from stress overload. Thank you, Ricky!

Thank you to Whitney Pak who stepped in to play Mrs. Tank. We could not have done it without you!

Thank you, also, to Thom Miller, not only for being my reader, but for always pushing and supporting me in telling my story.

And finally, a biggest thank you to my co-creator, best friend, and roommate, Bea Nowinski. To think that we grew up 7 minutes apart, never meeting, just to be assigned as roommates at a university 9 hours away, is always wild to me. It feels truly like fate, and I am deeply grateful that all our time together has culminated into this wonderful film.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

I will never forget the first time I heard the word “asexual” said aloud on television. I was sitting in my living room, a junior in high school, watching *Bojack Horseman* on my laptop. I had eagerly binged three seasons and was on to the fourth. But little did I know this Netflix original about a cartoon horse was about to change my life.

One of the main characters, Todd Chavez, sits across from his close friend Bojack Horseman. Throughout the season, Todd had been discovering his sexuality while dating his long-time crush, Emily, and attempting to understand why his attraction seemed different from those around him, and from Emily herself. Emily could not understand why Todd seemed interested in her emotionally but disinterested sexually. When she questioned Todd about what label he used for his sexuality, he stated “I think I might be nothing” (*Bojack Horseman* 3,12). Todd begins a journey to discover what “nothing” means and learns the term asexual. He goes through a few episodes discovering what being ace (short for asexual) means to him, and then finally, while sitting with Bojack, declares proudly, “I am an asexual person. I am asexual” (“Hurray! Todd Episode!” 24:05).

At that moment, I teared up and shut my computer. At the time, I had been questioning if I, like Todd, was also asexual. I had been terrified at the possibility, and I hesitantly researched the label when I felt brave enough. But here, right on my laptop screen, was a piece of art that stated “asexual” with pride and confidence. I had never seen anything like it, and it was enough to reach through my fears, rip down my walls, and have me admit out loud that I, too, was an asexual person.

As time passed, I became much more involved in the asexual community. I joined forums and online groups and, across them all, Todd Chavez unanimously stood as a beacon for ace



representation. He was widely adored and had helped many people, including myself, discover their asexuality. In my excitement, I researched Todd's voice actor, hoping to find a real person, not just a cartoon character, who shared in my identity. The actor, Aaron Paul, while supportive of the ace community and proud to voice a character that meant so much to us, did not identify as ace himself. I was disappointed. While appreciative of the fictional character and storyline of Todd, I wanted a real person I could look up to and see living my identity, out and proud, in the industry I was training to enter.

It is no secret that queer people want queer representation in film and TV. We want queer stories told where they can reach a broad audience. But what does proper representation look like? Can Todd Chavez be considered fully representative of the ace community when the actor portraying him does not share in his identity? If not, then how do we ensure that queer characters are cast with queer actors? And is that, in the end, of utmost importance?

There has been a lot of discussion, both in the wider acting community and here at Syracuse Drama, surrounding these questions on casting. Answering them is not as cut and dry as one might hope when considering the complexities of human sexuality and gender. I decided to explore these questions by creating my film, in collaboration with Bea Nowinski, a film major in the class of 2024, who also identifies as asexual. Together, we wrote a script that encapsulated our experience of asexuality, and I was cast to play the lead, Daphne Greco. Now, I would have the opportunity to play a role that aligned with my identity for the first time. I intended to explore how I could effectively represent my community and how to bring my own experiences to the role.

## Chapter 2: Current Asexual Representation

When I first arrived here at Syracuse, I decided that I wanted to bring my identity to the art that I made. I wanted to tell asexual stories and represent anyone in the drama department and beyond who might be ace too. I was incredibly passionate and searched for asexual representation in any media I consumed. Unfortunately, the amount of representation is limited. Every year GLAAD publishes a study called “Where We Are on TV” where they research characters who are series regulars from streaming services and cable television. They calculate how many of the characters they research fall under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. For the 2022-2023 study, GLAAD was happy to announce they had the highest number of asexual characters yet, at a staggering total of 8 out of 596 (“Where We Are on TV Report,” 2022 – 2023). That is less than 1% of all characters on television. However, this is much higher than when I first came to Syracuse in 2020, where there was a total of 1 out of 773, and that was, of course, Todd Chavez (“Where We Are on TV Report,” 2020 – 2021). But, besides *Bojack*, the other most popular examples are *Sex Education* and *Heartstopper*.

*Sex Education* is a Netflix original that centers around the character Otis exploring his sexuality and helping others in his high school to do the same by providing sex therapy. There was an episode that became popular in asexual spaces online. It was a single episode featuring a minor character, Florence, who does not return to the show. Florence was only on screen for around 5 minutes out of the 50-minute episode and during that time she grapples with not understanding why she does not seem to be as obsessed with sex as the rest of her peers. She goes to Jean Milburn, the school's sex therapist, to explain her experience saying she has “no connection to [sex]” and she “thinks [she] might be broken” (“Ep.4.” 46:34). Jean suggests that maybe Florence is asexual and explains the definition: not experiencing any sexual attraction.

She also adds that “sex doesn’t make us whole and so how could you ever be broken” (“Ep.4.” 47:11). I love that quote and I appreciate that *Sex Education* had an educational approach to introducing asexuality; it fits well into the context of the show. But still, the actress was not ace and after Florence left, asexuality was not a topic on the show until season 4 when the character Sarah “O” Owens was introduced. Since none of the writers nor Sarah’s actress identified as ace, the *Sex Education* writing team brought on asexual activist and influencer Yamin Benoit to inform and guide the character’s creation. This was a great step in bringing effective representation to TV. But, after the season aired, there was a general dislike for O’s character, and many, including Benoit herself, thought she and her asexuality were underdeveloped. After the season aired, Benoit tweeted, “I wanted to share something important regarding O’s character [...], as someone closely involved in creating her and the story. I’ve finally had time to watch the season and was disappointed to see that some important moments were cut out or changed” (Benoit, 2023). Hearing this from Benoit herself was discouraging. Even when writers took steps to get ace voices in the room, they ultimately overlooked those voices, diminishing ace representation in the show.

Recently, the television show *Heartstopper* came out with its second season. The show itself is based on a series of comics by the same name written by Alice Osman, an aromantic and asexual author. While the series focuses on the queer relationship of its two main characters, Nick and Charlie, it has another side character who identifies as aroace (aromantic and asexual), Isaac. While Isaac’s actor does not identify as ace, in season two his entire storyline is spent discovering his asexual identity. Within it, Isaac slowly comes to understand that he lacks attraction toward others. There is a beautiful scene where he sits and observes his friends, all with their partners. He realizes he is alone and feels no need to be in

partnerships like them. While Isaac does not come out to his friends in this season, we do see him researching asexuality and the writers even included him acquiring a copy of *Ace* by Angela Chen. *Ace* is a hugely respected book in the asexual community which essentially breaks down the label and what it reveals about society's views on sexuality. Having that included signaled to me that this story was coming from someone deep in the community. In a BBC interview, Alice Oseman revealed she wishes she had this representation when she was growing up, as it would have helped her significantly. She said, "If I'd seen asexual characters when I was a teenager, I would have understood that part of myself so much earlier, and it would have saved me a lot of anguish, pain, and confusion" (BBC 2023). Bea and I had similar intentions in creating our film, and you can feel that intention in *Heartstopper*.

Looking back at the three examples here, there is a wide breadth of asexual voices involved. There is *Bojack*, who did not have an ace performer for Todd, and, as far as I could find, no ace writers either. But the writers still managed to create the first and most respected example of asexual representation. There is *Sex Education*, which spread some information about asexuality, but fell short in its attempt to include actual ace voices and missed the mark in its portrayal of O. And finally, there is *Heartstopper*, a show written and produced by an aroace person, which incorporates asexuality deeply its second season plot. Seemingly, whether an asexual voice was involved or not, results were varied. This had me thinking a lot about the nature of representation and what truly counts in creating a good story about an underrepresented community.

### Chapter 3: Deciding on Our Story

Considering that asexual representation limited, Bea and I had a big responsibility on our hands to write a good ace story. If this got screened or submitted to festivals, there would be high likelihood that this would be someone's first exposure to asexuality. Therefore, we knew we wanted it to be, in some capacity, educational. We also wanted to emphasize that this was a piece by ace people, for ace people. Most of the representation we have is not written or performed by an ace person, so how can we make sure our community feels truly seen from our script?

Bea and I decided to take to the internet to ask other asexual folks that very question. We released a Google form on different asexual forums asking: "What kind of story about asexual people do you want to see?" We got over 40 responses to sort through with a huge variation of responses. Someone wanted a satire, another wanted a family drama, and another even suggested a spy thriller. We could not do all of that, so we raked through for a common denominator. We found three categories of requests. With every category, responders emphasized wanting the ace protagonist to be presented as normal and accepted. Someone even responded with, "I want a story that portrays us as human." As an ace person, at times we can feel alienated or less than human, so I wanted our ace protagonist to feel whole. That brings us to the first category of story requested on the form: a script about the isolation and alienation of being asexual. We received requests for a script that focuses on the struggles of coming to terms with asexuality and how it isolates you from allosexuals (allosexual meaning someone who is not asexual). Responders wanted their struggles to be showcased on screen and shared.

The next two requests were at odds with each other. One was a call for a romance story. Someone asked for a romance between two asexuals and another wanted a love story between an asexual person and an allosexual person. To clarify, this is possible because aromantic and

asexual are different identities. This is explained in the film as well, but the theory of the split attraction model “recognizes that sexual and romantic orientations are not the same” and that “people can experience sexual and romantic attraction differently” (Doll, 2021). Therefore, someone can be asexual and still want romantic partnerships, and many do. So, alloromantic asexuality was an aspect we kept in mind.

Conversely, the last category called for a plot about aromantic asexuals or, more accurately, a plot about friendship. One responder framed it as wanting a story that did not “devalue ‘just friends,’ but [explored] how friendships are as precious and fulfilling as romance.” Another response that stuck with me was “All I want is a storyline that avoids framing romance as the ultimate goal or some sort of miracle for an ace person to find.” I appreciated the emphasis on romance not being the end-all-be-all. Our society heavily values romantic and sexual love. But for asexual people, many of whom (even if they are not aromantic) struggle with traditional romantic relationships, friendship and family bonds take on an extra amount of importance. Because of this, the script needed to show that platonic and familial bonds can be as fulfilling, supportive, and loving as any romantic partnership.

With all these survey answers in mind, we began to brainstorm our plot. We honored what the broader ace community wanted while also keeping to our artistic process. So, how would we include it all? That became the question we strove to answer as we dove into the writing process.

## Chapter 4: The Writing Process

We had a lot to tackle, and we made a checklist from the survey. These were some points we included:

- (1) Having a normal, human, whole protagonist.
- (2) Showcasing some of the isolation and struggle that comes with realizing you are asexual.
- (3) Portraying an asexual character experiencing romance.
- (4) Emphasizing that romance is not the height of connection, and other connections can be just as fulfilling.

The first was not an issue. We decided that creating a “normal,” human character would be easiest in a coming-out, coming-of-age story. Sex is part of many coming-of-age movies and television shows, so this would be an opportunity to share a piece of our coming-of-age and do so in a genre that was familiar and nostalgic. For the second point, we went back and forth. We did not want this story to be a tragedy. There are struggles with being asexual in a world where it is not the norm, but it does not prevent us from forming bonds with others, which is a negative assumption about asexuality. We toyed around with the idea of our main character revealing feelings for their crush who, in turn, was repulsed by their asexuality, but that felt cliché. We also pivoted and thought about showcasing another queer person being dismissive and not accepting of asexuality, which is another issue in the LGBTQ+ community. There is frequent discussion about whether asexual people should even be included under the LGBTQ+ umbrella, and, therefore, ace people can feel isolated from the queer community. We decided to steer the narrative away from the idea that asexuality sentences you to a life of loneliness, disconnectedness, and ridicule from others. Instead, by portraying someone discovering their

sexuality, the internal feelings of isolation could be highlighted, without external forces bullying and/or othering our protagonist. We chose to maintain our character's internal confusion and feelings of isolation and pare down on any external discrimination.

Combining the next two bullet points of showcasing romance, but not glorifying it, was more difficult to tackle. Coming out to a partner or crush would be important to include, and that concept would contain romance, but what would happen after our protagonist came out? We did not want outright, repulsed rejection or confusion from the romantic interest. That would lead to bullying or othering. We chose that our main character would have a close friend or family member they would then lean on after the rejection, therefore showcasing the strength of bonds outside of romance. Then we thought, what if there still was a rejection, but it was cordial and kind, showing that even if a romantic connection is not formed, a platonic one can still exist and be just as strong? Then the idea of a sex education class came to mind. It would serve as an educational tool for our audience and the romantic interest, so that, when our protagonist came out to him, he would understand what asexuality is and be able to make an educated decision about his connection to our protagonist.

### **The Final Script: *A+***

These ideas, combined with Bea and I's real-life experiences, were the foundations of what inevitably became our film: *A+*. We decided on the title *A+* for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it was a play off the setting being a sex ed class. So, *A+* as in "aced it" or alluding to school, but it was also meant to represent the end of the acronym: LGBTQIA+. The *A+* stands for asexuality and aromanticism and the + is the many other identities that fall under the queer umbrella. We named our protagonist Daphne Greco, Daphne based on the Greek myth of Daphne and Apollo. Many aces claim Daphne is an asexual mythological figure because she decided to be



turned into a tree rather than have sex with Apollo. The health class she is in enters its sex education unit, and this, along with an impending prom night, become the background of the plot. She takes this class with both her brother, Charles “Arlo” Greco, and her crush/best friend, Oscar. Oscar is the romantic interest of the script. We were sure to show that ace people can still have crushes, even if they are unsure about sex.

The scene that catalyzes Daphne’s internal conflict takes place in class. As part of sex ed, Daphne must sit or stand depending on whether she agrees with a series of statements. The statements are posed by her teacher, Mrs. Tank, and they encapsulate different ideas about sex. The last statement in the series is, “I think a healthy romantic relationship means having sex.” The entire class stands in agreement while Daphne sits, thoroughly confused. This scene represents the isolation that can come from asexuality. It is also the catalyst for Daphne’s internal confusion over her identity. After realizing in class that she does not experience sex the same as her peers, Daphne goes to Arlo for advice. Through the entire script, we made Arlo a pillar of support. Bea and I both have brothers, Bea with two younger brothers, and I with two older brothers. They are incredibly important both of us, and Arlo was a way to include them in the script while giving Daphne a loving, supportive non-romantic connection. In this moment, he explains that everyone experiences sex at their own pace and suggests that she may feel sexual attraction toward Oscar. Daphne admits she had never thought of him sexually. At a later sex ed class, Mrs. Tank allows her students to anonymously asks questions by writing them on a notecard. Daphne writes, “What if I’m not interested in sex?” and turns it in. Mrs. Tank then explains asexuality to the class. Daphne does some research, including watching *Bojack Horseman*, and concludes that she identifies with asexuality.

Oscar ends up asking Daphne to prom and she says yes. On prom night, as she gets ready, she gets nervous about her newfound asexuality and any expectations Oscar may have for the night. She comes out to Arlo, and he is supportive through and through. Right after, Oscar arrives to take her to prom and asks her to be his girlfriend. She decides to come out to him right then and there, and we wrote that he chooses to not be in a relationship with her. After the respectful refusal, he says he still wants to take his best friend to prom. They happily go together as just friends. We did not make the story over-the-top optimistic by having Oscar be 100% okay dating an asexual person without any questions or qualms. That would not be accurate to a majority of ace's experiences. We also did not want Daphne to feel she needed to compromise on her needs or identity. Instead, we considered, what would an ideal "rejection" looked like. Ideally, we thought, Oscar would know himself well enough to understand that an asexual partner would not work for him. He would, therefore, respectfully say that he did not want a partnership, but that does not mean their friendship needs to end. A platonic connection can still be maintained, and the maintenance of a purely platonic relationship is not seen as any less meaningful than a romantic one.

That is a general summary of *A+*. This story did a good job at incorporating everything that was requested on our Google Form, while also imbuing it with Bea and I's voices and experiences. Writing it was a healing experience, especially Daphne coming out to Arlo. We created a hopeful script whose message spoke to the importance of connections that are not romantic or sexual.

## Chapter 5: Being Ace in Front of the Camera

Once the script was complete, Bea and I entered pre-production. This included securing funding, location scouting, getting equipment, finding cast and crew, and so much more. For this thesis, I will focus on what it was like during production, when I was performing in front of the camera.

We filmed in two different locations, the first was the DKA house and the other was American High. We filmed all the scenes in the house first, before relocating to the high school. This meant that I filmed the highly emotional scenes in the first half of our filming week, including the scene where Daphne comes out to her brother, Arlo. Cast in the role of Arlo was Bea and I's best friend, Sam Baylow. It was enjoyable spending time on set with him and it made me more comfortable with the vulnerable material. The coming out scene takes place right before Oscar picks Daphne up for prom. I wore my old prom dress from senior year. I never wore it out because of COVID, so I got a piece of my high school experience back. So, Daphne sits in her prom dress, nervous, and getting ready. Next came what Bea and I called the "eyeliner monologue." In the monologue, Daphne gets irritated about drawing on her eyeliner properly, but it quickly becomes a thinly veiled rant about her frustration and confusion over her asexuality. I found performing this on camera difficult. Not only was it highly emotional and long, but we had to do many takes of it. This was the first time that I had an on-camera experience like that, and I was doing it with words that were written by me about an experience like my own. I found it emotionally draining, but gratifying. I enjoyed showing the sadness, confusion, and frustration of not feeling like everyone else.

However, my favorite scene to shoot had to be when Oscar asks Daphne to be his girlfriend right before prom. Playing Oscar was my friend and fellow class of 2024 acting major,

Ian Purcell. Even though the scene was meant to be a rejection, it did not feel that way in the moment. It felt more like a friend reaching out to a friend for help and sharing a piece of themselves than it ever felt like a failing romantic connection. It was a negotiation between two people who cared for each other and were trying to understand how that care would manifest between them. Even though they wanted different things, that did not mean the connection needed to end. It brought me joy, and it was a reclamation of my coming-of-age experience.

After filming those two emotionally heightened scenes, the rest of the performances were easy. We relocated to the high school and filmed the sex ed classes. Whitney Pak, an Acting Professor in the Department of Drama, played Mrs. Tank, and I was transported back to high school. I enjoyed telling the rest of this story with an incredibly supportive cast and crew. Performing as an asexual character was fun, and cathartic, and allowed me to reflect more on asexual representation.

## Chapter 6: Reflection

Looking back on Bea and I's original vision of creating a film that showcased a complex asexual character and fulfilled the wants of the broader ace community, I believe we were successful. I set out on this thesis journey thinking about what "good" representation looks like and how A+ fits within that. After writing and performing this narrative, I think it is beneficial for the creative team and the actor to involve someone with a lived asexual experience in a story's creation.

Ideally, every asexual story would include an asexual voice behind it. The team of *Bojack Horseman* cast Todd's girlfriend Maude as Echo Gillette. Echo is an openly asexual YouTuber and actress. *Sex Education* brought in Yasmin, even if they could not keep all of her advice in the script. And *Heartstopper*'s Alice Oseman brought an authentic story of aroace discovery by using her own experience. So, undeniably, it is something creative teams see as valuable. Producers see the importance of bringing in someone with lived experience to a creative project. If done right, it can bring a sense of authenticity and ensure the creators are not upholding harmful stereotypes.

On top of that, I want every asexual person to have the opportunity to play an ace character. This experience was fun, vulnerable, and cathartic. When I think of Todd Chavez, played by an allosexual person, I now think less of what may have been lost performance-wise with an allo actor and more of what an incredible opportunity that would have been for an asexual actor. The chance to be ace on television is empirically 8 out of 596, and I would want to see those roles go to asexual actors. They may never get an opportunity to do so and, therefore, be denied a healing and affirming experience. I see that that is not completely possible. Asking for sexuality or demanding actors be a certain sexuality is a slippery slope.

That would require all actors in queer roles to be totally out of the closet and identify with a specific label, but not all people want to do that. A good example of how this can go wrong is with a *Heartstopper* cast member, Kit Connor. Kit plays a bisexual character with a boyfriend on the show. When he dated a girl in real life, he was publicly ridiculed on social media. There was outrage that he was a “straight” person playing a gay character on television. Twitter essentially forced him to come out and reveal his queer identity to stop the hate online. This was an example of the want for representation going too far.

It is also complicated in terms of a developing story. Todd, for example, was not supposed to be asexual. That was a decision that came later in the series. If all asexual characters needed to have actors who identify the same way, should Aaron Paul have been replaced? That is not possible. And it would have been a shame if, for the sake of having actor representation, Todd was never made asexual. That would have deprived the community of a figurehead that paved the way for asexual people on television. The actor representation would not have been worth that loss.

I believe every step should be taken to attempt to get an asexual person involved in an asexual narrative. Casting calls for openly ace actors and bringing in activists such as Yasmin are all great steps. But if an ace person cannot be directly involved, I would not want that to stop creatives from including an asexual person in their story. Education is incredibly important, and the more creators approach an asexual story from a kind and curious place, the more possibility of having sensitive and authentic representation.

I am excited for the day when I no longer have to think “This may be the only piece of media with an asexual person in it that our audience has seen, let's make sure it is educational.” *Sex Education*, *Bojack*, and *Heartstopper*, all included elements of educating the

audience, to make sure they even know what asexuality is. I hope this label becomes more widespread, so not every mention of it needs to be followed up by a definition. I know why these shows did this. It is the same reason Bea and I did it: because we need to spread more information about this underrepresented community. But I believe not having to do that will open more opportunities and bring asexual actors out of the woodwork. And the only way to do that is to champion and support more asexual stories and speak out when some of them fall short.

Above all else, from making this film with Bea, I learned how important it is to create your own art. I was proud to make the representation I wanted to see and to be that ace actor I always wanted. It is frustrating to feel unseen but taking that responsibility into my own hands was empowering. I do not have the same reach as Netflix and, ideally, ace representation will only increase and improve from where we are now. But, for now, I intend to continue making art about my identity, both for myself and for my community.

## Works Cited

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