Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Tufts University
Thank you to...

- Our participants!
- Crehan Lab research team, especially Jess Rocha & Jordan Sclar
- Crehan Lab Autism Community Advisory Board
Overview

❖ Gender Unicorn
❖ Gender identity and ASD
❖ Sexual orientation and ASD
❖ Sex education
❖ Some new data
❖ Action steps
❖ Resources
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned gender at birth</th>
<th>Male n (%)</th>
<th>Female n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels male</td>
<td>299 (91.7)</td>
<td>3 (0.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly male, partly female</td>
<td>10 (3.1)</td>
<td>31 (8.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not male, nor female</td>
<td>2 (0.6)</td>
<td>26 (7.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t know (yet)</td>
<td>4 (1.2)</td>
<td>9 (2.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different (e.g. human, no sex)</td>
<td>8 (2.5)</td>
<td>8 (2.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels female</td>
<td>3 (0.9)</td>
<td>272 (77.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Dewinter, De Graf, & Begeer, 2017)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>TD (n = 3927)</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>TD (n = 4137)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feels attracted to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men only</td>
<td>16 (5.1)</td>
<td>150 (3.8)</td>
<td>194 (56.6)**3</td>
<td>3601 (87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both men and women</td>
<td>27 (8.5)</td>
<td>184 (4.7)</td>
<td>77 (22.4)</td>
<td>418 (10.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women only</td>
<td>258 (81.6)**a</td>
<td>3549 (90.4)</td>
<td>21 (6.1)</td>
<td>53 (1.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>15 (4.7)</td>
<td>44 (1.1)</td>
<td>51 (14.9)</td>
<td>65 (1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a relationship</td>
<td>158 (50)**</td>
<td>2916 (74.3)</td>
<td>162 (47.2)**</td>
<td>2923 (70.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a man</td>
<td>8 (5.1)</td>
<td>113 (3.9)</td>
<td>151 (93.2)</td>
<td>2861 (97.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a woman</td>
<td>150 (94.9)</td>
<td>2803 (96.1)</td>
<td>11 (6.8)*</td>
<td>62 (2.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living together with partner</td>
<td>136 (86.1)</td>
<td>2450 (84)</td>
<td>130 (80.2)</td>
<td>2324 (79.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Dewinter, De Graf, & Begeer, 2017)

Sexual orientation & ASD
How we talk about and teach the concepts of gender identity and sexual orientation is particularly critical for autistic learners.
Sexuality & Relationship Education (SRE)
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Where are we now

• Huge variation by state
• Research tools
• Geared toward heterosexual relationships between cisgendered people
• Variable access for autistic learners
### Sexuality & Relationship Education (SRE)

#### Where are we now
- Huge variation by state
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- Variable access for autistic learners

#### What do we need to know
- Teaching methods
- Sources of information
- Timing
- Inclusive of all identities
Study results
Study results
Study results

Timing

Sources of information
Study results

Timing: X

Want more information: ✔

Sources of information: X
Study results

- Timing: 
- Sources of information: 
- Comparison to peers: 
- Want more information: ✔️
Gender identity diversity and queer sexual orientations are higher in autistic populations.

Less access to SRE for autistic students.

SRE programs in school overwhelmingly do not include information relevant for LGBTQ+ individuals.

To summarize
Gender identity diversity and queer sexual orientations are higher in autistic populations.

Less access to SRE for autistic students in school overwhelmingly do not include information relevant for LGBTQ+ individuals.

To summarize...
Books and media with diverse family structures and characters with various gender identities
Use wording like “many” or “some” when discussing gender and sex
Read up and identifying areas of discomfort
Books and media with diverse family structures and characters with various gender identities
Use wording like “many” or “some” when discussing gender and sex
Read up and identifying areas of discomfort

Parents

Ask questions!
Have resources in your office and waiting room
Consider developmental age
Understand the family and community context
Books and media with diverse family structures and characters with various gender identities
Use wording like “many” or “some” when discussing gender and sex
Read up and identifying areas of discomfort

Ask questions!
Have resources in your office and waiting room
Consider developmental age
Understand the family and community context

Identifying champions at school
Working SRE into IEPs
Focus on behaviors in addition to discussing identity
Support the GSA or LGBTQ+ groups at your school
Books and media with diverse family structures and characters with various gender identities
Use wording like “many” or “some” when discussing gender and sex
Read up and identifying areas of discomfort

Parents

Ask questions!
Have resources in your office and waiting room
Consider developmental age
Understand the family and community context

Other adults

Identifying champions at school
Working SRE into IEPs
Focus on behaviors in addition to discussing identity
Support the GSA or LGBTQ+ groups at your school

School

Keep questions open ended “Is there anyone you like at school?” instead of “That boy has a crush on you!”
Navigating the coming out process

Experiences
**Curricula**

**Tackling Teenage Training**

**Books**

* S.E.X. the all-you-need-to-know sexuality guide to get your through your teens & twenties *Heather Corinna

* The Facts of Life & More *Laura Walker-Hirsch

* A Guide to Gender *Sam Killerman

* Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Schooling, *Stephen Russell & Stacey Horn, eds.

**Online resources**

* Sex Ed for Self-Advocates through OAR GLAAD.org

* Planned PArenthood

**Television shows**

* Sex Education (Netflix)

* Everything’s Gonna Be Okay (Hulu)

* Atypical (Netflix)
Keep in touch!

- Study announcements and resources
  - CrehanLab on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Study questions? crehanlab@tufts.edu
- Other questions? eileen.crehan@tufts.edu

Currently running
- Focusing on fitness
  Ages 18+
- Sibling project
  Ages 18+, family triad

Coming soon!
- SRE RCT
  Adolescent cohort & adult cohort
- Sexuality education & identity survey
  Ages 18+
References


