

**I am a lesbian, and you love me**  
Lesbian representation in the media to reduce homophobia

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Master's Thesis

*June 2022*

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## **Abstract**

Background – Lesbian visibility has increased over the past decade. As such, people are exposed to a variety of different gender expressions. However, lesbians are often objectified and stereotyped in the media. Stereotypes can be harmful when perceived negatively as they are based on societal values rather than experience. Additionally, with the increased popularity of social media, frequent access to lesbians is much easier. As such, how lesbians are perceived is a critical factor.

Purpose – the purpose of the current study is to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which gender representation in lesbians impacts homophobia from a social identity perspective. The aim is to investigate whether feminine representations of lesbians on social media can reduce an aversion toward lesbians. Moreover, it aims to highlight whether people with an aversion are aware of their discrimination toward lesbians.

Method – An online experimental survey was made using already established scaled from theoretical literature. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the groups: masculine exposure, feminine exposure, and the control group. Once data was collected, the data has been analyzed using SPSS.

Findings – Results indicate that there is no difference in homophobia after exposure to masculine or feminine gender representation in lesbians. Moreover, openness to experience was found to be an insignificant predictor of homophobia. Additionally, results did reveal a significant effect between social identification and homophobia after exposure. Lastly, when lesbians are perceived as positive, it showed a reduction in homophobia.

Limitation – The differences in the exposure to feminine and masculine were perceived to be minimal. As such, the results could have been impacted by this.

Future direction – future researchers should be certain that their manipulations are done effectively. Moreover, lesbians have an array of different aesthetics (athletic, gothic, outdoorsy, creative, etc.). Thus, researchers may focus on how different aesthetics impact homophobia.

Keywords: Lesbian, Homophobia, Social Identification, Social Media, Gender Representation

## Preface

I am beyond excited to share this body of work with you. Since my coming out, I have experienced different gender expressions to understand my own identity. I quickly learned that people treated me differently based on how I expressed my gender. Ultimately, I was curious to investigate if these were my assumptions or if this was indeed due to my change in gender expression. I have written the thesis for my master's degree in Media and Business. However, I held queer activists in my mind as I hope that the findings in this study may be of use for their future endeavors.

First, I would like to thank my mother, who endlessly had to read through my paper whenever I had made revisions; without your patience and confusion, I would not have been able to write this paper. Thank you for asking the right questions.

Second, I would like to thank my supervisor for challenging me to do a quantitative study. Before this master's, SPSS felt very foreign to me. However, after much dedication, I have found the skills to understand my work.

Third, thank you to my amazing friends at the OG Haagse Liga, who helped me figure out what to wear for the photos at 7 in the morning on a Friday before leaving to work. I would have never known about the vast extent of lesbian fashion, queer entertainment, and the overall queer experiences with you guys.

Finally, I like to thank my dogs Mushu and Mila for making sure I would go outside after drowning myself in my work for hours. You guys kept me balanced, and I could never have done this without your cuddles and adorable faces.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Preface.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Table of Contents.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. A Personal Story from the Researcher .....	6
1.2. Lesbian Visibility in the Media .....	7
1.3. Societal Relevance .....	8
1.4. Scientific Relevance .....	9
1.5. Thesis Outline .....	10
<b>2. Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Lesbianism: A Modern Definition .....	11
2.2. The Manifestation of Homophobia .....	12
2.3. Social Identity Theory and Attitude Towards Lesbians.....	13
2.4. Openness to Experience and Attitudes Towards Lesbians.....	16
2.5. Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians.....	17
2.6. Conceptual Models .....	20
<b>3. Methods.....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1. Research Design and Justification .....	21
<b>3.2. Sampling Strategy.....</b>	<b>22</b>
3.2.1. Demographics.....	23
3.2.2. Sample .....	24
3.2.3. Study Materials .....	24
3.2.4. Survey Procedure .....	26
<b>3.3. Measurements and Operationalization.....</b>	<b>27</b>
3.3.1. Manipulation Check .....	27
3.2.3 Homophobia.....	27
3.3.2. Perception of Lesbian Representation .....	30
3.3.3. Social Identification.....	30
3.3.4. Openness to Experience.....	32
3.4. Analysis .....	33
3.5. Validity and Reliability .....	34
<b>4. Results.....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.1. Manipulation Check .....	36
<b>4.2. Hypothesis Testing .....</b>	<b>37</b>
4.2.1. Social Identification and Homophobia .....	38
4.2.2. Openness to Experience and Homophobia .....	38
4.2.3. Gender Representation and Homophobia .....	39
4.2.4. Positive Perception of Lesbian Representation and Homophobia.....	39

<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5.1 Key Findings .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1.1. Effects of Social Identification on Homophobia.....	41
5.1.2. Presence of Openness to Experience and Homophobia .....	42
5.1.3. Effects of Gender Representations on Homophobia .....	42
<b>5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications .....</b>	<b>43</b>
5.2.1. Theoretical Implications .....	44
5.2.2. Practical Implications .....	44
<b>5.3. Directions for Future Research .....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>5.4. Limitations.....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>47</b>

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. A Personal Story from the Researcher

"There is no such thing as looking gay," Maaïke said abruptly as me and the other five women were in the midst of discussing queer fashion. We had only just met during one of the most awkward queer speed dating sessions to celebrate the movie *Anne*+ its international premiere. Now we are sitting in one of the last lesbian bars in Amsterdam: Bar Buka. Speed dating may have been awkward, but everyone who attended was curious enough to know each other better.

"I disagree. You have got to admit that overalls are super queer! Just because Gen Z is copying us doesn't mean it's not typically queer." Eleana responded, "Or what about the eyebrow slit? Have you ever seen a straight person with an eyebrow slit?"

I laughed.

Maaïke shrugged, "Maybe, yes. But at the end of the day, what you wear doesn't make you gay; anybody can be gay no matter what they look like" She raised her voice, "isn't that what we want? Acceptance, no matter who you are or what you dress like?"

The conversation continued without me for a bit, mainly because I wasn't sure whom to side with, and curiosity arose as to what they had to say. Queer fashion has intrigued me ever since my coming out.

"Equality is what we want, but it's not where we are," I interrupted "I mean... I only came out to my family because, according to my brother, quote-unquote, I looked gay," Maaïke and I locked eyes and I raised my eyebrows, "and I would never find a man dressed like that." Regret came over me as I shared the story: I didn't want to share my coming-out because it's a typical first-time conversation for lesbians.

"Why? What were you wearing?" Maaïke raised her eyebrows and shook her head. I figured she must have been confused because I was dressed very feminine that day.

"I had my hair up in a bun, with an undercut, and I wore a graphic tee over a sweater," I answered.

"Yeah, that'll do it," Eleana said as our next round of beers was served.

"So that was it? Your coming-out?" Aimee asked.

"Yeah, sort of... I mean, we don't have to go into the details." I answered. "But honestly, I wouldn't have come out if it wasn't for my brother asking." My hands felt cold from the beer, "Hell, for so long, I fit so into that straight-feminine box that my family didn't even believe me. They thought it was a phase, which, by the way, I was supposedly too late for because you do that in college."

Everyone laughed, and for the rest of the next hour, everyone in the group shared their coming-out stories, and we all agreed; that if you don't look or behave overtly queer, you'll have to come out every time you meet someone new. We talked about the influence of the media when it comes to representation and how happy we are to see ourselves reflected in the characters in *Anne+*.

## **1.2. Lesbian Visibility in the Media**

The researcher her coming out story is not uncommon; as someone who identifies as queer (read; not hetero) and works hard to be perceived as such, the researcher often has to deal with assumptions people have, even with the way the researcher dresses or talks. Coping with the stereotypes and assumptions people have is very common for people who belong to a minority group. Extensive research has investigated what kind of stereotypes there are and how society reinforces those stereotypes (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Cox & Gallois, 1996). For example, commonly known stereotypes about lesbians are that they have short, manly hair and show masculine traits (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020). Moreover, lesbianism is often invalidated, assuming that any attraction between women is temporarily or merely experimental (Diamond, 2005).

Since 1985, the Gay Lesbian Association Against Defamation (GLAAD), an American queer activist organization, has been working hard to share the stories of the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer) community. GLAAD utilizes entertainment, news, and other media with the hopes of tackling these stereotypes and reducing homophobia (GLAAD, 2022). Due to their efforts, queer (LGBTQ+) representation has grown to 9.1% of all US television shows and has a great variety of different queer stories (GLAAD, 2021); This is a significant achievement considering the negative attitudes towards the queer community that the majority of people still have (Mason et al., 2017), However, with gay marriage being legal in 31 countries (Human Rights Campaign, 2021), acceptance toward queer people is slowly increasing (Meyer, 2003; as mentioned in Meyer et al., 2013)

Moreover, queer experiences vary per culture, making it more critical to bring the stories of queer people to the masses in an effort to reduce prejudice toward the queer community (Ciszek, 2017; Siebler, 2016; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012). Therefore, tackling such stereotypes via the media is an effective tool to reach multiple audiences that otherwise would not be familiar with the queer community (Chung, 2007; Croteau et al., 1997). Moreover, considering heteronormativity is the norm in most societies, exposure to queer identities can be beneficial for (self-) identity acceptance and development (Chung, 2007; Diamond, 2005; Siebler, 2016; Vivienne & Burgess, 2012).

Additionally, positive depictions of queer characters in the media can give people the courage they need to deal with harassment and rejection (Guerrero et al., 2018). Specifically,

exposure to role models with whom one identifies can influence the development of oneself in a positive way (Bandura, 2001; Guerrero et al., 2018). Research states that queer role models may give pride and comfort to their fans which their fans may not have in their day-to-day life (Gomillion and Giuliano, 2011).

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the current body of literature on the topic. Therefore, this study will focus on the impact gender representation of a lesbian via a photograph can have as it may be shared on social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook. To bridge the gap in the literature, the following research question has been formulated: *To what extent does the way lesbians are represented on social media impact homophobia?*

### **1.3. Societal Relevance**

While undoubtedly, GLAAD's efforts have effectively increased visibility, homophobia remains present. For instance, according to GLAAD's 2021 'accelerating acceptance report,' an increase in discrimination against queer people in the US has been reported compared to previous years (GLAAD, 2021). Moreover, Homosexuality remains a punishable crime in 71 countries according to the Human Rights Campaign from 2021. In addition, various studies indicate that queer people suffer from mental health issues more than heterosexuals, possibly resulting from homophobia (Bybee et al., 2009; Howard & Nicholas; 1998; Johnson et al., 2019).

Thus, understanding if the type of representation of queer people affects homophobia and what these effects are is beneficial for organizations such as GLAAD to streamline their efforts. Moreover, television producers will better understand what kind of content works best to reduce homophobia and create content that aligns with their values.

There has been an increase in queer visibility, leading to discussions about the accuracy and positivity of such representations and how effective they are in reducing homophobia (Diamond, 2005; Guerrero et al., 2018; Tomsen & Mason, 2001). For example, research shows that depicting stereotypes about lesbians can increase internalized homophobia and equally stimulate exclusionary behavior from heterosexuals (Cox & Gallois, 1996). As such, examining the relationship between LGBT representation and homophobia might highlight its effectiveness in reducing it.

Moreover, over the past decade people have become more comfortable exploring different identities, this is especially prevalent in the queer community (Fiani & Han, 2019; Chew et al., 2020; Yeadon-Lee, 2016). Although this is mainly due to the increased presence



of non-binary people, this is something that impacts everyone (Vijlbrief et al., 2020; Yeadon-Lee, 2016). As gender expression has become more fluid, it raises the question of how people respond to different gender expressions.

#### **1.4. Scientific Relevance**

There is limited research on the effects of lesbian representation (gender expression) on homophobia due to a lack of available media content at the time (Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018). In addition, the majority of the research has focused on gay men, even though there are specific issues that the lesbian community faces. For example, Diamond (2005) states that lesbians who try to understand their sexuality through the media are often pushed toward heterosexuality, due to a lack of exposure. Moreover, the media is, for many, a primary source of information; however, it enhances how minorities are perceived due to the influences of stereotypical depictions of such minorities as lesbians (Annati, 2020; Raley & Lucas, 2006). This signifies the relevance of including lesbians in future research (Gillig & Murphy, 2016; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018).

Additionally, with the increase of lesbian content available, there is also a great variety in how queerness is represented in these characters (GLAAD, 2021). Precisely, characters such as Saanvi Bahl in *Manifest*, Casey in *Atypical*, and Leighton in *The Sex Lives of College Girls* portray characters where their sexuality is secondary in the plotline. In these cases, viewers are first introduced to other aspects of their identity before romantic interests are introduced, such as being an athlete, doctor, or student. Being portrayed as more than their sexuality allows people to identify with the characters on different fronts (Hogg, 2016; Roccas & Brewer, 2002): This suggests that the exposure could lead to social identification with the characters and may reduce homophobia (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Trepte, 2013). However, as Madžarević and Soto-Sanfiel (2018) indicate, such research has not been conducted prior concerning lesbian content.

Furthermore, the limited research on lesbian representation has solely analyzed the frequency of exposure and its effect on attitudes (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020). Comparatively, the current study will investigate the effect of lesbian representation in the media on specific homophobic attitudes. Additionally, literature has focused on the influence of television, excluding the role social media could play despite its growing popularity (Al-Rahmi & Othman, 2013). However, social media is of great interest as it is an effective tool to get a message across to one's desired audience (Ciszek, 2017). According to Bond et al. (2009), queer content is more accessible on social media than on television, as social media is controlled by content created by its users.

## 1.5. Thesis Outline

As previously suggested, this study focuses on the relationship between different variables and homophobia. Firstly, this research aims to investigate if being exposed to different gender representations plays a role in reducing homophobia. Secondly, openness to experience as a personality trait is used to assess if the trait is of relevance in determining whether someone may be homophobic. Thirdly, an assessment of the relationship between social identity theory and homophobia is done.

This research will build upon the theoretical framework. Specifically, the conceptualization of homophobia, openness to experience, and social identity theory can be found here, along with a definition for lesbian, stereotypical representation, and how perceiving something as positive is off relevance.

The third chapter outlines the methodology and aims to explain the reasoning behind a quantitative method and how the relationships between the variables will be explored. Moreover, this chapter highlights the sampling technique used, the sample's demographics, and measurements utilized in the survey. Additionally, this chapter outlines the participants' procedure and thoroughly explains the stimulus materials used and their reasoning.

The fourth chapter will walk you through the results section and presents this research and its findings based on the analysis that has been conducted for the various hypotheses. The fifth and final chapter is the discussion. In this chapter, the researcher aims to answer the research question and discuss limitations and directions for future research.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the literature surrounding the topic. First, a conceptualization of the terms lesbian and homophobia are made. Secondly, an explanation for the use of social identity theory concerning homophobia. Third, the literature regarding openness to experience and its relationship with homophobia is discussed. Lastly, the researcher discusses the impacts of stereotypes about lesbians and how it relates to homophobia.

### 2.1. Lesbianism: A Modern Definition

For the sake of this study, this section will first explain what a lesbian is. The origin of the term lesbian comes from the Greek island Lesbos, where the poet Sappho was born (630 BC) according to Dubois (2020). Sappho became known for her poems about female homosexuality. It is speculated that people referred to female homosexuality as “sapphic”, which was inspired by her name (Valentine, 2008). However, many interpretations of her work are inspired by a discussion concerning her sexuality: there is no proof of Sappho being a homosexual, rather for a long period people assumed her to be a rather sex-positive heterosexual (Andreadis, 2001).

Moreover, this study will use the definition by Tate (2012), who defines a *lesbian* as a “woman who is emotionally, intellectually, and sexually attracted to other women” (p.18). The essential takeaway is that lesbians identify as woman-loving women. However, scholars have found to fully understand what a lesbian is, a deeper understanding of what it means to be a woman is necessary (Diamond, 2005; Tate, 2012; Weston, 2009).

Previous research indicates that self-identification is a crucial part of defining who is a woman considering the broad spectrum of cis- and trans-gender identities (Cox et al., 1996; Tate, 2012; Galupo et al., 2017; Hyde et al., 2019). Cis refers to people who identify with the gender assigned at birth, and trans refers to people who identify with a different gender than the one assigned at birth (Cox & Gallios, 1996; Tate, 2012). However, as Tate (2012) states, a definition requires more nuances as a shared social meaning of a woman impacts how someone experiences and understands “woman” as an identity.

Therefore, to include transgender people, scholars have reframed women to female-identified to recognize the inclusion of transgender and the various subsets of genderqueer people who are female-identified (Tate, 2012; Galupo et al., 2017). In addition, the definition of female-identified allows the inclusion of those that are not female at birth. For ease of understanding the word woman will be used throughout this paper and refers to the inclusion of all female-identified people.

To clarify, those excluded from the current working definition are cisgender men, transgender men, genderqueer male-identified people, and gender neutrals (non-binary).

## 2.2. The Manifestation of Homophobia

Many scholars have attempted to evaluate people's attitudes toward the queer community (Herek; 1984; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980; Smith, 1971). The first definition of homophobia can be traced back to Weinberg in 1972. Weinberg claimed homophobia caused fear of being around homosexuals, believing it to be rooted in hatred, anxiety, and general intolerance towards queer people. Interestingly, quickly after the term "homophobia" was founded, many professionals and non-professionals started to use the term to describe any negative feeling, attitude, or action toward homosexuals, which resulted in the term "homophobia" losing its original meaning as defined by Weinberg (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980).

Furthermore, in 1980, Hudson & Ricketts determined that homonegativism may be a better term to describe homophobia; they believed it was more multidimensional. Specifically, homonegativism would allow for phobia and sexism to fit (Herek, 1984; Hudson & Ricketts, 1980); this implies that the term homophobia alone would be too limiting for their definition. Instead, homophobia is a part of homonegativism. Hudson & Ricketts agreed that the phobia part manifests itself as a response out of "fear, disgust, anger, discomfort or aversion that individuals experience in dealing with gay people" (p.358). Moreover, people may consider heterosexual people to be better than homosexuals, without the phobia (Hudson & Ricketts, 1980)

However, disagreements continued regarding homophobia. Specifically, Herek (1980) finds homonegativism too restricting, as the term focuses primarily on negativity toward homosexuals. Specifically, attitudes and prejudices towards homosexuals vary widely based on social-cultural context and between homosexuals and lesbians (Goldstein & Davis, 2010; Herek, 1980; Herek, 2004; Massey, 2009). Therefore, Herek (1980) developed a scale to assess the attitudes of heterosexual people toward Lesbians and Gay Men (ATLG). The scale consisted of questions such as "Lesbians just cannot fit into society," which would indicate that if someone disagreed that *lesbians can fit into society* (p. 151, Massey, 2009). According to Massey (2009), these responses are too black and white. Despite the disagreements, it can be argued that in all instances the emphasis is on the negative attitude toward homosexuals.

Following the research by Hudson & Ricketts, other scholars add to the definition of homophobia to further explain the phenomenon. Scholars state that homophobia manifests

itself in multiple ways, such as anxiety about being around LGBT people, casual jokes, use of language such as "dykes" or "carpet muncher," to more severe feelings of disgust and anger towards LGBT people (Snively et al., 2004; Szymanski & Chung, 2002). To clarify, scholars are attempting to explain responses can vary in severity. However, the definition appears to resemble the original one made by Weinberg closely.

Additionally, Basow & Johnson's (2000) research suggests a difference in how homophobia manifests itself in men and women. Specifically, they found men to be more homophobic than women. Consequently, their research showed that people who put a higher importance on their gender traits are more homophobic, regardless of gender. Moreover, research indicates that men show more physical violence towards homosexuals than women (Basow & Johnson, 2000). This could be a result due to the sexual entitlement that heterosexual men feel they have over women and gay men (Herek, 1984).

Snively et al. (2004) add to the discussion, arguing that homophobia results from stereotyping. Societal values are often the basis for stereotypical assumptions rather than personal experiences, resulting from entertainment, the news, or stories from peers (*Blashill & Powlishta, 2009; Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020; Snively et al., 2004*). For example, when a television show depicts a lesbian as masculine, people might assume that masculine-looking women are gay (Chung, 2007; Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Moreover, Massey's (2009) research showed that homophobia has changed. Specifically, people are more likely to hold small prejudices or ignorance toward LGBT members instead of immense feelings of fear or disgust. Therefore, Massey (2009) conceptualized homophobia to be a sexual prejudice that consists of seven aspects; this has resulted in a model which assessed the various aspects of homophobia: "traditional heterosexism, denial of continued discrimination, aversion toward gay men – lesbians, the value of gay progress, resist heteronormativity, and positive beliefs" (p.156). Massey (2009) argues that with the increased acceptance of queer people, individuals may not show a direct aversion out of political correctness; however, their behavior would still be discriminatory.

For this study, it is interesting to investigate two aspects of homophobia: how people report their aversion toward lesbians and if denial of their discrimination can be detected.

### **2.3. Social Identity Theory and Attitude Towards Lesbians**

Social identity theory explains why people behave differently in different groups based on a social-psychological perspective (Trepte, 2013). Specifically, people show solidarity toward people in their group but discriminate against those outside their group (Rosenthal et al., 2012; Stets & Burke,

2000; Trepte, 2013). Furthermore, Perceiving people outside of the group as a threat is a common aspect (Branscombe et al., 1999; Trepte, 2013; Wang et al., 2018). Additionally, according to the theory, individuals cluster people together. Therefore, we view all who belong to the same group similarly. Social identification consists of two processes: self-categorization and self-comparison (Breeuwsma, 2022; Cox & Gallois, 1996)

Firstly, *self-categorization* is the process of identifying different groups someone belongs to (Breeuwsma, 2022). For example, categories include religion, race, and nationality (Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Cox & Gallois, 1996; Stets & Burke, 2000; Trepte, 2013). Moreover, race, gender, and sexuality are considered to be a “quasi-permanent” category of someone’s identity according to Cox & Gallois (p.14, 1996). Quasi-permanent means that it is a constant and cannot be changed for the most part. Specifically, A category refers to different attributes a person has. Moreover, a person can have multiple attributes.

Therefore, people can belong to multiple groups and often view their ingroup identities as overlapping (Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Shmidt et al., 2009). This process is defined as *social identity complexity*. Social identity complexity assumes that people only view those who share multiple categories as ingroup members, whereas those who share none to a few are outgroup members. For example, someone belongs to the ingroup when they are a lesbian, feminist, skateboarder, and masculine. Nevertheless, someone who only identifies as a lesbian, but does not fit into the other categories, will be treated as an outsider.

Moreover, social identity complexity consists of similarity complexity and overlap complexity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2016; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Schmid et al., 2009). Firstly, overlap complexity refers to the great variety of possible overlaps. For example, Roccas and Brewer (2002) state that when individuals believe that all feminists are lesbians, there would be a low overlap complexity. However, a feminist can also be a man or a straight woman. In other words, being a feminist can overlap with many other identities and is not exclusive to only lesbians.

Additionally, similarity complexity refers to how an individual perceives different categories to be intertwined and have the same meaning (Hogg, 2016; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Schmidt et al., 2009)—for example, thinking that being a feminist means the same thing as a lesbian. However, this is not the case, but repetitive exposure to the same kinds of people can convince someone that it is.

The second process of social identification is *self-comparison*: perceiving a category as positive and comparing their ingroup to an outgroup can lead to discrimination toward

the outgroup (Treppe, 2013). This process is referred to as *Ingroup bias*. For example, Cox and Gallois (1996) explain how heterosexual people may use reproduction to argue that they are better than homosexuals.

However, in the instance that someone perceives a category negatively that belongs to an outgroup, it can cause them to perceive the outgroup as a *distinctive threat*. For example, according to the theory, when a specific trait such as aggression has been identified in a person, and others appear to have the same quasi-permanent attribute, such as sexuality, it may lead people to assume that everyone with the same sexuality is aggressive (p. 2, Breeuwsma, 2022). However, societal values are often the basis for these assumptions rather than personal experiences leading to stereotypes (Breeuwsma; Cox & Gallois, 1996). Thus, someone who views lesbians as a distinctive threat is more likely to have an aversion toward lesbians and be homophobic (Cox & Gallois, 1996; Treppe, 2013).

Lastly, within social identity theory, cross-communication between the ingroup and outgroup can lead to positive effects (Treppe, 2013; Suzuki, 1998; Schmid et al., 2009). This practice is called *inter-group contact*. Various studies found that inter-group contact can reduce anxiety and personal and group threat and increase empathy (Herek & Glunt, 1993; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Hodson et al., 2016; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018). Specifically, Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) found that inter-group contact can increase tolerance and improve attitude toward members of the outgroup. Moreover, the increase of lesbian characters in the media may reduce anxiety.

Therefore, exposure to lesbians in the media should provoke this self-comparison process. Precisely, based on these assumptions, people that do not identify with lesbians should be more homophobic, which has inspired the following hypothesis:

H1: People who score low for social identification with lesbians after being exposed to lesbian representations on social media will indicate higher levels of homophobia toward lesbians compared to people who score high for social identification

The aspects that will be used for social identification consist of ingroup bias, similarity complexity, tolerance, and distinctive threat. Thus, low social identification suggests that people are biased toward their ingroup and perceive lesbians as a distinctive threat. Moreover, they do not have tolerance for lesbians and do not experience similarity complexity.

## 2.4. Openness to Experience and Attitudes Towards Lesbians

Aside from Social Identity Theory, personality traits may also affect whether someone is homophobic. For example, various studies link a person's personality to prejudice, of which the majority focus on the personality traits neuroticism and extroversion (Ekehammer, 2003, Ekehammer et al., 2004; Dreyer, 2007; Hodson & Dhont, 2015; Lippa et al., 1999). However, out of the Big Five personality traits, *openness to experience* is rather interesting to understand its association with homophobia as the trait affects social and interpersonal beliefs (Cullen et al., 2002; Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2020). Mainly since openness to experience is a trait that emphasizes a person's emotional side rather than logic (Curtis et al., 2015). Respectfully, the trait refers to emotional awareness, creativity, flexibility, curiosity, and a preference for novelty and nontraditional values (Curtis et al., 2015; McCrae & John, 1992).

Moreover, according to research, individuals who possess an openness to experience as a personality trait can be considered unconventional, emphatic, and curious (Coan, 1972; Kaufman, 2013; Leung & Chiu, 2008). In addition, according to John & Srivastava (1999), the theory believes that people who have the trait of openness to experience are adventurous, willing to explore new things, and are more open to differences. Conversely, people who lack this trait are considered closed-minded.

Additionally, openness to experience can define the tolerance for ambiguity and unconventional ideologies (McCrae & Costa, 1985; Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2020): this implies that people who possess openness to experience should be more accepting of lesbians. Contrary, the absence of openness to experience may equally bring attention to people who cling to the traditional values that prevent them from accepting things or people who function outside of the norm (Budner, 1961, Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2020).

A small number of studies that use self-reporting measures consistently show that openness to experience is a predictor of attitudes toward homosexuals (Cullen et al., 2002; Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007; Metin-Orta & Metin-Camgöz, 2020; Miller et al., 2012). For instance, the study done by Cullen et al. (2002) found that openness to experience correlated with a reduction in homophobia. Interestingly, Cullen et al. (2002) results indicate that the environment and gender reduce homophobia alongside openness to experience. Thus, the results aligned with the theory: showing that individuals who possess an openness to experience were less homophobic than those lacking the trait.

In comparison, Ekehammar et al. (2004) and Miller et al., (2012) findings do not support Cullen et al., (2002). Specifically, Ekehammar et al., (2004) their research indicate



that the Big Five personality traits have no direct effect on prejudices. However, their research found that the Big Five personality traits had a significant effect when predicting prejudice in support of external predictors (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007). Specifically, their findings did show an indirect effect through authoritarianism and social dominance orientation. Respectfully, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and extraversion all showed significant effects indirectly. Especially openness to experience showed to be significant when analyzing it in support of a person's values. Their study confirmed personality traits that outperform other predictors of prejudice (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2004; Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007).

Interestingly, according to Miller et al., (2012), gender does not play a role in homophobia which opposes previous studies. However, they did find openness to experience to play a factor which confirms Cullen et al., (2002) findings. Miller et al., (2012) state that people with an openness to experience do not perceive other people as a threat based on differences which could explain why someone who does not possess the trait would be homophobic. People who do not possess the trait prefer the comfort of what they know; they are threatened by change and differences.

Therefore, based on this perspective, people who score low for openness to experience should find lesbians scary. This has led to the following hypothesis:

H2: People who score higher for openness to experience will indicate lower levels of homophobia toward lesbians compared to people who score lower for openness to experience.

## **2.5. Stereotypical Representations of Lesbians**

As aforementioned, there has been an increased amount of lesbian representation in the media; the question arises of how they are depicted. Despite the increase, stereotypical depictions still dominate (Annati & Ramsay, 2022; Brambilla et al., 2011; Szymanski et al., 2010). In 2016, McLaughlin and Rodriguez introduced stereotyped identification as a concept. Stereotyped identification refers to the process of identifying with a homosexual character that promotes acceptance while simultaneously exhibiting stereotypes about homosexuals.

Moreover, McLaughlin and Rodriguez (2016) argue that viewers can hold onto negative stereotypes about lesbians after identification with a stereotypical character. Specifically, people have attitudes and opinions about a minority prior to exposure; when the exposure reinforces the attitude or opinion, it will become more ingrained in the mind with the minority and other assumptions (Price et al., 1997; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2016). Thus, separating the stereotype from the minority will become more challenging.

Moreover, the media can promote stereotypes and realize new ones (Annati & Ramsey, 2022; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2016). Specifically, McLaughlin & Rodrigues (2016) argue that the positive side of a new "type of depiction" diversifies the portrayal of lesbians in the media. However, amplifying a new depiction turns it into a stereotype: this means that when something becomes trendy, it can quickly fall into a trope and become harmful. Thus, this has resulted in the complexity of an outgroup, such as lesbians (Brambilla et al., 2011; Geiger et al., 2016).

Additionally, research indicates that lesbians are stereotypically portrayed as very feminine on television (Calzo, 2009; Diamond, 2005; Greenwood & Lippman, 2010; Johnson, 2016; Raley & Lucas, 2006). Specifically, the majority of lesbian characters are played by heterosexual women and still embody heterosexuality in their representation (Diamond, 2005; Blashill & Powlishta; Annati & Ramsey, 2022). Moreover, research states that lesbian characters are portrayed as attractive and pleasing to the male audience (Diamond, 2005; Blashill & Powlishta). However, this is not always the case.

For instance, specific television shows, such as *The L Word*, are made for the lesbian audience and offer much more masculine representation (Annati & Ramsey, 2022; Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). For example, wearing male clothes, short hair, or portraying masculine language and behavior (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009).

Additionally, Blashill & Powlishta (2009) indicate that the portrayal of lesbians as masculine is harmful because it defies gender norms which can cause negative attitudes toward lesbians. However, people can have different perceptions of negative and positive representation (Krakowiak & Tsay-Vogel, 2013; Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020; Maier et al., 2014). For example, Lissita & Kushnirovich (2020) find that someone may perceive a flamboyantly gay character to be significantly over the top, while simultaneously, someone else could consider this accurate representation of gay people.

Additionally, there are several ways in which lesbians can express their gender. Geiger et al., (2016) identified eight distinct subgroups within a US sample. Specifically, feminine lesbians and masculine lesbians were separated. Every group was placed in either a positive subgroup or a negative subgroup. For example, butch is a term used to refer to the a masculine gender expression in lesbians. However, when perceived negatively, masculinity in lesbians can be seen as aggressive, angry, ugly, fat, and loud and called an "angry butch". However, when a masculine lesbian was seen as positive, the term "soft butch" would be used. Consequently, Geiger et al., (2016) align with Lissita & Kushnirovich's (2020) findings that both masculine and feminine gender expression can be perceived as positive.

Hence, there may be a relation between the presence of masculinity in lesbians and how it is perceived. Specifically, when masculinity in lesbians is perceived as negative, it should incite homophobia. Whereas when feminine lesbians are perceived as positive, it should reduce homophobia. Remarkably, only when femininity is perceived as positive should it reduce homophobia. The following hypotheses have been made:

H3: Exposure to a) feminine lesbian *representation* reduces homophobia toward lesbians while b) masculine lesbian *representation* increases homophobia toward lesbians

H4: Perception of lesbian representation moderates the relationship between lesbian representation and homophobia toward lesbians.

Notably, H4 assumes that a positive perception of feminine lesbian representation moderates the relationship between feminine lesbian representation and homophobia, and negative perception of masculine lesbian representation moderates the relationship between masculine lesbian representation and homophobia.

## 2.6. Conceptual Models

The following conceptual model demonstrates that there are five variables based on the hypotheses: (1) openness to experience, (2) social identification, (3) lesbian representation, (4) one moderator: perception of lesbian representation, and (5) one dependent variable: homophobia (Figure 1).

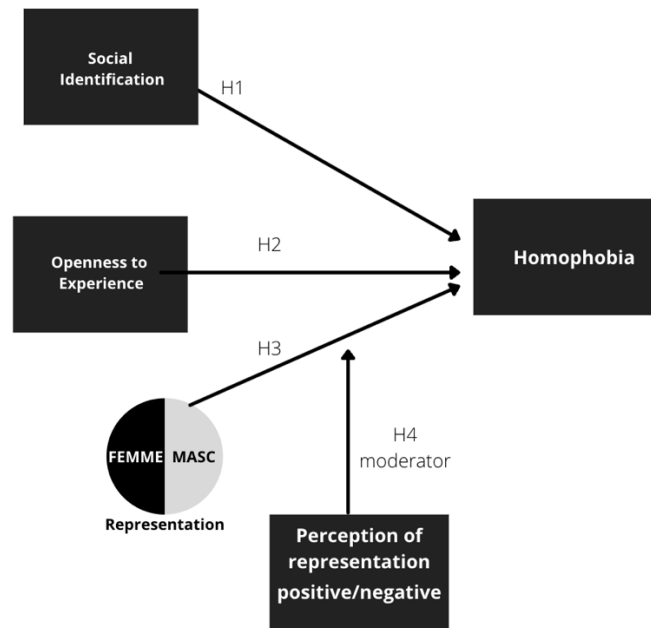


Figure 1: The Conceptual Model with Hypotheses

		Social identification (SI)		Openness to experience (O)	
		HIGH	LOW	HIGH	LOW
Representation	FEM	FEMININE X HIGH SI	FEMININE X LOW SI	FEMININE X HIGH O	FEMININE X LOW O
	MASC	MASCULINE X HIGH SI	MASCULINE X LOW SI	MASCULINE X HIGH O	MASCULINE X HIGH O
CONTROL					

Figure 2: Experimental Set-up

### **3. Methods**

In this chapter, the researcher makes a detailed explanation of the research design, sampling, and results. The method that has been chosen will be considered, following a description of the sampling method and sample used. Then, the survey procedure, as well as the study materials, will be discussed, followed by the measurements and operationalization. Lastly, the validity and reliability of the study will be postulated.

#### **3.1. Research Design and Justification**

For this study, a quantitative approach is deemed most appropriate. Firstly, a quantitative approach will allow the researcher to gather a large amount of data within a short time (Babbie, 2020). Secondly, quantitative methods will allow this research to build upon the existing theories regarding the topic (Babbie, 2020). Finally, this form of research allows for statistical analysis and testing of valid and reliable measurements (Babbie, 2020).

Specifically, the researcher intends to do an experimental study. According to Babbie (2020), an experimental study allows the researcher to categorize variables and manipulate them to investigate different potential outcomes. Therefore, an experimental design is what the researcher deems most fitting to answer the research question. Mainly, this research aims to investigate whether the independent variables (social identification, openness to experience, lesbian representation) influence the dependent variable (homophobia).

Additionally, lesbian representation, one of the independent variables, has two conditions: Masculine, Feminine, and one control group. Therefore, this research uses a unifactorial design for its analysis. A unifactorial design allows the researcher to investigate the different outcomes (Babbie, 2020). This type of set-up is a between-factor experiment, implying that each participant is exposed to merely one of the conditions (Babbie, 2020).

Moreover, the experimental set-up can be seen in Figure 2 and demonstrates that there will be two interactions, first, between social identification and gender representation, and second, between openness to experience and gender representation. Lastly, there will be one control group to compare the experimental results.

In addition, the experiment was conducted through an online survey (Appendix B). A survey is the fastest way to reach as many people as possible. In addition, people have shown to be more honest when answering online surveys (Babbie, 2020). However, confidentiality and anonymity are associated with online research (Fielding et al., 2017). Therefore, for ethical purposes, the survey included a text in the beginning to inform the participants that the survey was anonymous and

would only be used for academic purposes to ensure they felt more comfortable and to be honest in their responses (Fielding et al., 2017).

The survey was distributed to individuals outside the participant's network to avoid biases, as the visuals representing masculine and feminine depict an image of the researcher herself. Another issue that could arise when conducting an online survey experiment is participants dropping out during the experiment, which may lead to biases (Fielding et al., 2017). There are several reasons for participants to drop out, for example, the duration of the survey, or they may find specific questions too controversial. Consequently, incomplete responses could lead to inaccuracy of the results (Fielding et al., 2017). However, to reduce this issue, the researcher ensured to share the survey on portals that would allow fellow researchers to receive a code when completed. The fellow researchers could use that code to gain points to gather participants for their research.

Additionally, the researcher offered contact information and research affiliation so that participants could reach out and confirm credibility (Fielding et al., 2017). Moreover, the questions in the survey were formulated using natural and easy language to understand to ensure that participants would not feel embarrassed for not understanding jargon (Babbie, 2020; Fielding et al., 2017). However, the survey was only available in English. Therefore, all participants had to be comfortable with the language to fill it out. Finally, the survey lasted 5 to 7 minutes to complete, which should aid in the completion and accuracy of the results (Fielding et al., 2017).

### **3.2. Sampling Strategy**

The survey was distributed via the survey portal SurveySwap.io, where the researchers could pay a small fee in exchange for responses, hoping to reach as many people as possible in a short time. Additionally, the portal allowed the researcher to complete surveys from fellow researchers in exchange for points that could be used to gather respondents. The researcher utilized both to ensure that enough responses would be collected. Moreover, the survey was distributed via the researcher's social media account on Reddit. Specifically, the researcher posted the link on a subreddit for survey exchanges named r/SampleSize (Figure 3). In the subreddit, users can post surveys with specific information regarding the survey to ensure participants would fit the criteria. Moreover, posting the survey on Reddit allowed people to give feedback regarding the survey as seen in Figure 4. The specific sampling strategy utilized in this study is convenience sampling. It implies that participants are not based on any formal sample design. Therefore, the results

could exhibit a possible form of bias as they may not be reflective of larger populations (Sarstedt et al., 2017).

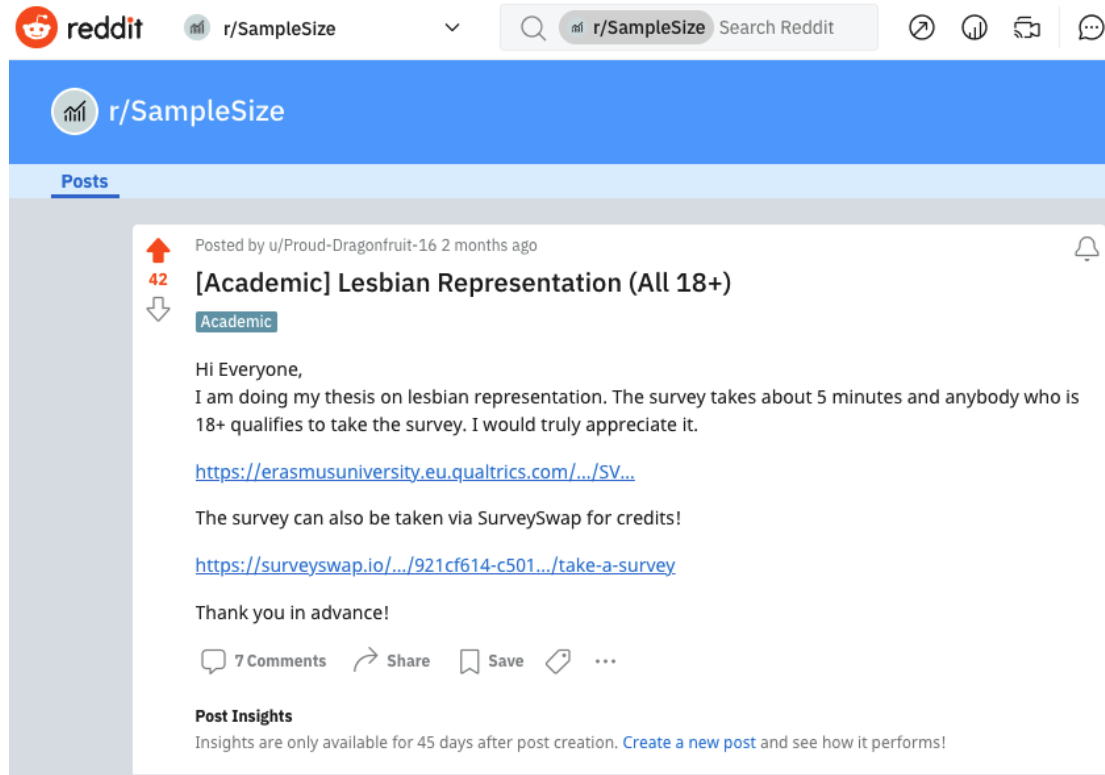


Figure 3: The Message Put on Reddit by the Researcher

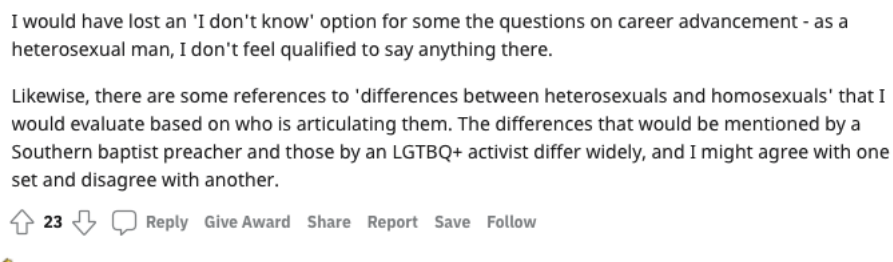


Figure 4: Example Feedback Received on Reddit

### 3.2.1. Demographics

Everyone above 18 is considered a part of the target group. Although heterosexual people are considered the main focus of the study, this was not specified during data collection. The

researcher placed demographic questions at the end of the survey to not overwhelm them with personal questions (Babbie, 2020).

First, by inquiring about sexual orientation, the researcher removed all responses that did not fit into the demographic. Second, the researcher asked participants for their country of origin to place the social and cultural environment that participants reside in; this is especially relevant considering the focus of the study on social identification. Third, as aforementioned, gender could play a role in homophobia. Therefore, an equally distributed gender amongst the responses is crucial to ensure that the manipulation works (Fielding et al., 2017). Fourth, the researcher wanted to ensure that all participants were of legal age. Ultimately, the researcher ensured to communicate the sampling criteria within the message.

### **3.2.2. Sample**

A total of 428 responses were recorded, after data cleaning  $N = 166$  were included for further analysis. In total, 262 responses have been excluded from the results and are deemed invalid. Out of the 262 invalid responses, 155 stopped answering too early, 66 identified as bisexual and 37 as homosexual and 1 was under the age of 18. Therefore, based on data cleaning a total of 166 valid responses will be used for analysis.

In the final sample, the number of valid responses for age, gender and country is 166. ( $M_{Age} = 27.20$ ,  $SD = 8.35$ , 39% male, 51% female). Participants were offered a third option of *Non-binary/Third gender* which was selected by 12 (7%) of the responses, 3 selected 'prefer not to say'. Prefer not to say is treated a missing value which leaves gender with a total of 163.

As the focus is mainly on heterosexual people, a total of 129 identified as such ( $N = 129$ , 77.7%), followed by Other ( $N = 32$ , 19.3%). The remainder indicated "prefer not to say" ( $N = 5$ , .3%). Prefer not to say was treated as a missing value in any further analysis, leaving sexual orientation with 161 respondents. Furthermore, a total of 32 countries are represented in the results, which 54 who are American ( $N = 54$ , 32.5%), followed by British ( $N = 25$ , 15.1%), Dutch ( $N = 14$ , 8.4%), German ( $N = 12$ , 7.2%). The remainder of the countries were represented by less than 10 people.

### **3.2.3. Study Materials**

As mentioned, lesbian representation was manipulated by creating two different visuals. The two visuals contain an image of the same woman with a change in masculine or



feminine presentation. In order to avoid the researcher's notion of what masculine or feminine is, the alterations have been done based on research. The researcher altered clothing, hair, and make-up.

According to Reddy-Best & Jones (2020), femininity in a lesbian can be seen in hyper-femininity, the portrayal of the ultimate feminine woman; this is shown through wearing heels, long hair, acrylic nails, make-up, and dresses. Moreover, Rand (2017) states that femininity in lesbians can be similar to the typical American cheerleader: trendy and sometimes provocative. Geiger et al., (2006) contribute that feminine lesbians can be split into *lipstick* lesbians, career-oriented feminists, hypersexual, and sexually confused. Firstly, lipstick lesbians refer to hyper-feminine and are associated with "beauty, sensitivity, and maternal instincts" (p.171). The researcher utilized the descriptors for *lipstick* as a criterium for the manipulation alongside Reddy-Best & Jonas's (2020) definition of femininity.

Masculinity in a woman is often a tell-tale that she is a lesbian, according to Rand (2017).

However, Reddy-best & Jones (2020) states that in current fashion, even heterosexual woman can be seen wearing very "typically" lesbian clothes. For example, jeans, sneakers, and informal attire: a pantsuit. However, even in the scenario of the pantsuit: a lesbian would opt for a male dress shirt, whereas a heterosexual would be more likely to select a "femme blouse" (p. 163). An example of the embodiment of masculinity in lesbians is Ellen Degeneres; she even created a fashion brand to capitalize on it (Reddy-Best & Jonas, 2020).

Moreover, according to Geiger et al., (2006), masculine lesbians can often be stereotyped as one of the four subcategories: soft butch, free-spirited, sexually deviant, or angry butch. Angry butch is associated with aggression, being defensive, and being humorless. Moreover, Geiger et al., (2006) described the angry butch woman as stocky, ugly, overweight, androgynous, and muscular.

In physical appearance, masculine women have short hair and short nails and often look boyish (Geiger et al., 2006; Rand, 2017; Reddy-best & Jonas, 2020). To specify: they often attempt to highlight or create the illusion of masculine features: a square figure, short hair, muscular. Masculine features can be created with the use of oversized clothing or binders. For the masculine stimulus, the researcher utilized the criterium for soft-butch and angry butch alongside assumed physical appearance.

Therefore, the feminine visual shows a woman with long hair, a full face of make-up, and wearing a floral light blue dress. The woman is placed in front of some greenery and can be seen from the waist up. The visual for the feminine manipulation can be seen in appendix A1.

In the masculine visual, the same woman has shorter hair styled back. She is wearing a button-up with dark blue pants and a brown belt and has a silver chain attached to the belt.

Moreover, she is wearing a sea-shell chain on her neck. The woman is photographed from the knees up and placed in front of some greenery. The visual for the masculine manipulation can be seen in appendix A2.

To ensure that participants knew she was a lesbian. The text above the visual said: "Please take a moment to look at the following image of a lesbian; once you are ready, you can continue to the rest of the survey." This manipulation aims to investigate the different effects of masculine and feminine lesbian representation on homophobia. Therefore, a part of the participants will only be exposed to one of the two study materials. This will leave us with three groups, including the control group: (A) the control group, (B) masculine, and (C) feminine.

### **3.2.4. Survey Procedure**

This survey experiment was designed to be completed via a laptop. Before starting the survey, participants had to read a message informing them about the duration, topic, and what to expect. Moreover, they were informed that the survey is best to be done via laptop. However, it was entirely possible to be completed via any other smart device. The message informed the participants that they would agree to the terms and grant consent for further analysis by clicking next. The message also made clear to participants that the survey was for educational purposes and that they could stop at any time, and that there were no wrong answers. Moreover, the message provided an email address of the researcher that they could contact for any questions that may arise. Lastly, participants would be informed that all information is confidential and anonymous.

Once the participant has agreed to be a part of the study, they would be randomly assigned to one of the groups (A, B, or C). Group A will immediately be directed to the control block. The control block consisted of 17 questions taken from a homophobia scale, ten questions from the openness to experience personality scale, and nine questions based on a social identification scale. Lastly, participants were asked socio-demographic questions: age, gender, sexual orientation, and country of origin. Groups B and C (experimental) will be exposed to the study materials and manipulation checks before being directed to the control block. The manipulation check was done by asking participants to describe the visual (study material) they saw in detail, followed by three questions about their perception of the visual to assess accuracy, gender representation, and positivity.

### 3.3. Measurements and Operationalization

The goal of this research is to answer the proposed research question. Therefore, to ensure validity and reliability, the data that has been collected has been tested and analyzed. Specifically, the researcher conducted a manipulation check. Moreover, confirmative factor analysis and a reliability analysis have been conducted on each scale.

#### 3.3.1. Manipulation Check

As previously mentioned, the manipulation check consists of two questions directly placed after the visuals. The first question asked participants to describe the visual in detail, followed by a question where participants had to select the gender representation they were exposed to. The question was to ensure that they did not skip the visual and that the manipulation was measured with two open-ended items and one on a continuous variable. The continuous variable was on a 5-point Likert scale (1= very masculine, 5= very feminine). All respondents in the manipulation group answered the second question (N=100), and 93 answered the open-ended question.

#### 3.2.3 Homophobia

The dependent variable, *Homophobia*, was taken from Massey (2009) scale that measures prejudice against LGBT members. The original scale consisted of 70 factors consisting out of 70 items. However, the scale has been adjusted and remains a total of 16 items, including the following two factors: denial of continued discrimination (8) and aversion toward lesbians (8). The questions were based on a 7-points Likert scale ranging from (1 = *totally disagree*, 7 = *totally agree*). The 16 items were entered into a Confirmative Factor Analysis using principal components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation with a fixed number of factors of two ( $>1.00$ ),  $KMO = .79$ ,  $\chi^2 (N= 166, 120) = 640.686$ ,  $p < .001$ . The resultant model explained that denial of continued discrimination explained 48% of the variance in homophobia and that aversion toward lesbians explained 12% of the variance. Factor loaders of individual items onto the two factors found are present in Table 3.1. The factors found aligned with Massey et al., (2009) and are:

*Denial of continued discrimination.* The first factor includes eight items that indicate a denial of discrimination that LGBT members face, such as, "Discrimination against gay men and lesbians is no longer a problem in the United States" and "Lesbians and gay men often miss out on good jobs due to discrimination".

Reliability analysis for the factor was run and showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .90. This indicates that the factor Denial of continued discrimination is very reliable as it is above an .80. the mean score for the factor was 4.75, with a standard deviation of 1.19.

*Aversion toward lesbians.* The second factor includes eight items describing disgust when near lesbians, and wanting to avoid contact, such as, “I think female homosexuals are disgusting” and “I try to avoid contact with lesbians”. This factor also includes items that criticizes the gender representation of lesbian women with statements such as, “Lesbians can’t be feminine” and “Lesbians aren’t real woman”.

Reliability analysis for the factor was run and showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .87. This indicates that the factor Denial of continued discrimination is reliable as it is above an .80. The mean score for the factor was 1.52, with a standard deviation of .86.

Table 3.1: Factor and Reliability Analysis for Scales for Social Identification

Item	Aversion toward lesbians	Denial of continued discrimination
It would be upsetting for me to find that I was alone with a lesbian	-.91	
Lesbians cant be feminine	-.88	
I try to avoid contact with lesbians	-.86	
Im uncomfortable when lesbians act masculine	-.78	
Lesbians aren’t real woman	-.72	
I would like to have more lesbian friends (reversed)	-.65	
I think female homosexuals are disgusting	-.57	
I wish lesbians would act more feminine	-.51	
Lesbians and gay men often miss out on good jobs due to discrimination		.95

Too many lesbians and gay men still lose out on jobs and promotions because of their sexual orientation		.87
It is easy to understand why gay and lesbian right groups are still concerned about societal limitations of homosexual opportunities		.83
It is rare to see gay men and lesbians treated in a homophobic manner on television. (reversed)		.80
Society has reached the point where gay people and straight people have equal opportunities for advancement (reversed)		.77
Most lesbians and gay men are no longer discriminated against. (reversed)		.66
It is easy to understand the anger of lesbian and gay rights groups in my country		.64
Discrimination against gay men and lesbians is no longer a problem in the United States. (reversed)	(.44)	.46
<hr/>		
R <sup>2</sup>	12.49	48.30
Cronbach's alpha	.87	.90
<hr/>		

### 3.3.2. Perception of Lesbian Representation

The independent variable, Perception of Lesbian Representation includes three individual items. The first one was taken from (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020) and includes will be adjusted to fit this study: “what was your response to the previous lesbian visual?”. The items is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging (1= very negative to 5 = very positive).

### 3.3.3. Social Identification

Social identification was taken from Schmid et al., (2009) and has been adjusted to fit this study. It includes a total of 9 items that measured four parts of the social identity: distinctive threat (3), similarity complexity (2), ingroup bias (2), and tolerance (2). Questions will be asked on a 6-point Likert scale that ask participants how strongly they agree with a statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Ingroup bias will be measured on a range to the ingroup and outgroup (0 = extremely unfavorable, 100 = extremely favorable). The nine items have been entered into a Confirmative Factor Analysis using principal component extraction with Direct Oblimin based on eigenvalues (>1.00),  $KMO = .51$ ,  $\chi^2 (N= 166, 36) = 372.272$ ,  $p < .001$ . The resultant model explained 75% of the variance in Social identification. A KMO score between .50 and .60 can be considered miserable and may weaken any findings made from the data, however, it is still eligible for factor analysis. The resultant model explained 75% of the variance in Social identification. Factor loadings of the individual items onto the four factors found are present in table 3.2. The factors found aligned with Smidt et al., (2009) and are:

*Distinctive threat.* The first factor consists of three items that indicate whether they view lesbian people as a threat to their identity, such as, “It annoys me when others don’t see the important differences between Heterosexuals and Homosexuals”. Reliability analysis for the factor showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .77. This indicates that the factor Distinctive threat is somewhat reliable as it is above a .70. the mean score for the factor was 2.77, with a standard deviation of 1.36.

*Similarity Complex.* The second factor consists of two items that indicate whether being heterosexual people and homosexuality are considered equal, such as, “Being a Heterosexual in my community means you are normal”. Reliability analysis for the factor showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .73. This indicates that the factor similarity complex is somewhat reliable as it is above a .70. the mean score for the factor was 2.69, with a standard deviation of 1.36.

*Ingroup Bias.* The third factor consist of two questions where participants have to rank homosexuals and lesbian people on a scale from 1 to 100. Reliability analysis for the factor showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .78. This indicates that the factor ingroup bias is somewhat reliable as it is above a .70. the mean score for the factor was 2.91, with a standard deviation of 19.25.

*Tolerance.* The fourth factor consist of two items to determine the level of tolerance heterosexual people have toward lesbians, such as, “I can easily accept the differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals”. Reliability analysis for the factor showed a Cronbach’s alpha of .54. This indicates that the factor tolerance is unreliable as it is below a .70. the mean score for the factor was 5.68, with a standard deviation of 1.21. However, due to the unreliability score, tolerance will not be used for any further analysis.

Table 3.2: Factor and Reliability Analysis for Scales for Social Identification

Item	Distinctive threat	Similarity Complex	Ingroup Bias	Tolerance
What is your overall feeling toward heterosexual people?			.97	
What is your overall feeling toward lesbian people?			.98	
It annoys me when others see heterosexuals and homosexuals as the same	.90			
It is not right that heterosexuals and homosexuals are threatened as if they were the same	.85			
It annoys me when others dont see the important differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals	.70			
Being a Heterosexual in my community means you are normal (reversed)		.89		

A typical heterosexual is very similar to a typical person in my community (reversed)				.88
I understand that lesbians need to celebrate their visibility and equality (pride)				.81
I can easily accept the differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals				.78
<hr/>				
R <sup>2</sup>	22.16	17.51	22.82	12.65
Cronbach's alpha	.77	.73	.79	.54
<hr/>				

### 3.3.4. Openness to Experience

The independent variable, openness to experience, was taken from John & Srivastava (1999) Big Five Inventory questionnaire and includes a total of 10 items that measure the presence of openness to experience in participants. Questions were asked on a 5-point Likert scale that ask participants how strongly they agree with a statement (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

The 10 items were entered into a Confirmative Factor Analysis using principal components extraction with Direct Oblimin rotation with a fixed number of factors of 1 (>1.00),  $KMO = .86$ ,  $\chi^2 (N= 166, 45) = 432,124$ ,  $p < .001$ . The resultant model explained 42% of the variance in openness to experience. Factor loaders of individual items onto the factors found are present in Table 3.3. Two of the items did not load onto the factor and will be therefore excluded from any further analysis.

*Openness to experience.* The factor includes a total of eight items to indicate the extent to which someone may possess the personality trait openness to experience, such as, “I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas”, and “I see myself as someone who is inventive”. Reliability analysis for the factor showed a Cronbach's alpha of .85. This indicates that the factor openness to experience is very reliable as it is above a .80. the mean score for the factor was 5.26, with a standard deviation of .96.



Table 3.3: Factor and Reliability Analysis for the Openness to Experience Scale

Item	Openness to Experience
I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas	.82
I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things	.66
I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker	.76
I see myself as someone who has an active imagination	.71
I see myself as someone who is inventive	.80
I see myself as someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences	.61
I see myself as someone who prefers work that is routine (Reverse)	
I see myself as someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature	.66
I see myself as someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas	.73
I see myself as someone who has few artistic interest (Reverse)	
R <sup>2</sup>	42.41
Cronbach's alpha	.85

### 3.4. Analysis

Linear regression is most fitting to answer the research question. Linear regression will allow the researcher to investigate if the independent variables' value predicts the independent variable's value (Montgomery et al., 2021). Moreover, linear regression allows the researcher to understand the strength of the relationship (R squared) and whether or not the prediction is significant

(Montgomery et al., 2021). Therefore, for H1 & H2, linear regression is a logical choice as homophobia, openness to experience, and social identification are all continuous variables (Montgomery et al., 202).

For H3, a variant analysis will be used to answer the hypothesis. ANOVA will allow the researcher to compare results between the different groups via post hoc comparisons to investigate a significant effect.

Moreover, a moderation analysis will be used to answer H4. A moderation analysis will be used to determine if reducing homophobia is moderated by the perception of lesbian representation (Vogt, 2011). This will be done by adding the interaction to linear regression (Vogt, 2011). Therefore, the different groups (masculine, feminine, control) will be dummy coded.

Lastly, to investigate if the manipulation was adequate, the open-ended question has been coded into the categories based on Geiger et al., (2006) research. Once coded, the variable will be placed in ANOVA to investigate the outcome and if they align with the assigned manipulation. Additionally, an ANOVA will be utilized to investigate if the gender representation aligns with the assigned manipulation.

### **3.5. Validity and Reliability**

The quality of the research has to be evaluated based on validity and reliability. The validity or accuracy ensures that the experiment measures the variable homophobia, openness to experience, and social identification. However, validity can only be assured when reliability is high. To aid with the validity, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three groups by Qualtrics. According to (Fielding et al., 2017), random assignment increases validity as each participant has an equal opportunity of being assigned to a group. Thus, the researcher may remove biases that confidently affect the research outcome.

Moreover, reliability is concerned with whether the study is replicable (Hauser et al., 2018). To ensure reliability, all scales come from pre-existing scales: this suggests that all scales had a Cronbach's alpha of .80 or above (Bujang et al., 2018). However, not all scales were related to homophobia, therefore proper adjustments have been made. Thus, to be certain that each scale was reliable, a confirmative factor analysis has been conducted on each scale (Neuman, 2014). Moreover, all questions have been standardized for the respondents to ensure consistency, excluding the manipulation.

In addition, the manipulation check aids in assessing the experiment's effectiveness. Finally, to clarify, it ensures that participants responded in accordance with the manipulation (Neuman, 2014).

## 4. Results

This chapter entails the results. Firstly, to ensure that the manipulation was effective, the researcher conducted a manipulation check through ANOVA. Secondly, each hypothesis has been analyzed. The analysis included a multiple linear regression, linear regression and moderation analysis done via hierarchical regression analysis.

### 4.1. Manipulation Check

The manipulation consisted of three questions; the open-ended question requested participants to describe the visual they were exposed to. 93 responses out of the 100 assigned to the manipulation groups answered the open-ended question. The answers to the open-ended question have been coded according to Geiger et al., (2006).

Firstly, each answer has been coded into only one grouping, despite fitting into multiple; the dominant category has been chosen. The findings have been analyzed using crosstabs and revealed that lipstick lesbian (N=41, 80,4%) was the most common subcategory for the feminine representation, which means that the manipulation of the feminine group was overall successful. However, soft-butch (N=25, 51%) was the most prominent group for the masculine representation. They are followed by career-oriented feminists (N=8, 16.3%) and lipstick lesbians (N=6, 12.2%). The data indicates that the masculine representation was only perceived by half of the group as masculine and, therefore, unsuccessful.

Second, an ANOVA was conducted to compare the answers to the open-ended question, which showed a significant main effect on the exposure to the study materials and how gender representation is perceived in the study materials,  $F(2, 98) = 52.208, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .348$ . Since there are only two groups, Tukey Post-hoc comparisons were not performed. Descriptive statistics revealed for feminine ( $M = 4.12, SD = .77$ ), followed by masculine ( $M = 2.90, SD = .92$ ). This means that the feminine visual was indeed perceived to be more feminine. However, the masculine visual was perceived to be closer to neither masculine nor feminine, which aligns with the results from the open-ended question.

Third, to investigate whether the participants perceived the visuals to be accurate, descriptive statistics were run for the variable and showed a mean ( $M$ ) of 3.23, indicating that the manipulation was representation “might or might not” be accurate. This means that participants felt that participants were unsure if it was accurate.

Overall, this means that the manipulation was only partially successful, which will be considered in further analysis and interpretation of the results.

## 4.2. Hypothesis Testing

To test the first three hypotheses the researcher has conducted two multiple linear regressions. One with an aversion toward lesbians as a criterium and one with denial of continued discrimination as a criterium. The predictors in the first model are distinctive threat, ingroup bias, and similarity complexity for the first hypothesis, openness to experience for the second hypothesis, and lesbian representation for the third hypothesis.

The model for aversion toward lesbians was found to be significant,  $F(5, 152) = 6.37, p < .001, = .17$ . Furthermore, the model for denial of continued discrimination was equally found to be significant,  $F(5, 152) = 4.93, p < .001, = .14$ . However, as shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 only the results for hypothesis 1 show significance. The researcher discusses the results for each hypothesis individually in the following chapters.

Table 4.1: Regression Model for Predicting Aversion Toward Lesbians (N=157)

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Standardized Coefficients Beta
constant	1.752***	
Distinctive Threat	.139	.243 ***
Ingroup Bias	.011	.247 ***
Similarity Complexity	-.083	-.152 **
Openness to Experience	-.066	-.086 *
Lesbian representation	-.185	-.114 *
$R^2$	.173	
$F$	6.366***	

Significance Levels: \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 4.2: Regression Model for Predicting Denial of Continued Discrimination (N=157)

Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients Beta	Standardized Coefficients Beta
Constant	4.317***	
Distinctive Threat	.118	.137 *
Ingroup Bias	-.020	-.310 ***
Similarity Complexity	.057	.069 *

Openness to Experience	-.027	-.023 *
Lesbian representation	.231	.094 *
$R^2$	.374	
$F$	4.828***	

Significance Levels: \*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$

#### 4.2.1. Social Identification and Homophobia

Hypothesis 1 (H1) stated that participants who score low for social identification after exposure to the manipulation would score high for homophobia after exposure to gender representation. To clarify, participants would indicate that they would view lesbians as more of a distinctive threat, suffer less from a similarity complexity, and hold a bias for their social group, which leads them to be aversive toward lesbians and be in denial of their discrimination.

As aforementioned, in the first model aversion towards lesbians is used as a criterium (DV), and the second model has denial of continued discrimination as a criterium. The predictors (IV) for the models are from social identification: distinctive threat, ingroup bias, and similarity complexity. The distinctive threat ( $b = .24, p < .001$ ), and ingroup bias ( $b = .25, p < .001$ ) were both found to be significant predictors.

Based on coefficient beta, it can be deduced that ingroup bias and distinctive threat positively correlate with an aversion toward lesbians, and the similarity complexity has a negative correlation. This indicates that when participants view lesbians as more of a distinctive threat, they would indeed show more aversion toward lesbians. Consequently, ingroup bias showed a positive relationship, which suggests that, as expected, when people hold a stronger preference for their social group, their aversion toward lesbians increases. This aligns with the hypothesis.

In the second model with denial of continued discrimination as a criterium, however, only ingroup bias was a significant predictor ( $b = -.31, p < .001$ ). Based on coefficient beta, it can be deduced that ingroup bias has a negative correlation with denial of continued discrimination. This can be interpreted that when participants hold a preference or bias for their own group, they would be more in denial of their continued discrimination toward lesbians. Thus, ingroup bias overall is a strong predictor of homophobic attitudes. As such, hypothesis 1 can be accepted as social identification is a predictor of homophobia.

#### 4.2.2. Openness to Experience and Homophobia

Hypothesis 2 (H2) suggested that participants who possess the personality trait of openness to experience would be less homophobic; specifically, they would be aware of their continued discrimination and would not have an aversion toward lesbians. Two linear regressions have been conducted to explore the relationship, first with an aversion toward lesbians as a criterium. The second model had a denial of continued discrimination as a criterium. The predictor for the models was openness to experience. Although both models were found to be significant as stated in 4.2. openness to experience did not show to be a significant predictor of homophobia. Therefore, any interpretation of the data would lead to weak arguments. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

### **4.2.3. Gender Representation and Homophobia**

Hypothesis 3 (H3) claims that participants, after exposure to feminine lesbian representation, would show less aversion toward lesbians and would be aware of their continued discrimination compared to masculine lesbian representation. Lesbian representation was used as an independent variable (predictor), and aversion toward lesbians and denial of continued discrimination were dependent variables (criterium).

To use lesbian representation in a linear regression analysis, the researcher first had to dummy code the variable. One dummy code was created for the masculine representation, and one for the feminine representation. Only the dummy code for the masculine representation was used in the model. Unfortunately, results revealed that exposure to lesbian representation is an insignificant predictor of reducing homophobia. Specifically, both aversion toward lesbians and denial of continued discrimination showed to be insignificant. As such, the third hypothesis cannot be accepted.

### **4.2.4. Positive Perception of Lesbian Representation and Homophobia**

Finally, hypothesis 4 (H4) suggests that how the participants perceive manipulation (lesbian representation) moderates the relationship with an aversion toward lesbians and with denial of continued discrimination. Unfortunately, as H3 has been rejected, the relationship between exposure to gender representation and homophobia does not qualify for a moderation analysis (Aiken et al., 1991). Therefore, H4 is automatically rejected.

However, the researcher did conduct a linear regression with the perception of lesbian representation as a predictor and with an aversion toward lesbians as a criterium in the first model and denial of continued discrimination as a criterium in the second model. Specifically, to investigate whether the perception of lesbian representation can predict homophobia. Both aversion toward lesbians  $F(2, 98) = 11.86, p < .001, = .11.$  and denial of continued discrimination  $F(1, 98) =$

8.19,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta^2 = .07$ . showed to be significant. Thus, when participants perceived the lesbian representation as positive, they reported being less homophobic compared to when the representation was perceived as negative.



## 5. Discussion

Over the past decade, lesbians have gained more representation in the media (Geiger et al., 2006): this is an incredible feat with the widespread acknowledgment of negative attitudes toward lesbians (Kite & Whitley, 1996). However, acceptance of the lgbtq+ community is slowly growing (Annati, 2020; Meyer, 2003).

Moreover, with the increased visibility, lesbians are often objectified and depicted as stereotypical lesbians (Raley & Lucas, 2006; McLaughlin & Rodriguez, 2016). Additionally, negative stereotypes can be harmful to lesbians as assumptions based on stereotypes, rather than experience, may lead to a justification of discrimination or induce fear (Blashill & Powlishta, 2009). Therefore, a critical factor in how people respond to lesbians is whether they perceive it positively or negatively (Lissitsa & Kushnirovich, 2020).

Additionally, research suggests that when people easily relate to lesbians, they will be less homophobic (Treppe, 2013). Thus, the sexuality of lesbian characters as secondary is beneficial to increasing social identification. Lastly, the personality trait of openness to experience may play a role in predicting homophobia (Cullen et al., 2002).

Therefore, an experiment has been conducted to investigate a relationship between these factors and to answer the following research question: *To what extent does the way lesbians are represented on social media impact homophobia?*

### 5.1 Key Findings

#### 5.1.1. Effects of Social Identification on Homophobia.

One of the goals of this study was to evaluate if social identification could predict homophobia; it was expected that low social identification would lead to more homophobia. The research findings aligned with these assumptions and showed a significant effect of social identification on homophobia.

Results indicate that aversion towards lesbians is influenced by ingroup bias. Specifically, the results aligned with the assumptions based on the theory (Schmid et al., 2009; Treppe, 2013; Cox & Gallios, 1996). Results show that heterosexual people prefer their group above lesbians, and in such a case, it leads to more aversion toward lesbians. Thus, a positive relationship between the ingroup bias and aversion toward lesbians is present. In other words, when people like their own group above lesbians, they are more aversive. Equally, results showed that ingroup bias negatively influences denial of continued discrimination; this indicates that individuals would be more in denial of their continued discrimination when ingroup bias is high.

Additionally, results revealed that perceiving lesbians as a distinctive threat indicates an aversion toward lesbians but does not predict denial of continued discrimination. As such, conclusions can not be drawn to determine whether individuals are in denial of their discrimination when they perceive lesbians as a threat.

Moreover, similarity complexity did not show a significant relationship with an aversion toward lesbians or homophobia. Thus, further research is required to understand if individuals who experience similarity complexity are more homophobic. Lastly, tolerance did not show to be high reliability and was excluded from any further analysis. Unfortunately, the study can not reveal whether low tolerance predicts homophobia.

### **5.1.2. Presence of Openness to Experience and Homophobia**

The present hypothesis tested the relationship between the presence of the personality trait openness to experience in individuals and homophobia. Specifically, a decrease or lack of openness to experience in people should increase homophobia. Contrary to previous research (Cullen et al., 2002; McCrea & Costa, 1985), there appears to be no significant relationship between openness to experience and aversion toward lesbians. Moreover, results showed no significant relationship with denial of continued discrimination. Finally, results showed that either model could only explain a small part of the variance, indicating that any difference could have been purely coincidental.

Possibly, exposure to lesbians has become a more frequent occurrence. As such, the normalization of lesbians may explain why openness to experience does not predict homophobia. Specifically, the personality traits assume that those who lack the trait are closed-minded. However, increased exposure may surpass that. Lesbians may have become more normalized in current society. Therefore, one may still be closed-minded whilst being accepting of lesbians.

### **5.1.3. Effects of Gender Representations on Homophobia**

Lastly, the current study aimed to assess whether exposure to feminine representation would reduce homophobia compared to no exposure and masculine representation. Unfortunately, no effect was found between gender representation and aversion toward lesbians and denial of continued discrimination. As such, no conclusions can be drawn from the data.

Moreover, data revealed how minor the differences are for aversion toward lesbians and denial of continued discrimination toward lesbians. Respectfully, the mean for each

group was below 1.7, which means that respondents reported having no aversion toward lesbians. This indicates that individuals do not discriminate more toward masculine or less toward feminine lesbians. However, as stated before, no conclusions are supported by the data as it was shown to be insignificant.

These results may be explained by the possibility that respondents provided socially desirable answers, or due to the demographics of the sample. Specifically, 51% identified as female and approximately 66% were aged in their twenties. Previous research has indicated that women may be less homophobic overall compared to men (Cullen et al., 2002). Equally, younger generations may be more accepting of lesbians than previous generations due to exposure to lesbians on social media.

Furthermore, perceiving the representation was assumed to be moderating the relationship between gender representation and homophobia; consequently, as aforementioned, results did not qualify for a moderation analysis as there is no significant effect on gender representation and homophobia.

However, data did reveal a relationship between the perception of lesbian representation and homophobia. Specifically, data revealed a negative relationship between perceiving lesbian representation as positive and aversion toward lesbians. In other words, when people perceive lesbian representation positively, they would be less homophobic.

In addition, a positive perception of lesbian representation showed to affect denial of continued discrimination. Perceiving lesbian representation as positive reduced aversion toward lesbians in individuals and made them more aware of their own discrimination.

The data aligns with previous research (Geiger et al., 2016; Lissita & Kushnirovich, 2020). As such, positivity does affect homophobia, as suspected. However, this was not shown to have an influence on the relationship. Thus, further analysis is necessary to draw any accurate conclusions.

## **5.2. Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The results from this study contribute to the current body of literature and have several implications for practice that can inform movie producers and activist organizations such as GLAAD how gender representation in lesbians is perceived amongst its heterosexual viewers and the effect on reducing homophobia. The present study researched the relationship between social identification, openness to experience, gender representation, perception of lesbian representation, and homophobia.

Despite the numerous studies within the field, this is the first to combine these factors concerning lesbians. Previous studies have investigated the topic concerning merely gay men (Gillig

& Murphy, 2016; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018). Moreover, the impact of stereotypical lesbian representation in media on LGBTQ+ people has equally been researched extensively, however not on the entire population as is done in this study.

### **5.2.1. Theoretical Implications**

In total, there are two academic implications. Firstly, the lack of results is a contribution to academic research. Although social identity theory has been thoroughly researched and established (Treppe, 2013; Cox & Gallios, 1996), previous research has been predominately focused on communication between different groups and ingroup bias to predict homophobia toward lesbians (Campbell et al., 2011; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018). However, the other aspects have been previously ignored, such as tolerance, distinctive threat, and similarity complexity (Schmidt et al., 2009). As such, the current body of work investigated these aspects in relation to attitudes of homophobia. Moreover, the study supports the notion that when lesbians are perceived as a distinctive threat, it predicts an aversion toward lesbians. This implies that homophobia is partially caused by fear and that lesbians are seen as threatening to someone's reality.

Second, this study contributes to understanding gender representation in lesbians and their relationship with homophobia. Although the study showed no effect of gender representation on reducing homophobia, an academic contribution is made to explain the importance of how lesbian representation is perceived. In other words, the study has shown that when a lesbian is perceived as positive, it reduces homophobia which supports Geiger et al., (2016) study. However, both masculine and feminine lesbians can be perceived as positive. However, other factors could be an indication as to why something is perceived as positive or negative. Therefore, this study can be used as a foundation to investigate further why people respond positive or negative to lesbians.

The scale by Massey (2009) that this study has used was practical to assess aversion toward lesbians. However, being in denial of one's own discrimination toward lesbians was insignificant across multiple models. Thus, the current study shows that denial of continued discrimination may not be a factor in assessing homophobia.

### **5.2.2. Practical Implications**

This study provides provocative insights for media professionals, queer activists, and organizations like GLAAD. Indeed, the study has provided these practitioners with practical information. First, the study aims to show that feminine representation does not have a

different effect on homophobia compared to masculine representation. Specifically, masculine and feminine results were perceived as nearly the same. This suggests that it does not matter how masculine or feminine some presents themselves. Thus, any arguments made by media professionals that state otherwise can be refuted. As such, queer activists can use these results to streamline their efforts to argue for better and more representation in media.

Second, screenwriters and movie producers can use these results to understand why they should write and create lesbian characters that viewers can identify with if they wish to do so. Specifically, the study emphasizes that developing non-threatening characters are essential to reducing homophobia. Thus, characters should be created to be complex characters that viewers can relate to in multiple aspects to reduce ingroup bias. To clarify, when people feel like their identity overlaps with the character on different fronts, they are more likely to resonate with the character, increasing acceptance. Notably, homophobia may be reduced when viewers feel they can identify with the characters on television and consider them part of their ingroup. Therefore, storylines that focus on career, parenthood, hobbies, and more can be beneficial.

### **5.3. Directions for Future Research**

Although results provided revealing data, most of the data did not show significance. This implies that any arguments made from the data are weak. Therefore, data may be improved by gathering a larger sample. Moreover, a study to compare results amongst heterosexuals and members of the queer community could be of interest. Specifically, members of the queer community may be able to assess better whether any difference in gender representation is accurate. Significantly, since gender representation in queer people may vary compared to heterosexual people.

Furthermore, in the current study, the focus was predominately on sexual orientation. However, research has shown that religion and race are predictors of homophobia (Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2018). Thus, adding social-demographic questions such as race and religion to investigate which category of their social identities is most dominant could show provocative insights. Moreover, exploring whether these factors play a role is essential to ensure that any results within a manipulation are due to the stimulus instead of any outside factors (Neuman, 2014).

Additionally, as previously mentioned, research has focused on intergroup contact and frequency. Intergroup contact refers to communication with people from a different group than your own. Introducing these factors could be interesting, especially as research showed that frequent contact with lesbians might reduce homophobia (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2013). Furthermore, it could be introduced to compare whether frequent exposure improves

tolerance toward lesbians by conducting a study over time to investigate if people are less likely to perceive lesbians as threatening after regular exposure.

Furthermore, the current study compared masculine vs. feminine lesbians. However, lesbians express themselves differently outside of gender (Geiger et al., 2016). For example, in the current study, both masculine and feminine representations wore business casual attire. However, it could be interesting to investigate how people respond to different aesthetics such as athletic, outdoorsy, artistic, gothic, or preppy. Specifically to confirm whether specific aesthetics are perceived as queer.

#### **5.4. Limitations**

This study experienced several limitations. First, the researcher did not include asexuality as an option for respondents, thus making it difficult for those people to identify themselves. Although the study's primary focus is on heterosexual people, asexual people do not identify by definition with homosexuals and thus could have revealed new insights.

Second, data showed that the feminine representation was successful. However, the masculine representation was not perceived as masculine enough. Specifically, the masculine was perceived mainly as neither masculine nor feminine. Thus, in future research, manipulating the masculine representation needs to be done more extremely: this could explain why no difference was found between gender representation and its effect on homophobia.

Third, the sample used for analysis was relatively small (N=166); working with a small sample could cause the results to be insignificant due to the increased margin of error (Neuman, 2014).

Fourth, although the researcher used convenience sampling to gather a diverse sample, the sample still showed a skew toward females, thus not representative of the larger population (Ritchie, 2019). Therefore, the results are limited in their generalizability (Babbie, 2020). Implying that the results may not apply to the larger population. Additionally, the focus was on heterosexuals; thus, the researcher did not gather any demographics regarding race or religion, which could have skewed the results.

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## Appendix

### A. STUDY MATERIALS

1: Feminine



2: Masculine



### B. SURVEY

Welcome to my survey! I am a Media and Business Master student at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am researching homophobia for my thesis.

The survey will take approximately 5 to 7 minutes to complete. It will contain an image, statements, and other questions related to the topic. Your identity will remain completely anonymous. The information you share is confidential and will only be used for the purpose of this research. As this survey is voluntary, you can stop at any time if you wish to do so. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

There is no need to sign this document. By completing this survey, you agree to the usage of your data for the purpose of educational research.

If you have any questions please email me:

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Kind regards,  
Hester Breeuwsma

Please take a moment to look at the following image of a lesbian woman, once you are ready you can continue to the rest of the survey

(STUDY MATERIALS)

1. How would you describe the appearance of the woman in the previous visual?  
*Fill in the blank*
2. What is your overall feeling toward the accuracy of the gender representation in the previous visual?
  - a. Very Negative
  - b. Negative
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Positive
  - e. Very Positive
3. what was your response to the previous visual?
  - a. Very Negative
  - b. Negative
  - c. Neutral
  - d. Positive
  - e. Very Positive
4. Most lesbians and gay men are no longer discriminated against.
  - a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
5. Society has reached the point where gay people and straight people have equal opportunities for advancement
  - a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
6. It is rare to see gay men and lesbians treated in a homophobic manner on television.
  - a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
7. Discrimination against gay men and lesbians is no longer a problem in the United States.

- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
8. It is easy to understand the anger of lesbian and gay rights groups in America.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
9. Lesbians and gay men often miss out on good jobs due to discrimination.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
10. It is easy to understand why gay and lesbian rights groups are still concerned about societal limitation of homosexuals' opportunities.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
11. Too many lesbians and gay men still lose out on jobs and promotions because of their sexual orientation.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
12. Lesbians aren't real women.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
13. I wish lesbians would act more feminine.
- a. Totally disagree

- b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
14. I try to avoid contact with lesbians.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
15. It would be upsetting for me to find that I was alone with a lesbian.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
16. I would like to have more lesbian friends.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
17. I'm uncomfortable when lesbians act masculine.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
18. I think female homosexuals are disgusting.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
19. Lesbians can't be feminine.
- a. Totally disagree
  - b. Disagree
  - c. Somewhat disagree
  - d. Neutral

- e. Somewhat agree
  - f. Agree
  - g. Totally agree
20. I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas
    - a. True
    - b. False
  21. I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things
    - a. True
    - b. False
  22. I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker
    - a. True
    - b. False
  23. I see myself as someone who has an active imagination
    - a. True
    - b. False
  24. I see myself as someone who is inventive
    - a. True
    - b. False
  25. I see myself as someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences
    - a. True
    - b. False
  26. I see myself as someone who prefers work that is routine (Reverse)
    - a. True
    - b. False
  27. I see myself as someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas
    - a. True
    - b. False
  28. I see myself as someone who has few artistic interest (Reverse)
    - a. True
    - b. False
  29. I see myself as someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature
    - a. True
    - b. False
  30. It annoys me when others don't see the important differences between Heterosexuals and Homosexuals (distinct)
    - a. Strongly disagree
    - b. Disagree
    - c. Somewhat disagree
    - d. Neutral
    - e. Somewhat agree
    - f. Agree
    - g. Strongly agree
  31. It is not right that Heterosexuals and Homosexuals are treated as if they were the same (distinct)
    - a. Strongly disagree
    - b. Disagree
    - c. Somewhat disagree
    - d. Neutral
    - e. Somewhat agree
    - f. Agree
    - g. Strongly agree



32. It annoys me when others see Heterosexuals and Homosexuals as the same. (distinct)
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat agree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
33. Being a Heterosexual in my community means you are normal (simi)
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat agree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
34. A typical heterosexual is very similar to a typical person in my community (simi)
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat agree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
35. What is your overall feeling toward heterosexual people?
- Feeling thermometer: 0 - 100
36. What is your overall feeling toward heterosexual people?
- Feeling thermometer: 0 - 100
37. I understand that lesbians need to celebrate their visibility and equality (pride) (tolerance)
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat agree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
38. I can easily accept the differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals (tolerance)
- Strongly disagree
  - Disagree
  - Somewhat disagree
  - Neutral
  - Somewhat agree
  - Agree
  - Strongly agree
39. What is your age?
- Fill in the blank*
40. What is your nationality?
- fill in the blank*
41. What is your gender?
- man*
  - woman*

- c. *non-binary/other*
42. Which one best describes you?
- a. *Heterosexual*
  - b. *Homosexual*
  - c. *Bisexual*
  - d. *other; please specify*