Exploring My Intersectionality

Intersectionality is what makes a person individual and unique. Aspects of one’s life interact with each other to create a perspective that only they can offer the world. My gender, sexuality and race all interact with each other in different ways. Expression of my sexuality and gender create discourse in my mind as I explore those parts of myself, also how I choose to express those outwardly and my race’s influence on those categories.

I have known I’m bisexual since the 6th grade when I came out. I’ve always found both women and men attractive. My relationship with sex itself could be considered to exist somewhere of the asexuality spectrum, but I don’t label myself in that regard as I’m comfortable without one. Being bisexual broadens my dating pool and increases the number of communities I am a part of, yet I don’t have as much of an interest or need sex as much as those I’m surrounded by, I am seen as different by my friends and others. This only narrows how I can express myself because of the expectations I’m being set up for verses what I’m actually doing and how I can live my life; even though I am an individual, social experiences still have an effect on me.

My gender is somewhat of a new development. I have always felt some masculine energy within myself, but I aways loved being a woman and the femininity that comes with it. I tossed around using all pronouns and identifying as gender fluid, but they didn’t feel right. I started using only she/they pronouns and that felt right. I don’t identify as genderfluid anymore, and other labels don’t seem to fit how I feel so I don’t use any. Rather, I think of myself as feeling feminine some days and not gendered on others. Many people don’t see me as being anything other than strictly feminine because they’ve either only known me as female or don’t conceptualize that I might have different pronouns because I’m very feminine looking in physicality and presentation. I mostly keep my pronouns private, yet I want others to know that I don’t feel gender on certain days, which is somewhat counterproductive. I am comfortable with my gender identity, but I am not 100% confident about coming out to people in intimate settings.

I am white. My family has been here for many generations and most cultural traditions were lost over the years, leaving me to follow practically only American traditions. I have not experienced discrimination on an industrial or societal level. I have also more accessibility and opportunities due to my skin color. I am aware of my privilege and try to remind myself of it every day to keep myself in check.

In my experience, being white has resulted in more societal acceptance of my sexuality and gender. To some, I am only seen a deviating from being a woman, while other people of color have the compounded experience of societal and institutional discrimination because of the color of their skin while possibly battling with their sexuality and gender as well. I am cis het passing as well, so I don’t face the amount of discrimination others of my same positionality feel; and because I can become a part of the nuclear family because of the way I look and who I’m attached to, people don’t bat a negative eye in my direction. I also have more freedom to express myself because of the lack of boundaries that are set for me.

I’ve recently been struggling with my sexuality and gender identities together, as well as my efforts to be perceived as my identities being mute as I am cis het passing. People tend to assume I am a solely a woman even when I am dressed in what society has deemed as male clothes; most of the clothes in my closest if from the men’s section. I wonder if it’s because of my long hair, my facial features, or the way I carry myself. In Betsy Lucal’s *What it Means to be Gendered Me,* she discusses gender’s place in society and how we are doing binary gender no matter what we attempt to do otherwise, “…a person who does not do gender appropriately is placed not into a third category but rather into the one with which her or his gender display seems most closely to fit,” (Lucal, 784). This statement resonates with me based on what I stated previously; even when I try to display gender in a specific way others assume I identify as female. It also provides a point that we as a society still binarily confine gender to either male or female, which only makes it harder to display no gender identities.

Continuing onto my sexuality expression, Tara Hardy poetically discusses her experience with sex and sexuality in her piece *Femme Dyke Slut,* which has given me a new perspective about expression and sexuality. She says, “In the dyke community there’s a belief that being femme is some kind of natural expression of being female; the contradictory belief also exists that many trappings of femineity are in fact unnatural…My point is that I get up every day and decide how to present myself to the world… because how we’re read is connected to safety, credibility and recognition,”(Hardy, 181) reiterating that one, our presentation holds a lot of meaning to ourselves, and two, that the stereotypes of eth communities to which we belong in can create dissonance for how we internally conceptualize our identities, effecting how we express ourselves. Both Hardy and Lucal use their personal experience to discuss expression, which I found relevant to my experience with being misgendered and my troubles with displaying who I am while not pretending to be what I’m not out of fear of societal rejection.

Identity and expression are two big aspects of the self. For me, my gender, sexuality, and race all coexist and interact in such a way that makes me who I am right now; my gender and sexuality expression is something challenging because of the macroscopic examinations of these topics explained by Lucal and Hardy and my race leading me to have an easier time with these expressions and acceptance.

Work Cited:

Hardy, Tara. “Femme Dyke Slut.” *Sex & Single Girls: Straight and Queer Woman on Sexuality*, Seattle, WA, 2000, pp. 173–182.

Lucal, Betsy. “What it Means to be Gendered Me.” *Sage Journals*, vol. 13, no. 6, Dec. 1999, pp. 781–797, https://doi.org/10.1177/089124399013006006.