Perceptions and Dating Intentions of Single Lesbians and Bisexual Women

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Master Thesis – Applied Social Psychology

S4661869
July 2025
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Abstract

Lesbians and bisexual women are often targets of societal prejudice – especially bisexual women. This may lead them to engage in negative meta-stereotyping, which involves expecting that others will stereotype them negatively based on their sexual identity. In this research, we investigated the relationship between negative meta-stereotyping and dating intentions, as well as what roles self-esteem and internalized sexual stigma (ISS) play in it. An online cross-sectional correlational study was conducted, with 196 lesbians and 175 bisexual women as participants. As hypothesized, we found that bisexual women expect to be stereotyped negatively more than lesbians and that they experience higher levels of ISS. At the same time, there were no differences between the two groups in terms of self-esteem and dating intentions. However, we did find support for our mediation hypotheses: compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower self-esteem and higher ISS respectively, and hence, decreased dating intentions. These findings highlight the importance of considering psychological mechanisms like negative meta-stereotyping, self-esteem, and ISS when investigating LGBTQ+ individuals' dating intentions and dating lives in general. Theoretical and practical implications regarding the socially disadvantaged bisexual identity, strategies to improve queer women's dating lives, and the need to differentiate between queer sexual identities are discussed.

Keywords: negative meta-stereotypes, dating intentions, self-esteem, internalized sexual stigma, lesbian women, bisexual women

Perceptions and Dating Intentions of Single Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Research on the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals has found that nearly half of them identify as single, even though a vast majority – roughly 80% – are interested in having committed romantic relationships (Canaday, 2016). This could potentially be explained by the particular challenges they face as a sexual minority (i.e., discrimination and stigma; Meyer, 2003). Minority stress has detrimental effects on people's romantic lives (Sommantico & Parrello, 2021), and this might discourage queer people from dating, despite their interest in doing so. More specifically, they may fear being discriminated against and/or being perceived negatively by others, since LGBTQ+ people are highly negatively stereotyped (Nadal et al., 2016). In turn, this may contribute to their lower dating intentions.

Expecting to be stereotyped negatively by others and having lower dating intentions might be especially pronounced in bisexual women, because stereotypes regarding bisexuality are generally more prevalent and more negative in nature than those regarding homosexuality (Feinstein et al., 2022; Pistella et al., 2016). Thus, bisexual women's expectations of how they are being perceived may be playing a role in them having lower dating intentions than lesbians. Accordingly, while 50% of young lesbians have experienced a same-sex relationship, only 26% of bisexual women have done so, which is a significant contrast (Elze, 2002).

These expectations about being seen in a negative way could impact dating intentions because they might lead people to perceive themselves negatively as well. Believing that one is seen negatively by others – especially in a stereotypical manner – decreases self-esteem (Vorauer et al., 1998). Thinking lowly of oneself may, in turn, prompt people to avoid dating. Moreover, expecting to be stereotyped negatively because of one's sexual identity might lead to people viewing that part of their identity more negatively themselves. Experiencing such self-stigma is subsequently correlated with avoiding interpersonal connections, including

romantic ones (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Thus, reduced self-esteem and the internalization of negative views one assumes others hold about them might be contributing to the lower dating intentions of queer people.

Studying this is essential, because LGBTQ+ individuals suffer from more mental health problems than cisgender heterosexuals (Meyer, 2003; Nguyen et al., 2023). Enduring microaggressions, such as being stereotyped, leads to issues like lower psychological well-being, higher chances of binge drinking, and increased rates of depressive symptoms (Nadal et al., 2016). In particular, minority stress causes more psychological distress to cisgender gay and bisexual women than for any other cisgender sexual minority (Baiocco et al., 2020). Nevertheless, romantic relationships might help alleviate this. They can buffer against stressors related to one's minority status (e.g., family disappointment, discrimination) (Macapagal et al., 2015), and they enhance the physical and mental health and longevity of young queer people (Mazur, 2022). Consequently, it is important to identify the potential factors preventing them from dating.

Therefore, the aim of the current research is to examine how expecting to be stereotyped negatively by others relates to having lower dating intentions, focusing on lesbians and bisexual women. More specifically, it investigates the roles of self-esteem and the internalization of negativity regarding one's own sexual orientation in this relationship.

The Negative Consequences of Being Stereotyped

Negative stereotypes regarding lesbians and bisexual women are prevalent in society (Nadal et al., 2016). Both groups are perceived as "just going through a phase", confused about their own sexuality, attention-seekers, "choosing" to be queer, willing to have threesomes, and/or preying on heterosexual women (Dyar et al., 2015; McLean, 2008; Pistella et al., 2016). Bisexuals seem to be stereotyped more frequently and more negatively (Feinstein et al., 2022), due to the hegemonic notion that people can only be attracted to one

gender (Bollas, 2023). While lesbians are viewed as codependent in relationships, bisexuals are uniquely seen as greedy, hypersexual, promiscuous, non-monogamous, and unfaithful (Dyar et al., 2015; McLean, 2008).

Stereotypes have negative consequences for those who are stereotyped, regardless of whether they believe in them or not (Hinton et al., 2019). Meta-stereotyping refers to a person's expectations about how others in society stereotype them as member of a specific group (Vorauer et al., 1998) (e.g., a lesbian thinking that she is seen as confused about her sexual orientation).

The content of meta-stereotypes is usually negative (Vezzali, 2016). Thus, they are associated with negative psychological outcomes for both advantaged and disadvantaged social groups. For example, research on race-related meta-stereotypes suggests a link to heightened psychological distress among Asian Americans (Atkin & Tran, 2020) and increased intergroup anxiety among Black South Africans (Finchilescu, 2010). In the case of gay men, meta-stereotyping predicts lower cognitive well-being (Hinton et al., 2019). When it comes to organizational outcomes, meta-stereotypes are related to self-perceived employability (Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2014), work engagement and avoidance (Finkelstein et al., 2020), and future time perspectives and attitudes towards retirement (Bal et al., 2015). Finally, negative meta-stereotypes shape social interactions. They decrease individuals' ingroup identification (Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2011), lower their willingness to provide or seek help (van Leeuwen et al., 2014; Wakefield et al., 2012), and lead to negative evaluations of and avoidance of contact with outgroup members (Vorauer et al., 1998).

Comparing Lesbians and Bisexual Women

Bisexual people face unique stigma, qualitatively different from that experienced by gay individuals (Pistella et al., 2016), due to being targeted by many specific stereotypes (Feinstein et al., 2022). Negative stereotypes and attitudes towards them are also more

prevalent than those directed at gay people (Baiocco et al., 2020). This may be because heterosexual people have more negative attitudes towards bisexuals than towards lesbians and gay men (Dyar et al., 2015). Moreover, bisexuality is viewed negatively not only by heterosexual people, but also among gays and lesbians (Feinstein et al., 2022; Pistella et al., 2016). For instance, some lesbians reject bisexual women as potential romantic partners because they are scared of being cheated on with a man (McLean, 2008). Thus, bisexuals face discrimination from both groups and have reported lower feelings of belonging to both the heterosexual and the LGBTQ+ communities (Dyar et al., 2015; Feinstein et al., 2022; McInnis et al., 2022). This difference between the extent of bi- and homonegativity could imply that bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians, which is the first hypothesis we investigated in the current research.

Individuals participating in intergroup interactions with salient group identities, such as dating, usually concern themselves with how they are being viewed and evaluated by outgroup members (Vezzali, 2016). Because of this, meta-stereotyping can occur. This might negatively affect the interaction in question, because it deprives the meta-stereotyping person of a sense of control and agency (Vázquez et al., 2016; Vorauer et al., 1998). They believe that they are seen as socially undesirable, so they either derogate the other person and the group they belong to, or they avoid contact with them entirely. In a dating context, this might translate into having lower intentions to date.

Furthermore, all the aforementioned negative stereotypes regarding LGBTQ+ women pertain to their supposed behaviors in romantic relationships. Therefore, if queer women believe they are perceived through these stereotypes, their intentions to date might diminish. Prior research also indicates that people who hold negative attitudes towards bisexuality in particular tend to hold negative attitudes towards the idea of being in a relationship with a bisexual partner as well (Armstrong & Reissing, 2014). If bisexual women expect such

attitudes from potential partners – and given the fact that bisexual stereotypes are more negative and prevalent than lesbian stereotypes – they may exhibit even lower dating intentions than lesbians, which is our second hypothesis.

The Mediating Role of Self-Esteem

One consequence of negative meta-stereotyping is reduced self-esteem (Gordijn, 2010; Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2014). Self-esteem is the part of one's self-concept that evaluates the self as worthy or unworthy (Heatherton & Wyland, 2003). Thus, it might be relevant in the context of dating, because it is a subjective index of social acceptance, conveying one's relational value (Blais et al., 2014). Having lower self-esteem is also associated with avoiding romantic relationships and viewing them more negatively (Rill et al., 2009), so it could play a role in dating intentions. Consequently, to identify what psychological factors might be explaining the relationship between queer women's negative meta-stereotyping and their dating intentions, we first investigate self-esteem.

LGBTQ+ people in general have lower self-esteem than cisgender heterosexual people (Chung et al., 2012). This is related to the microaggressions they experience, which detrimentally affect their mental health (Nadal et al., 2016). However, findings regarding queer women's self-esteem in particular are inconclusive, since very little research has been done on the heterogeneity of self-esteem within the queer community. To our knowledge, Bridge et al. (2019) is the only study showing that bisexuals have lower self-esteem than gay people.

Because their sexual identity is highly and uniquely stigmatized (Pistella et al., 2016), bisexual individuals must endure even more negative prejudice than lesbians and gay men (Baiocco et al., 2020). There is also strong evidence that they experience more mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression (Dyar et al., 2015; Feinstein et al., 2022). They also come out less frequently (Balsam & Mohr, 2007; Baiocco et al., 2020; Pistella et al.,

2016) and report a lower sense of belonging to the LGBTQ+ community (Bridge et al., 2019; Feinstein et al., 2022; McInnis et al., 2022) compared to lesbians and gay men. Given that both coming out and a strong sense of belonging are associated with higher self-esteem (McInnis et al., 2022; Pistella et al., 2016), it is reasonable to hypothesize that bisexual women have lower self-esteem than lesbians. This is the third hypothesis we tested.

Self-esteem decreases as a consequence of negative meta-stereotyping (Gordijn, 2010; Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2014), because feeling stereotyped by an outgroup member threatens one's self-concept (Vorauer et al., 1998). This decline in self-esteem may, in turn, influence dating intentions. Specifically, lower self-esteem among bisexual people is associated with a reduced sense of belonging (McInnis et al., 2022) and coming out less often (Baiocco et al., 2020; Mohr & Balsam, 2007; Pistella et al., 2016). Subsequently, these could have implications for dating intentions. For example, if an individual finds it difficult to come out to someone, it may keep them from pursuing that person.

In addition, people with lower self-esteem have more negative views of their relationships (Rill et al., 2009). This may prevent them from searching for a romantic partner. Lower self-esteem is also associated with prioritizing self-protection goals over connectedness goals in relationships, which keeps people from engaging in situations that require dependency and trust, such as dating (Rill et al., 2009). This happens because their negative self-views make them fear vulnerability and rejection (Don et al., 2018). Taking all of this into account, we expect that bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians, which predicts lower self-esteem, and hence, lower dating intentions. This is our fourth hypothesis.

Internalized Sexual Stigma as Another Mediator

Another factor that might potentially explain the link between negative meta-stereotyping and dating intentions is internalized sexual stigma (ISS). ISS refers to the

internalization, by queer individuals, of society's negative attitudes and stereotypes about their own sexual identity (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Nguyen et al., 2023). ISS occurs because people often perceive themselves through the imagined perspective of others, allowing them to anticipate social reactions (Meyer, 2003). LGBTQ+ individuals with high levels of ISS isolate and hate themselves, feel ashamed, and believe that they should be punished, because they think their identity is morally or religiously wrong (Terutung & Sukmaningrum, 2024). They also have negative attitudes towards and feel uncomfortable around other queer people, and they wish to "become" heterosexual (Salvati et al., 2017). This mechanism of internal conflict and self-denigration has severe detrimental consequences on mental health (Pistella et al., 2022).

Among queer people, there seem to be significant differences in ISS, with several studies providing evidence that bisexual people have higher levels of ISS than gay men and women (e.g., Cox et al., 2010; Rosario et al., 2002). This might occur because ISS by definition implies internalizing stereotypes and negative attitudes, which enhances self-stigma (McInnis et al., 2022). Since bisexuals are more likely to be stereotyped (Feinstein et al., 2022) and viewed negatively (Baiocco et al., 2020), it is reasonable to assume that they also experience more ISS. Furthermore, increased ISS may prevent them from coming out and/or from confronting the discrimination encountered in society, which may reinforce the negative attitudes they have towards themselves (Baiocco et al., 2020; Pistella et al., 2016). Therefore, it seems plausible that bisexual women specifically have higher ISS than lesbians, which is the fifth hypothesis we investigated. This notion has also been supported by Baiocco et al. (2020) and Pistella et al. (2022), who demonstrated that lesbians harbor higher levels of positive feelings regarding their own sexual orientation than bisexual women.

The relationship between negative meta-stereotyping and ISS has not been studied thus far. However, research shows that high ISS is predicted by sexuality-based

discrimination, including microaggressions (Nguyen et al., 2023). Because stereotypes are common microaggressions, high ISS might also be predicted by stereotypes, and thus, by negative meta-stereotypes as well. Moreover, in the case of bisexuals specifically, the internalization of negative attitudes and stereotypes can indeed lead to greater self-stigma (McInnis et al., 2022). Consequently, negative meta-stereotypes might predict increased ISS.

In turn, individuals with high levels of ISS tend to struggle with intimate relationships (Meyer, 2003). Stereotypes regarding queer identities suggest that LGBTQ+ people are incapable of intimacy and maintaining healthy, lasting relationships (Frost & Meyer, 2009). If they internalize these notions, the shame, anxiety, and depressive symptoms associated with ISS might predict various intimacy-related issues. They may end up avoiding romantic connections altogether, to escape anxiety and shame, and because a potential romantic partner would be a constant reminder of their sexual orientation, which they hate (Frost & Meyer, 2009). Thus, they may have lower intentions to date. The stereotypes regarding bisexuality in particular are even more indicative of one's potential flaws as a romantic partner (e.g., being unfaithful). Therefore, if a bisexual person internalizes these stereotypes and believes that this is how they are perceived by others, they might exhibit even lower dating intentions. Consequently, it could be that, compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which promotes higher ISS, and hence, lower dating intentions. This is our sixth hypothesis.

The Current Research

LGBTQ+ people's lower rates of being in a relationship may stem from minority stress (Meyer, 2003), which can adversely impact dating (Sommantico & Parrello, 2021). Namely, expecting to be stereotyped negatively by others – negative meta-stereotyping – reduces self-esteem (Gordijn, 2010; Vorauer et al., 1998) and is associated with internalizing negative beliefs about one's own sexual identity (i.e. internalized sexual stigma; ISS) (Frost &

Meyer, 2009). In turn, these may predict avoidance of romantic connections, and thus, lower dating intentions.

As a result, in the current study we sought to investigate the roles of self-esteem and ISS in the relationship between negative meta-stereotyping and dating intentions in the context of single queer women. More specifically, due to differences in their experiences, lesbians and bisexuals were compared. Literature on minority stress in general has rarely focused on queer women (Pistella et al., 2022), even though their experiences differ from those of queer men (Dyar et al., 2015). Their dating intentions and their beliefs about how others see them have also never been studied. Thus, to allow for a comparison between lesbians and bisexual women, we hypothesized that bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, lower dating intentions, lower self-esteem, and higher ISS than lesbians. Furthermore, we hypothesized that, compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower self-esteem and higher ISS respectively, and hence, lower dating intentions. In addition, self-esteem and ISS were also examined concomitantly, through an explorative serial parallel mediation model (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Serial Parallel Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation, Negative Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS
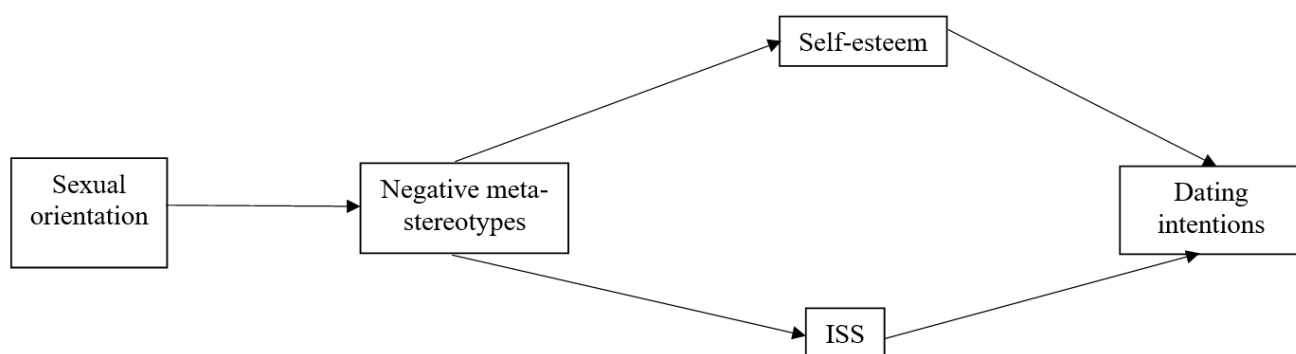
Method

Participants and Design

Based on an a priori Monte Carlo power analysis for sequential mediation with moderate correlations ($r = .25$) (Schoemann et al., 2017), a minimum of 313 participants was required for the study to attain a statistical power of 0.8. To account for potential participant exclusions, we aimed for a sample of 350 English-speaking participants, who had to be single adult women self-identifying as lesbians or bisexuals (divided into 175 lesbians and 175 bisexuals)[1]. Participants were recruited internationally, through social media platforms (i.e., Reddit, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, tumblr), as well as the crowdsourcing platform Prolific. On social media, the study link was posted in groups and forums dedicated to LGBTQ+ individuals and shared via private messages. After filling in the questionnaire, each participant recruited through Prolific received £1.50 as financial compensation.

A total of 446 individuals[2] consented to participation and the processing of their data and completed the survey. Based on our preregistration (https://aspredicted.org/kw7g-zjw4.pdf), 73 participants were removed for completing less than 50% of the questionnaire, one case was excluded for failing two control questions, and one participant was excluded for showing flatlining. Thus, the final sample consisted of $N = 371$ participants, whose ages ranged from 18 to 59 ($M_{age} = 27.22$, $SD_{age} = 7.47$), of which $n = 196$ were lesbians and $n = 175$ were bisexuals. The sample included participants who identified as White ($n = 211$, 52.5%), Black ($n = 86$, 21.4%), Hispanic or Latinx ($n = 30$, 7.5%), Asian ($n = 29$, 7.2%), Middle Eastern or North African ($n = 6$, 1.5%), Indigenous ($n = 4$, 1%), multiracial or

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[1] Originally, we aimed to recruit LGBTQ+ women at large and conduct exploratory analyses with those not identifying as lesbians or bisexuals. However, once data collection had started, we received feedback from asexual and pansexual participants who felt like the study was not designed for them and were uncomfortable. Consequently, we decided to collect data only from lesbians and bisexuals, changed the advertised target audience, and deleted the data from the other participants before we began the analysis.

[2] Because data collection progressed more quickly than anticipated, the number of participants exceeded the 350 required by the power analysis.

multiethnic ($n = 21$, 5.2%), or preferred to self-describe ($n = 14$, 3.5%) or to not disclose ($n = 1$, 0.2%). Additionally, out of the final sample, $n = 265$ (71.43%) participants reported presently not going on dates, while $n = 106$ (28.57%) participants reported going on dates.

The study involved a questionnaire, and its research design was cross-sectional correlational. The independent variable was sexual orientation, the dependent variable was dating intentions, and the included mediators were negative meta-stereotypes regarding both lesbians and bisexual women, self-esteem, and internalized sexual stigma (ISS). For exploratory purposes, negative meta-stereotypes of lesbians exclusively, negative meta-stereotypes of bisexuals exclusively, and meta-perceptions of characteristics unrelated to one's sexual identity were also measured as potential mediators. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen prior to data collection.

Procedure

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed using the online survey portal Qualtrics, where participants also completed it. After reading the study description and giving their informed consent to participate and have their data used, participants provided demographic information (i.e., their age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and relationship status). Individuals who did not consent or who did not identify as single adult gay or bisexual women were redirected to exit the survey and their data was eliminated from the dataset. Following this, participants reported their beliefs regarding negative stereotypes that might be held by people in society about women like them. Subsequently, their self-esteem, ISS, and dating intentions were assessed. Three attention checks were also embedded in the questionnaire, where participants were asked to select specific answers, in order to detect inattention and/or problematic response patterns. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their contribution and debriefed in regards to the study's aim.

Next, they were provided several online resources that could be valuable for LGBTQ+ individuals, the researcher's contact details, and the chance to withdraw their consent and leave feedback on the survey. On average, the questionnaire was completed in 8.63 minutes.

Measures

Answers were rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) for all measures.

Negative Meta-Stereotypes

Negative meta-stereotypes of lesbians and bisexual women were assessed in this study by asking participants about their expectations of how others in society might perceive them, as someone who identifies as a lesbian or a bisexual woman. This measure was informed by Vorauer et al.'s (1998) measure of meta-stereotypes. To make the items feel more personal and highlight the fact that the scale measures perceptions of lesbians and bisexual women specifically, the instruction statement was "Think about how others in society are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus, you". Since both gay and bisexual participants completed the same questionnaire, the item prompt was "I think that most people in society believe that women like me are…", to ensure that each participant responded while thinking of only their own sexual identity.

To measure negative meta-stereotypes of both lesbians and bisexual women, eight items informed by literature were used, denoting traits that are usually associated with both groups (e.g., "attention seekers"; McLean, 2008; Nadal et al., 2011; Nadal et al., 2016). These form the "negative meta-stereotypes" scale ($\alpha = .85$, $M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.12$). In addition, we also explored lesbian-specific and bisexual-specific negative meta-stereotypes, as well as traits unrelated to one's sexual identity. Thus, two negative traits that usually concern lesbians exclusively ("codependent in relationships" and "man haters"; Nadal et al., 2016; $r = .26$, $p < .01$) comprise the "lesbian meta-stereotypes" scale ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.20$), and four negative

traits that usually concern bisexuals exclusively (e.g., "promiscuous"; Dyar et al., 2014;

Lambe et al., 2017) encompass the "bisexual meta-stereotypes" scale (α = .83, M = 4.70, SD =

1.31). Lastly, 10 "regular", non-stereotypical positive traits acting as fillers (e.g., "kind") form

the "negative meta-perceptions" scale (α = .76, M = 3.59, SD = 0.71). The filler items were

included so participants would not have to rate only negative traits; these items were reverse-

coded, because higher scores on all these scales indicate expecting to be perceived more

negatively. In total, these four scales included 24 items.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem was measured using a reduced version of the State Self-Esteem Scale

(Heatherton & Polivy, 1991), which is based on the notion that self-esteem fluctuates in time,

across interactions, depending on momentary self-evaluations. We adjusted the scale to

include seven items of the social self-esteem subscale (example of item: "I feel self-

conscious"), two items of the performance self-esteem subscale ("I feel confident about my

abilities" and "I feel like I'm not doing well"), and two items of the appearance self-esteem

subscale ("I feel that others respect and admire me" and "I feel good about myself") (11 items

in total). The rest of the original scale's items were not included because they were not

relevant for assessing self-esteem in the context of dating. Eight items indicating lower self-

esteem (e.g., "I feel displeased with myself") were reverse-coded, so higher scores on this

scale suggest higher self-esteem. The measure exhibited good reliability (α = .92, M = 3.94,

SD = 1.29).

Internalized Sexual Stigma (ISS)

To assess ISS, participants completed an adapted version of the Measure of

Internalized Sexual Stigma for Lesbians and Gay Men (MISS-LG; Lingiardi et al., 2012),

which captures gay individuals' attitudes towards homosexuality in general and towards

themselves as homosexuals in particular. It involves three subscales, corresponding to the

dimensions of ISS: identity, social discomfort, and sexuality. We adjusted this measure to be suitable for lesbians and bisexual women by selecting items that were relevant for our context from the original questionnaire and adapting them for our population. There are 17 items in total; examples are "I would prefer to be heterosexual" (identity), "I hope no one realizes my sexual orientation" (social discomfort), and "All women of my sexual orientation end up isolated and alone" (sexuality). Four items implying lower ISS (e.g., "My sexual orientation is a strength") were reverse-coded. Thus, higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of ISS. The Cronbach's alpha of the scale was $\alpha = .90$, indicating good reliability ($M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.94$).

Dating Intentions

Intentions to date were measured with a 9-item scale developed by the research team, based on the assumption that dating intentions might be reflected by feeling comfortable with dating and a tendency to take initiative while dating. Four items suggesting lower dating intentions were reverse-coded (e.g., "I avoid getting romantically involved with people"), so higher scores on this scale indicate higher dating intentions. An example of an item that was not reverse-coded is "I would ask someone out on a date if I felt a connection with them". We combined all the items into one scale, as this measure showed good reliability ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.45$).

Results

Descriptive statistics and a series of univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted using SPSS (Version 30). Mediation analyses were conducted with the PROCESS models 6, 80, and 81, using bootstraps analyses employing 5000 bias-corrected bootstraps samples. For an overview of the statistical assumptions that were checked, see Appendix B.

Correlations between the Measures

Table 1 presents the zero-order correlations of the study's key variables. It shows that having more negative meta-stereotypes is associated with having more specific bisexual and lesbian meta-stereotypes as well, but the correlation with bisexual meta-stereotypes is much stronger. Meanwhile, there is no correlation between having bisexual meta-stereotypes and having lesbian meta-stereotypes, indicating that they might indeed be specific to distinct groups. Individuals who have more negative and bisexual meta-stereotypes – but not more lesbian meta-stereotypes – also have more negative meta-perceptions. Furthermore, all three types of meta-stereotypes, as well as negative meta-perceptions, are associated with lower self-esteem, albeit these correlations are rather weak. Increased ISS is also correlated weakly with having more negative meta-stereotypes, bisexual meta-stereotypes, and negative meta-perceptions, and more strongly with a lower self-esteem. Finally, lower dating intentions correlate with more bisexual meta-stereotypes, more negative meta-perceptions, lower self-esteem, and higher ISS – with the last two correlations being stronger than the rest.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of the Variables of Interest

Variable	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Negative meta-stereotypes	371	−						
2. Bisexual meta-stereotypes	371	.61**	−					
3. Lesbian meta-stereotypes	371	.26**	.08	−				
4. Negative meta-perceptions	371	.21**	.15**	−.10	−			
5. Self-esteem	371	−.19**	−.19**	−.13*	−.14**	−		
6. ISS	371	.12*	.15**	.05	.20**	−.40**	−	
7. Dating intentions	366	−.07	−.14**	−.01	−.19**	.47**	−.34**	−

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01.

Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

First, we hypothesized that bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians. To test this, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted, with sexual orientation as the independent variable and negative meta-stereotypes as the dependent variable. In line with our prediction, bisexual women were found to be holding significantly more negative meta-stereotypes ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.04$) than lesbians ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.11$), $F(1, 369) = 30.37$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .076$, and sexual orientation explains 7.6% of the variance in negative meta-stereotyping.

In addition, we explored whether sexual orientation also predicts bisexual meta-stereotypes, lesbian meta-stereotypes, or negative meta-perceptions. The respective one-way between-subjects ANOVAs found that bisexual women have significantly more bisexual meta-stereotypes ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.22$) than lesbians ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.17$), $F(1, 369) = 71.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .162$, and lesbians have significantly more lesbian meta-stereotypes ($M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.12$) than bisexuals ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 369) = 25.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$, indicating that these meta-stereotypes pertain to distinct groups. In other words, bisexuals feel like they are perceived more negatively in regards to bisexual stereotypes specifically, and lesbians believe that they are viewed more negatively in regards to lesbian stereotypes.

On the other hand, results showed no main effect of sexual orientation on negative meta-perceptions, $F(1, 369) = 0.43$, $p = .51$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, suggesting that non-stereotypical negative meta-perceptions are not different between lesbians and bisexual women.

Hypothesis 2

To test whether bisexual women show lower intentions to date than lesbians, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted, with sexual orientation as the independent variable and dating intentions as the dependent variable. Findings showed no significant difference in intentions to date between lesbians ($M = 3.49$, $SD = 1.46$) and bisexuals ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.45$), $F(1, 364) = 0.07$, $p = .79$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. The hypothesis was thus not supported.

Hypothesis 3

According to Hypothesis 3, bisexual women have lower self-esteem than lesbians. To test this prediction, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted with sexual orientation as the independent variable and self-esteem as the dependent variable. However, it showed that there is no significant difference in self-esteem between bisexuals ($M = 3.89$, SD

= 1.27) and lesbians (M = 3.97, SD = 1.31), $F(1, 369)$ = 0.4, p = .53, η_p^2 = .001, so no support was found for the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4

We hypothesized that, compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower self-esteem, and hence, lower dating intentions. We tested this by means of a sequential mediation analysis conducted using PROCESS model 6 (Hayes, 2022), with sexual orientation as the independent variable, dating intentions as the dependent variable, and negative meta-stereotypes and self-esteem (in this order) as mediators. The overall model is significant (R^2 = 0.22, $F(3, 362)$ = 34.36, p < .001). There is no direct effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions (b = 0.073, SE = 0.14, t = 0.52, p = .6), and the total effect is also not statistically significant (b = −0.033, SE = 0.08, 95% CI = [−0.192, 0.125]). Still, the indirect effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions through negative meta-stereotypes and self-esteem is negative and significant (b = −0.073, SE = 0.03, 95% CI = [−0.129, −0.026]), despite the non-significant total and direct effects. This is consistent with a mediation process in which sexual orientation is related to dating intentions exclusively through the mediators: bisexuals have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians, predicting lower self-esteem and, in turn, lower dating intentions (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Sequential Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation, Negative Meta-Stereotypes, and Self-Esteem
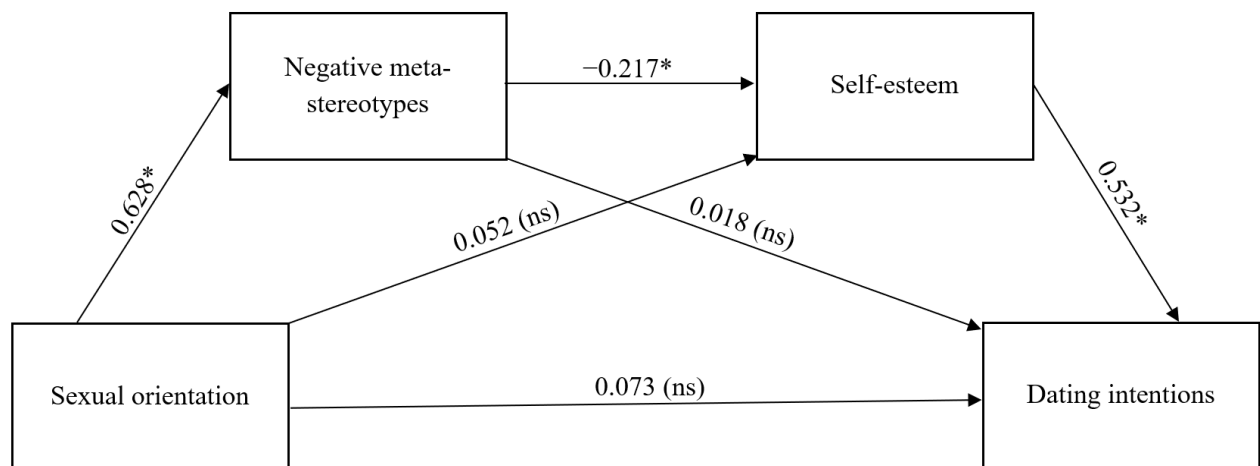
Note. *p < .01; ns = not significant at the alpha level of .05.

Hypothesis 5

To test the prediction that bisexual women experience higher levels of ISS than lesbians, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run, with sexual orientation as the predictor and ISS as the outcome. In line with the hypothesis, bisexuals (M = 2.51, SD = 0.94) exhibited higher levels of ISS than lesbians (M = 2.33, SD = 0.94), $F(1, 369)$ = 3.54, p = .061, η_{p}^{2} = .10. However, this finding was not significant at the conventional alpha level of .05.

Hypothesis 6

Our last hypothesis was that, compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts higher ISS, and hence, lower dating intentions. To test this, a sequential mediation analysis was employed using PROCESS model 6 (Hayes, 2022). Sexual orientation was the predictor, dating intentions was the outcome, and negative meta-stereotypes and ISS (in this order) acted as mediators. The overall model is significant (R^2 = 0.12, $F(3, 362)$ = 16.02, p < .001). Results indicate that there is no direct effect of sexual

orientation on dating intentions ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.15$, $t = 1.07$, $p = .285$). The total effect is also not statistically significant ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI = $[-0.23, 0.10]$), but there is a significant negative indirect effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions via negative meta-stereotypes and ISS ($b = -0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI = $[-0.065, -0.002]$). This supports the hypothesis and indicates a mediation process in which sexual orientation is related to dating intentions solely via the mediators: bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians, which predicts increased ISS and, in turn, lower dating intentions (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Sequential Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation, Negative Meta-Stereotypes, and ISS
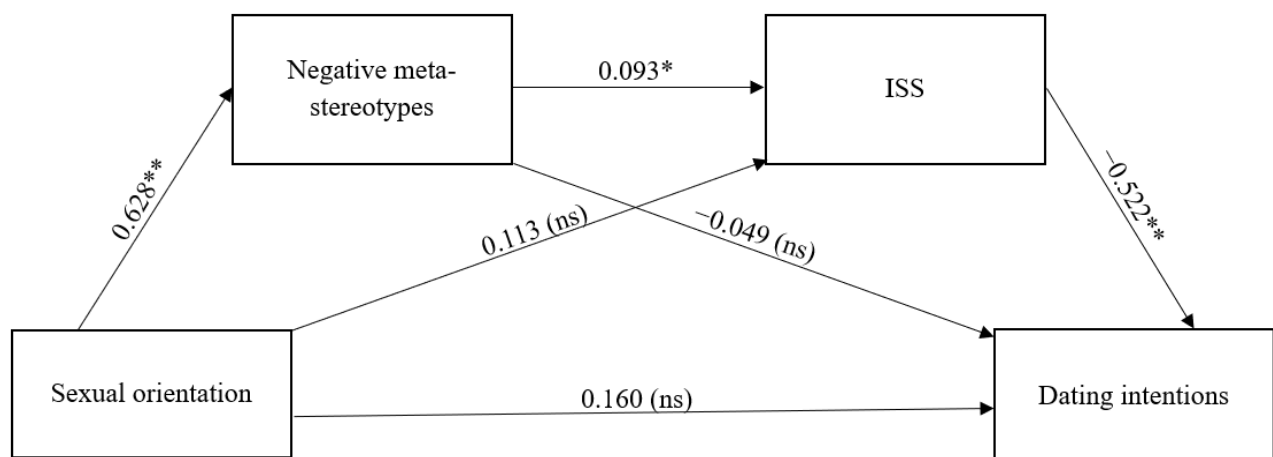
Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ns = not significant at the alpha level of .05.

In summary, sexual orientation does not significantly predict self-esteem, ISS, or dating intentions directly. However, bisexual women do have more negative meta-stereotypes than lesbians. This predicts lower dating intentions through a reduced self-esteem on the one hand, and through higher ISS on the other hand.

Exploratory Analysis

Self-Esteem and ISS: A Serial Parallel Mediation Analysis

We next explored a model that includes both self-esteem and ISS concomitantly, using PROCESS model 81. Thus, sexual orientation is the predictor, dating intentions is the outcome, and negative meta-stereotypes, self-esteem, and ISS are mediators (the last two in parallel). The overall model is significant ($R^2 = 0.50$, $F(4, 361) = 30.04$, $p < .001$). A bootstraps analysis revealed that both indirect effects generated by the two pathways are statistically significant – sexual orientation predicting dating intentions through negative meta-stereotypes and self-esteem ($b = -0.06$, $SE = 0.23$, 95% CI = [−0.112, −0.022]) and through negative meta-stereotypes and ISS ($b = -0.016$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI = [−0.037, −0.001]). Since the direct effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.14$, $t = 0.80$, $p = .43$) and the total effect ($b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI = [−0.24, 0.10]) are both statistically insignificant, this suggests a mediation process in which dating intentions are predicted by sexual orientation exclusively through the mediators: compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which is associated with both decreased self-esteem and increased ISS, and thus, with decreased intentions to date (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Serial Parallel Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation,

Negative Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS
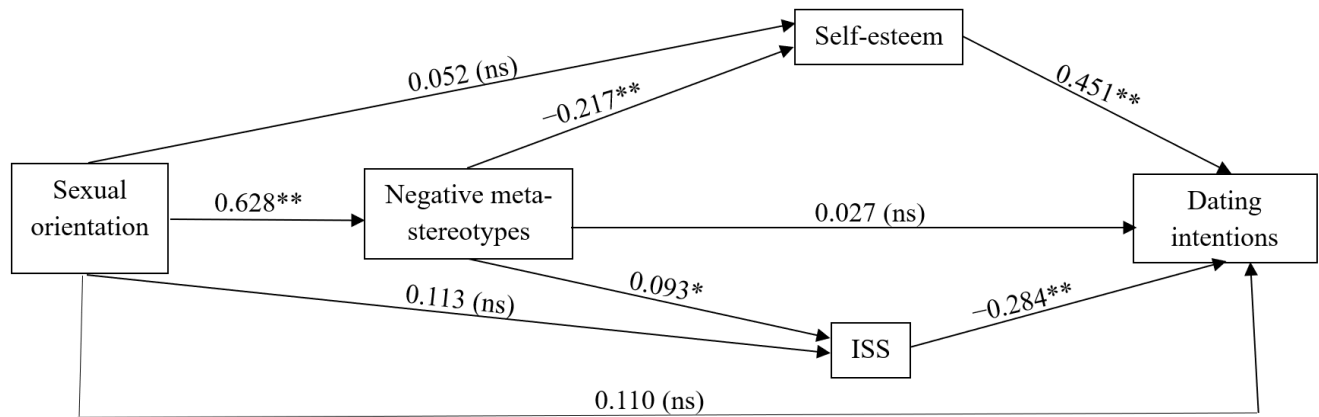
Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ns = not significant at the alpha level of .05.

Meta-Stereotypes Exclusive to Bisexuals or Lesbians

We also explored models that include meta-stereotypes specific to each group[3]. First,

we assessed the same model as in the previous section, but replaced negative meta-stereotypes

with bisexual meta-stereotypes. The overall model is significant ($R^2 = 0.25$, $F(4, 361) = 30.57$,

$p < .001$). Both the direct effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions ($b = 0.204$, $SE =$

0.14, $t = 1.41$, $p = .16$) and the total effect ($b = −0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, 95% CI = $[−0.35, 0.03]$)

were not significant. Nonetheless, a bootstraps analysis showed that the indirect effects

through the two pathways are statistically significant – sexual orientation predicting dating

intentions through bisexual meta-stereotypes and self-esteem ($b = −0.10$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI =

$[−0.16, −0.03]$) and through bisexual meta-stereotypes and ISS ($b = −0.03$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI

= $[−0.06, −0.004]$). Thus, there is a mediation process in which sexual orientation predicts

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[3] When negative, lesbian, and bisexual meta-stereotypes were all included in a serial parallel mediation model along with ISS (using PROCESS model 80), bisexual meta-stereotypes were the only ones that predicted lower dating intentions, and the effect was direct. Thus, bisexual meta-stereotypes might show the greatest contribution to dating intentions when all types of meta-stereotypes are considered concomitantly. However, we cannot be fully certain of these results, as the power analysis had not been done while taking this model into account, and the effects were small.

dating intentions solely via the mediators: compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more bisexual meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower self-esteem and higher ISS, and hence, diminished dating intentions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Serial Parallel Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation, Bisexual Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS
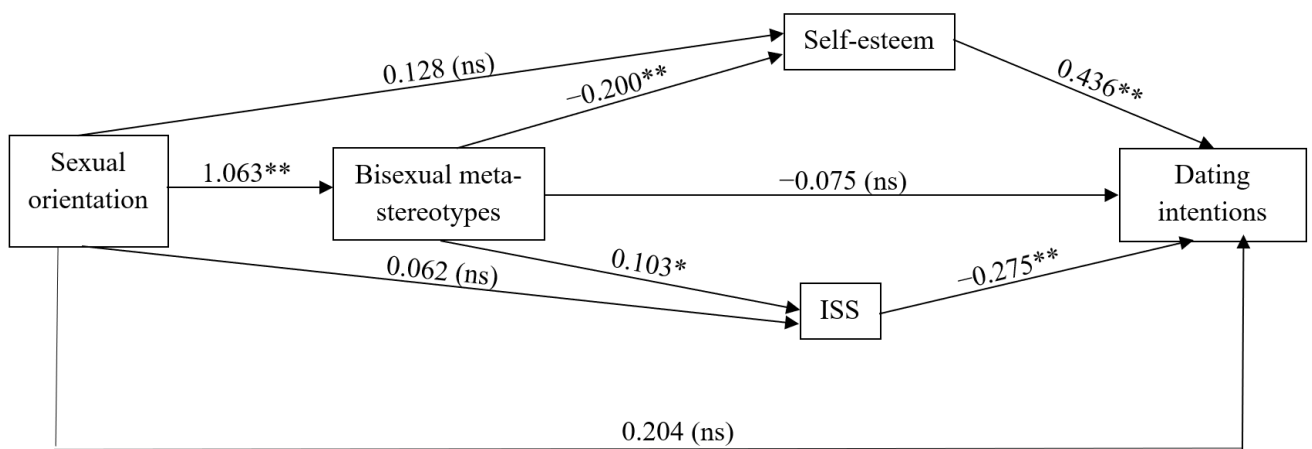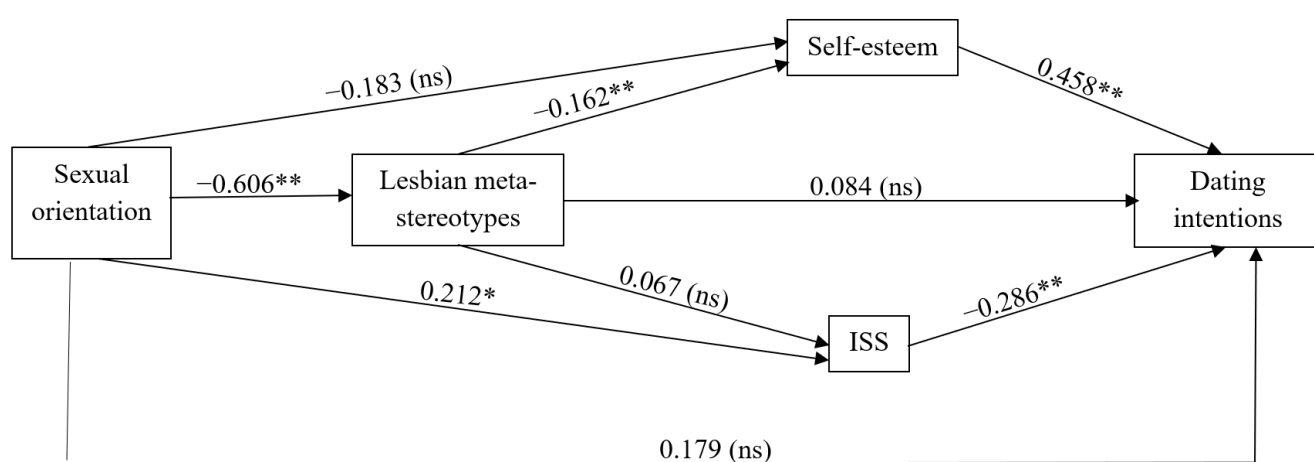

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ns = not significant at the alpha level of .05.

Subsequently, we analyzed the aforementioned model again, but replaced bisexual meta-stereotypes with lesbian meta-stereotypes. The overall model is significant ($R^2 = 0.25$, $F(4, 361) = 30.7$, $p < .001$). The direct effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions ($b = 0.179$, $SE = 0.14$, $t = 1.30$, $p = .19$), as well as the total effect ($b = -0.139$, $SE = 0.09$, 95% CI = [−0.31, 0.03]), are not statistically significant. However, only one of the indirect effects derived from the two pathways is statistically significant – sexual orientation predicts dating intentions via lesbian meta-stereotypes and self-esteem ($b = 0.045$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.09]). By contrast, sexual orientation does not predict dating intentions through lesbian meta-stereotypes and ISS ($b = 0.012$, $SE = 0.01$, 95% CI = [−0.002, 0.032]). Therefore, there is a mediation process in which sexual orientation is related to dating intentions exclusively

through the mediators of only one pathway: lesbians have more lesbian meta-stereotypes than

bisexual women, which predicts lower self-esteem and, in turn, decreased dating intentions

(see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Serial Parallel Mediation Model Predicting Dating Intentions from Sexual Orientation,

Lesbian Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS

Note. *p* < .05; **p* < .01; ns = not significant at the alpha level of .05.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to analyze the links between sexual orientation, self-

esteem, ISS, and dating intentions. More specifically, we investigated what roles self-esteem

and ISS play in the relationship between negative meta-stereotyping and dating intentions, in

the case of bisexual women and lesbians.

First, we expected and found that bisexual women have more negative meta-

stereotypes than lesbians (Hypothesis 1). However, no differences were found between

bisexual women and lesbians in terms of dating intentions (Hypothesis 2) or self-esteem

(Hypothesis 3). Interestingly though, in line with Hypothesis 4, results revealed that compared

to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower self-

esteem, and hence, decreased dating intentions. In addition, we also hypothesized that bisexual women have higher ISS than lesbians (Hypothesis 5). There was some indication of support for this, but the effect was not strong enough to ensure statistical significance. Lastly, Hypothesis 6 was supported – compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicts higher ISS, and hence, lower dating intentions.

In addition to these hypothesized effects, we also found that having more negative meta-stereotypes predicts reduced dating intentions through both decreased self-esteem and increased ISS at the same time. Furthermore, we found that bisexuals have more *bisexual* meta-stereotypes and lesbians have more *lesbian* meta-stereotypes, but neither group has more negative general meta-perceptions. Compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more *bisexual* meta-stereotypes, which is associated with lower self-esteem and higher ISS, and thus, with decreased dating intentions. However, only self-esteem plays a role in the case of lesbian meta-stereotypes: lesbians have more *lesbian* meta-stereotypes than bisexuals, which predicts diminished self-esteem and, in turn, lower dating intentions. Notably, these findings should be approached with caution, since the required sample size was calculated for the models testing the hypothesized effects.

In summary, we conclude that the difference in dating intentions between bisexual women and lesbians is predicted by negative meta-stereotypes through decreased self-esteem and increased ISS. This suggests the importance of accounting for specific psychological mechanisms like (negative) meta-stereotyping, self-esteem, and ISS when examining dating intentions in the context of sexual orientation.

Theoretical Implications

The current research has implications for different literatures, as we integrate work on meta-stereotyping, ISS, and self-esteem to examine the unexplored construct of dating intentions.

Differences in Negative Meta-Stereotypes

First, we found that bisexual women indeed engage in more negative meta-stereotyping than lesbians. While no other studies have analyzed this exact notion, our result does align with previous research showing that bisexual individuals are stereotyped negatively more than gay people (e.g., Baiocco et al., 2020). Heterosexual people tend to view bisexuals more negatively than they view homosexuals (Dyar et al., 2015), and gay men and women also have negative attitudes towards bisexuals (Feinstein et al., 2022), which they do express overtly (McLean, 2008). Consequently, it is plausible that bisexual people are aware of this, so them having more negative meta-stereotypes is an expected and coherent outcome.

In addition, we also found differences between lesbians and bisexual women in terms of more specific meta-stereotypes: bisexuals have more *bisexual* meta-stereotypes, while lesbians have more *lesbian* meta-stereotypes. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between different queer sexual identities' specific (meta-)stereotypes in research. More broadly, it also suggests that the particular content of the (meta-)stereotypes is more relevant than just their negative connotations when trying to identify differences between lesbians and bisexual women. This notion is also supported by our finding that the two groups do not differ in terms of negative meta-perceptions. Expecting to be perceived negatively in general (i.e., in a non-stereotypical way) does not meaningfully distinguish between lesbians and bisexual women. Instead, it is the expectation of being stereotyped negatively specifically in regards to one's own sexual identity that does that.

Differences in ISS and Self-Esteem

Not only do bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, but they also experience higher levels of ISS. Although this effect was small, it replicates literature showing that bisexual people experience higher ISS than gay people (e.g., Baiocco et al., 2020; Cox et al., 2010; Rosario et al., 2002). As expected, although both groups suffer from

the consequences of societal heterosexism/prejudice, lesbians view their own sexual identity more positively. This might be caused by the way society upholds monosexuality (i.e., attraction to only one gender) as the normative standard for sexual orientation (Bollas, 2023), invalidating bisexuality (Pistella et al., 2022). Moreover, bisexual people are more likely to be perceived negatively (Baiocco et al., 2020) and are the targets of more stereotypes, including from gay individuals (Feinstein et al., 2022). Therefore, they do feel less welcome in the LGBTQ+ community (McInnis et al., 2022). Social support and affiliation are important protective factors that increase positive affect (Pistella et al., 2022), so it is thus unsurprising that bisexual women in our study view their own sexual orientation more negatively.

On the other hand, the two groups reported similar levels of self-esteem. This is in opposition with Bridge et al. (2019), who found that bisexual people exhibit lower self-esteem than lesbians and gay men. Since these findings represent, to our knowledge, the full extent of the research on the differences between gay and bisexual people's self-esteem, the evidence remains inconclusive. Our hypothesis was based on bisexuals' poorer mental health (Dyar et al., 2015; Feinstein et al., 2022), lower coming out rate (Baiocco et al., 2020), and lower sense of belonging in the LGBTQ+ community (McInnis et al., 2022). Thus, there is a need to clarify what other factors – if any – might determine differences in self-esteem among sexual minority subgroups (e.g., sample characteristics or methodological approaches).

Indirect Effects on Dating Intentions

In this research, contrary to our expectations, bisexual women and lesbians reported similar dating intentions, so sexual orientation does not have a direct effect on this variable. However, indirect effects were found: compared to lesbians, bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, which predicted decreased self-esteem and increased ISS respectively, which both in turn predicted lower dating intentions.

The relationship between negative meta-stereotyping and self-esteem is in line with existing research showing that negative meta-stereotypes reduce self-esteem (e.g., Gordijn, 2010; Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2014). Furthermore, our finding that more negative meta-stereotypes predict higher ISS echoes McInnis et al.'s (2022) observation that bisexuals internalizing negative attitudes and stereotypes leads to enhanced self-stigma. Therefore, as we hypothesized, bisexual women expect to be more negatively stereotyped than lesbians, which predicts lower self-esteem and higher ISS. Feeling stereotyped by outgroup members threatens their self-concept, reducing their self-esteem (Vorauer et al., 1998), and being stereotyped elicits ISS (McInnis et al., 2022).

At the same time, there are no studies on dating intentions. Nevertheless, lower self-esteem is associated with viewing relationships more negatively and with avoiding connections and situations that necessitate dependency (Rill et al., 2009). Higher ISS is also correlated with struggling with intimate relationships (Meyer, 2003). These may all have implications for dating, so our finding that lower self-esteem and higher ISS predict decreased dating intentions echoes existing research. Queer women's negative self-views (including low self-esteem and enhanced ISS) make them afraid of rejection and vulnerability (Don et al., 2018). This may keep them from dating, especially since the stereotypes they might internalize describe them as unable to maintain healthy, lasting romantic relationships (Frost & Meyer, 2009). And this is particularly the case for bisexuals. In sum, expecting to be stereotyped negatively predicts having lower intentions to date through lower self-esteem and higher ISS. While this occurs for both lesbians and bisexual women, the link is stronger for bisexuals.

In addition, we also found this indirect effect in the case of sexual orientation-specific meta-stereotypes. Bisexuals have more *bisexual* meta-stereotypes, which predicts lower dating intentions through self-esteem and ISS, while lesbians have more *lesbian* meta-

stereotypes, which predicts decreased dating intentions via self-esteem. This indicates that it is not just the overall negativity of meta-stereotypes that has indirect detrimental effects on dating. Rather, it is their particular content that is more relevant, because lesbians' and bisexual women's dating intentions are impacted more by the meta-stereotypes related to their own specific identity.

This is also reinforced by the two groups having similar levels of negative meta-perceptions in our study, which suggests that there is no indirect effect of sexual orientation on dating intentions through negative meta-perceptions. Expecting to be stereotyped negatively in regards to one's own sexual identity is more relevant for predicting dating intentions than expecting to be perceived negatively in general. This contradicts studies like Gordijn et al. (2008) and Gordijn et al. (2017), which have shown that the valence of traits is more consequential than their content. This could be because, unlike those studies, the current research focused on dating intentions as the outcome, rather than well-being or feelings about brief imagined intergroup interactions with strangers. These are more general constructs, while dating intentions are more specific. Moreover, queer women's negative (meta-)stereotypes relate to their supposed behaviors in relationships, which might be why their content is of greater importance for dating-related variables. Consequently, the present study contributes to existing research by reinforcing the idea that valence and content are distinct aspects of (meta-)stereotypes. More importantly however, it suggests that the specific context (e.g., dating) determines whether it is the content or the valence that is more relevant.

In other words, it is not sufficient for someone to believe that they are perceived negatively by others in terms of non-stereotypical characteristics, unrelated to their sexual orientation (e.g., unkind, unintelligent, uncreative), for their dating intentions to decrease. Instead, they need to believe that people in society stereotype them, perceiving them in negative ways related to their queerness in particular, for that to happen. Moreover, it is the

(meta-)stereotypes pertaining to their own sexual orientation specifically that have the most impact on dating intentions through lower self-esteem and/or higher ISS.

By conceptualizing dating intentions, our study adds to the literature on (queer) people's interpersonal relationships. By defining this variable as feeling comfortable with dating and taking initiative while dating, we framed it as a precursor to actual dating, indicating perceived ability/capacity to date. As most literature in this area focuses on individuals who are already in romantic relationships, we view dating intentions as the equivalent of relationship self-efficacy (i.e., the self-perceived relational competence; Riggio et al., 2013) for single people. In our view, it is important to study such overlooked early stages of relational development, because they are key to understanding how people navigate dating. This is especially the case for marginalized groups, as they experience unique stressors that impact their romantic lives negatively (Sommantico & Parrello, 2021).

Practical Implications

Our findings have practical implications, firstly, for how lesbians and bisexual women navigate dating. They suggest that lower dating intentions may be linked not only to being stereotyped by others, but also to subjective beliefs that one is being stereotyped. Thus, efforts to improve queer women's dating lives (and overall mental health) should not focus solely on reducing societal stereotypes, but also on changing their own perceptions and beliefs. Naturally, combating prejudice and negative stereotypes perpetuated by others should remain a key priority, since they actively harm queer people's physical and psychological health, including their romantic relationships (Doyle & Molix, 2015). Still, reducing negative meta-stereotypes or learning how to protect oneself against their harmful effects may complement these efforts. Therefore, professionals supporting the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., social workers, therapists/counselors, doctors, nonprofit workers, diversity and inclusion officers) should be more aware of this issue and learn how to address it. They could work with queer

people to reduce their negative meta-stereotypes or, alternatively, to regulate them consciously so positive traits are accepted and negative traits are rejected (Klein & Azzi, 2001). At the same time, reduced negative meta-stereotypes would also predict lower ISS and higher self-esteem, bringing further benefits.

In addition, the fact that bisexual women expect to be stereotyped negatively more than lesbians, which then predicts lower dating intentions through self-esteem and ISS, indicates that individuals of different (queer) sexual identities have specific problems, including different beliefs about how they are perceived by others. Therefore, we advocate for a differential approach in practice; for example, when treating queer people's psychological issues in clinical contexts, or when attempting to lower societal anti-LGBTQ+ stereotypes and prejudice in real-life contexts.

Ultimately, all these practical implications are important to consider because romantic relationships – which may begin by having higher dating intentions – benefit queer people's mental and physical health (Mazur, 2022) and protect them against stressors associated with their minority identity (Macapagal et al., 2015).

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions

The current research shows meaningful strengths. Firstly, to our knowledge, no other studies have examined queer women's (negative) meta-stereotyping, nor its relationship with dating intentions. We addressed this gap in literature by analyzing the roles of self-esteem and ISS in this relationship, while comparing lesbians and bisexual women specifically. In this way, we highlighted the importance of distinguishing between different queer sexual identities. Additionally, we conceptualized dating intentions, an unexplored precursor to dating behaviors. This could open doors towards uncharted matters, which can have important practical implications, especially for single people, who are often overlooked in dating-related research. A key methodological strength lies in the a priori power analysis, which allowed us

to recruit a sufficiently large sample, with a nearly equal number of lesbian and bisexual participants. In turn, this enhanced our findings' generalizability, validity, and reliability. Moreover, we had a comparably racially and ethnically diverse sample – 52.5% of participants identified as White, while a meta-analysis reports that 66% of participants in social psychology studies are White (Roberts et al., 2020). This increased our generalizability even further. Lastly, all measures we used showed relatively high internal consistency, suggesting high reliability, and two of them were validated in previous research.

At the same time, the present study also has limitations. On the one hand, due to its correlational nature, we cannot draw causal conclusions. Still, we attempted to partially mitigate this by measuring participants' negative meta-stereotypes before assessing their self-esteem, ISS, and dating intentions. Thus, it is possible that making participants' meta-stereotypes salient first might have impacted their self-esteem and ISS, which, in turn, may have influenced their dating intentions. To ensure the causality of these relationships, future research should employ experiments in which there is a control group and meta-stereotypes are manipulated. For example, negative meta-stereotypes can be manipulated by prompting participants to describe (verbally or in writing) how they think society/outgroups stereotype them negatively as members of a certain group (e.g., He et al., 2017; Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2011).

A further limitation concerns the generalizability of our findings. Approximately half of the participants were recruited through social media communities and pages dedicated to queer women. It is therefore plausible that these individuals are more likely to disclose their sexual identity and be open about it at least on social media, which is correlated with having more social support (Tao & Fisher, 2023). This might affect their meta-stereotyping, self-esteem, ISS, and dating intentions – for instance, queer women who experience more social support have higher self-esteem and lower ISS (Wang et al., 2020). Future studies should

therefore aim to have a more representative sample of gay and bisexual women in terms of how open they are about their sexual identity and how much social support they receive.

Lastly, we focused on a single social category in our study (i.e., sexual orientation), which is often the case in meta-stereotype literature (Babbitt et al., 2018). However, intersections of social categories shape how different people experience discrimination, including stereotypes (Crenshaw, 1998). For instance, Calabrese et al. (2017) showed how stereotypes ascribed to Black gay men overlap with or are distinct from the stereotypes associated with Black heterosexual men or White gay men. We are not aware of any prior work that has explored such intersections in the case of queer women. Therefore, future studies should attempt to determine how different facets of queer women's identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, cis- or transgender identity, ability, socioeconomic status, personality, mental illness) interact with each other and relate to ascribed (meta-)stereotypes, as well as with their self-esteem, ISS, and/or dating intentions.

Alternatively, future research could also explore dating intentions in the context of other populations' meta-stereotypes. For instance, Jerald et al. (2017) found that Black women's meta-stereotypes are associated with heightened anxiety, depression, and hostility; but are Black people's (or other racialized groups') meta-stereotypes related to dating-related outcomes as well, or is this phenomenon unique to sexual minorities? Most stereotypes associated with Black individuals portray them as a physical threat (i.e., they are dangerous, aggressive, hot-tempered, strong, athletic, but also unintelligent; Bergstrom et al., 2023), instead of describing dating-related tendencies explicitly. Therefore, it is plausible that their relationship to dating intentions is weaker, if it exists at all – or it could potentially still be explained through self-esteem. Research on how different types of (meta-)stereotypes relate to dating intentions could reveal if it is their content or the valence that is more relevant in this context.

A further avenue for future research stems from the interesting findings regarding differences between bisexual women and lesbians – the experiences of queer women should be addressed by sexual orientation. The disadvantaged position of the bisexual individual in the context of dating especially highlights how queer people can also ascribe stereotypes to each other, and meta-stereotypes affect the self differently depending on the group that is believed to be holding the stereotypes (Klein & Azzi, 2001). Future research considering these ideas is needed, to form a more complete picture of bisexual individuals' experiences – do they believe that other LGBTQ+ people stereotype them differently from how heterosexual people do? Do their meta-stereotypes align with the stereotypes that other people in society really hold about them? Are the stereotypes associated with bisexual women different from those associated with bisexual men? These are just some examples of research questions that could be explored.

Finally, to broaden the scope of this research, future studies could investigate how negative meta-stereotypes relate to outcomes beyond dating intentions. Literature already shows that they are associated with well-being (e.g., Hinton et al., 2019; Jerald et al., 2017) and social identification (e.g., Owuamalam & Zagefka, 2011) – but not in the context of queer women. Other constructs that could be studied in this sense are workplace-related (e.g., workplace ambition or performance, organizational belonging, leadership avoidance), especially since meta-stereotype literature in industrial-organizational psychology is scarce. Owuamalam and Zagefka (2014) found that negative meta-stereotypes diminish employability beliefs through self-esteem, but only in the case of women and ethnic minorities in Britain, while LGBTQ+ individuals represent a significant part of the workforce as well. It would be interesting to see if queer women's meta-stereotypes, which are so dating-focused, are also relevant in the workplace context. Considering the key role that self-esteem plays, we speculate that they might be, albeit perhaps to a lesser extent than in a dating context.

Conclusion

The current research aimed to identify potential explanations for why nearly half of LGBTQ+ individuals identify as single, despite the fact that roughly 80% of them are interested in having committed romantic relationships (Canaday, 2016). We targeted queer women specifically, and aimed to find possible explanations for why dating might be an issue for them. Notably, we focused particularly on lesbians and bisexual women and investigated the relationships between their negative meta-stereotypes, self-esteem, ISS, and dating intentions. We provide evidence that negative meta-stereotypes may play a key role. This implies that reducing negative meta-stereotypes could be an effective strategy for improving dating intentions, through increasing self-esteem and reducing ISS. It also highlights that especially bisexual women have more negative meta-stereotypes, so we bring awareness to the fact that the LGBTQ+ community should not be treated as a monolith, in research or in practice. People of different sexual identities have distinct issues, and reduced dating intentions may be just one of the outcomes associated with negative meta-stereotypes.

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Appendix A

The Full Questionnaire

"Perceptions and Dating Intentions of Single Lesbians and Bisexual Women"

Welcome to this study! Please read the study information below carefully and after that, click on the red arrow to continue to the next page.

Why do I receive this information?
You are being invited to participate in this study, because we are looking for people to complete this questionnaire about the dating intentions of single lesbians and bisexual women. First, you will be asked to specify your sexual orientation and relationship status. Next, you will be asked about how you feel about yourself, both in general and in regards to your sexual orientation. Then, you will be asked about your beliefs regarding how society perceives people of your sexual orientation. The last part covers your dating intentions – your willingness to take initiative when dating and how comfortable you are with dating.

This research is part of the Master's thesis project by M. G. Butan, from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, and is supervised by E. Gordijn. Contact information: m.g.butan@student.rug.nl.

The start date of the research will be 01-11-2024 and the end date of the research will be 01-06-2025.

Do I have to participate in this research?
Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. You can withdraw from participation at every moment without explanation, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, also after you have given consent for participation.

Why this research?
In this research, we want to study single lesbians' and bisexual women's dating intentions, their beliefs about how society perceives them, and how they feel about themselves.

For this research, we are looking for participants:
(1) who are women
(2) who are at least 18 years old
(3) who are a lesbian or bisexual
(4) who speak English
(5) who are single

What do we ask of you during the research?
First, we will ask you for your consent to participate. When you agree to participate, you will be guided to the online questionnaire. In the questionnaire, you first answer some demographic questions, namely your age, gender, racial/ethnic background, relationship status, and sexual orientation. Next, you will be asked questions about your views on how society perceives women of your sexual orientation, how you perceive yourself in general and in regards to your sexual orientation, and your dating intentions.

If you decided to withdraw from the study but would like to receive more information, you can always ask for this by sending emails to m.g.butan@student.rug.nl.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

You will receive £1.50 as compensation for your participation.

What are the consequences of participation?
With our research, we hope to gain more understanding of single lesbians' and bisexual women's dating intentions. Thus, with your participation, you will contribute to this research. Your participation will also help a Master's student with her Master's thesis.

We believe that there are no major risks associated with participating in this study. However, we collect some sensitive information and the topic might be upsetting or distressing to some people. Please remember that you may always withdraw from the study and/or skip questions you may not wish to answer, which does not have any negative consequences for you.

How will we treat your data?
The data consists of your responses to the questions which will be collected using an online questionnaire. We collect this data for scientific purposes.

Your data will be used to write a Master's thesis, and possibly to write an empirical article in a scientific peer-reviewed journal.

Some information may act as identifiers when combined (i.e., gender, age, racial/ethnic background, relationship status, sexual orientation, and personal remarks). If the data is published, we will anonymize information that could be used to identify individual participants (e.g., personal remarks). All such potentially identifying information – not just personal remarks – will be excluded from any online sharing websites. Also, Prolific ID codes can be deemed as identifiers. Once we have compensated your participation, we will delete these codes from the data after downloading the data from Qualtrics. If the data is published, we will anonymize information that could be used to identify individual participants (e.g., personal remarks).

Data processing takes place in Europe. When the study is finished, the data will be stored at a safe University of Groningen server and will be stored for 10 years, which is in line with the university's data storage protocol.

What else do you need to know?
You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by sending an e-mail to m.g.butan@student.rug.nl.

Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: ec-bss@rug.nl.

Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: privacy@rug.nl.

As a research participant, you have the right to a copy of this research information.

Show Discussion (2)   Last Comment 6 Feb 2024 3:27am by Nienke Judith Maria Ruijter, de#GMW

Consent ✳ ×→

INFORMED CONSENT
"Perceptions and Dating Intentions of Single Lesbians and Bisexual Women""

By consenting to participate in this study you understand the following:

1. I have the right to receive a copy of this informed consent form by taking a screenshot of this page or asking the researcher for a copy (send an email to m.g.butan@student.rug.nl).
2. My participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw from this study at any moment without having to give a reason and without any negative consequences.
3. I am allowed to refuse to answer any questions that I do not wish to answer. I do not have to provide any reason for this, and this does not have any negative consequences.
4. My responses are confidential and will not be shared with anyone besides the research team.
5. All my responses will be securely stored and are only accessible to the researchers.
6. After completing the questionnaire, I will receive more information on the purpose of this research.
7. I approve that researchers can handle my personal data.
8. I declare to be at least 18 years old.

ConsentParticipation ✳

Do you agree to participate in this study (if you don't want to participate, click "No" and you will leave the questionnaire)?

○ Yes, I want to participate.

○ No.

ConsentDataCollect ✳

Do you give permission for your data to be collected during your participation in this study, to be analyzed and used for the purposes of the study outlined above (if you do not consent, click "No" and you will leave the questionnaire)?

○ Yes, I consent to the processing of my personal data as mentioned in the study information.

○ No.

🖥 Import from library Add new question

Add Block

▼ no consent

no consent

You indicated you do not want to participate in this research. If you want to let us know why you do not want to participate, you can do so below. We thank you for your time!

[Import from library]   [Add new question]

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demographics

Demographics

First, we ask you to provide some demographic information below before starting the main survey.

Age   ✱

What is your age?

Gender   ✱   x→   (x)

Please indicate your gender identity

○ Female

○ Male

○ Non-binary

○ Prefer to self-describe

○ Prefer not to answer

[Import from library]   [Add new question]

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▾ d   2

Race

Please indicate your racial or ethnic background

✳

- ☐ Black
- ☐ White
- ☐ Hispanic or Latinx
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Middle Eastern or North African
- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Multiracial or multiethnic
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe
  [   ]
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Orientation

How would you best describe your sexual orientation?

✳ ✗→

- ○ Heterosexual (straight)
- ○ Lesbian/gay/homosexual
- ○ Bisexual
- ○ Pansexual
- ○ Asexual
- ○ Prefer to self-describe
  [   ]
- ○ Prefer not to answer

📖 Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

▾ Relationship status

Relation

How would you best describe your current relationship status?

✳

- ○ Single (and not going on dates)
- ○ Single (but going on dates)
- ○ Not single
- ○ Prefer to self-describe
  [   ]
- ○ Prefer not to answer

Meta-stereotypes

Meta

You have indicated that you identify as a lesbian or a bisexual woman. One of the goals of this research is to explore how single lesbians and bisexual women expect to be perceived by others in society.

You are now asked about your expectations of how **others in society** may perceive you as someone who identifies as a lesbian or a bisexual woman.

Think about how **others in society** are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus you. Please indicate for each statement to what extent you agree (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

I think that most **people in society** believe that women like me are …

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
Intelligent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sporty	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Confused about their sexuality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Just going through a phase	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Warm	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Show Discussion (1)   Last Comment 22 Jan 2024 4:36am by Ernestine Gordijn#GMW

-------------------------------- Page Break --------------------------------

Meta

Think about how others in society are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus you. Please indicate for each statement to what extent you agree (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

I think that most people in society believe that women like me are …

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
Intentionally choosing their sexual orientation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Generous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Attention seekers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Just experimenting with their sexuality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Creative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

-------------------------------- Page Break --------------------------------

Meta

Think about how others in society are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus you.
Please indicate for each statement to what extent you agree (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

I think that most people in society believe that women like me are …

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
Predatory towards heterosexual women	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Willing to be inappropriately propositioned sexually	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Kind	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please click 'three' (this is an attention check)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Man haters	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

-------- Page Break --------

Meta

Think about how others in society are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus you.
Please indicate for each statement to what extent you agree (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

I think that most people in society believe that women like me are …

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
Codependent in relationships	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Funny	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Greedy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nature lovers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Passionate about music	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

-------- Page Break --------

Meta

Think about how others in society are likely to perceive lesbians and bisexual women and thus you.
Please indicate for each statement to what extent you agree (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

I think that most people in society believe that women like me are …

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
Hypersexual	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Promiscuous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Bookworms	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cheaters	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

-------- Page Break --------

Esteem

In the next part, you will answer some questions about how you feel about yourself.

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
I feel confident about my abilities.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that others respect and admire me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel self-conscious.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel displeased with myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel good about myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

Self-esteem

Esteem

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
I am worried about what other people think of me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel inferior to others at this moment.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel concerned about the impression I am making.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel like I'm not doing well.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am worried about looking foolish.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

Internalized stigma

Stigma

In the next part, you will answer some questions in regards to how you feel about your sexual identity.

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
At my university (and/or work), it is better that other people do not discover my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The thought of my sexual orientation makes me feel depressed.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am happy with my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not tell my friends about my sexual orientation because I would be afraid of losing them.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If it were possible, I would do anything to change my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is difficult for me to talk about my sexual orientation, including to someone I know.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

-------------------------------- Page Break --------------------------------

Stigma

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
My sexual orientation is a deviance.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My sexual orientation is a strength.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sometimes I think that if I were heterosexual I could be happier.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I hope no one realizes my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would prefer to be heterosexual.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please click 'five' (this is an attention check).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I tell everyone about my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

Internalized stigma

Stigma

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
At university (and/or work) I pretend to be heterosexual.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
All women of my sexual orientation end up isolated and alone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I do not like thinking about my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm careful about what I wear and what I say, to avoid showing my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I'm proud of my sexual orientation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

Dating intentions

Dating

In the next part, you will answer some questions about your dating intentions.

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
If I see someone attractive in a bar, I am likely to approach them and start a conversation.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable complimenting people I find attractive.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please click 'one' (this is an attention check).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I tend to make the first move when I'm interested in someone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would ask someone out on a date if I felt a connection with them.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

Dating intentions

Dating

Please indicate to what extent you agree with these statements.

	1. Strongly disagree	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7. Strongly agree
I feel comfortable flirting with people to express my interest.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I avoid getting romantically involved with people.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am not good at approaching people I find attractive.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel insecure about my ability to approach people I'm interested in.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Showing interest in people I find attractive is difficult for me.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Import from library | Add new question

Add Block

debrief + resources

(The ending of the questionnaire is on the next page)
Thank you for taking the time to take this questionnaire!
The main purposes of this study were to investigate how single lesbians and bisexual women think they are being perceived by society, how they feel about themselves and about their sexual orientation, and what their dating intentions are (i.e., whether they are comfortable with dating and whether they take initiative when dating). Our aim is to find out whether beliefs about how society views lesbians and bisexual women are related to these women's dating intentions and how they feel about themselves. We are also aiming to compare the answers of women with different sexual orientations within our sample.
We understand that answering questions about how you believe you are perceived, how you perceive yourself and dating intentions may have elicited negative emotions. However, this research is important because research in this area thus far has rarely focused on single LGBTQ+ women. This study may give insight into how single lesbians and bisexual women think they are being perceived by society and the challenges they face when dating. Additionally, outcomes of this study can potentially be used to support lesbians and bisexual women in general.
If this study has left you with negative feelings or thoughts about your own experiences, and you require psychological support, there are several resources that might be helpful to you:
https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/mental-well-being-resources-for-the-public
This website contains several articles and videos offering support for mental health and well-being issues.
https://www.thetrevorproject.org/
The Trevor Project, dedicated to LGBTQ+ youth all over the world, provides crisis services, peer support, and conducts research studies. They do very extensive advocacy work and public education, but their primary mission statement remains to end suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. Crisis services:
https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help/
https://biresource.org/
Bisexual Resource Center offers support and resources for people who identify as bisexual, pansexual, or queer. They have very extensive information on the intersection of sexuality with disability, gender identity, age, and religion, as well as tips and debunked myths.
https://www.thefeministclub.nl/

Feminist Club Amsterdam is a Dutch community that organizes feminist events with an emphasis on intersectionality and fighting for queer liberation. It also offers an extensive resource library regarding, among others, discrimination, mental health, and activist and community groups, in both Dutch and English.

https://avp.org/
Anti-Violence Project is the largest anti-LGBTQ+ violence organization in the United States. It offers exhaustive resources for LGBTQ+ and HIV/AIDS-affected survivors of violence, especially legal information and services, it organizes events, and it provides a crisis intervention hotline. Crisis hotline: https://avp.org/get-help/call-our-hotline/
We want to emphasize that this study was purely academic in nature, and your responses will be kept strictly confidential. Your participation was completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Thank you once again for your valuable participation, we appreciate your help in furthering our understanding on these important issues.

---

final consent ✱

Now that you have read all the information about the purposes of the study, do you still agree with the use and processing of your data?

○ Yes, I consent to the use and processing of my data

○ No, I do not consent to the use and processing of my data, and my data should be permanently deleted

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Questions, concerns

We are very grateful for your participation! If you have any further questions, complaints or if you would like to know more about the results of the study, please contact us via m.g.butan@student.rug.nl. Or if you want to leave a comment right now, you can do so below.

Click on the arrow to leave the questionnaire.

[?]

Show Discussion (1)   Last Comment 22 Jan 2024 4:48am by Ernestine Gordijn#GMW

▲   🖵 Import from library   Add new question

Add Block

End of Survey

(Respondents will be redirected to https://app.prolific.com/submissions/complete?cc=CCD1047B

Appendix B

Statistical Assumption Checks

First, we checked the statistical assumptions for the one-way ANOVAs by inspecting

Q–Q plots of the dependent variables (i.e., negative meta-stereotypes, self-esteem, ISS, and

dating intentions) within each level of the independent variable (i.e., bisexual women and

lesbians). The only instances of slight violation of normality are depicted in Figures B1 and

B2. However, this is not an issue, considering the robustness of the ANOVAs, the relatively

large sample sizes of both groups, and the fact that the observations were independent. The

assumption of homoscedasticity was assessed with Levene's test, which was non-significant

for all dependent variables, indicating that the assumption was met.

Figure B1
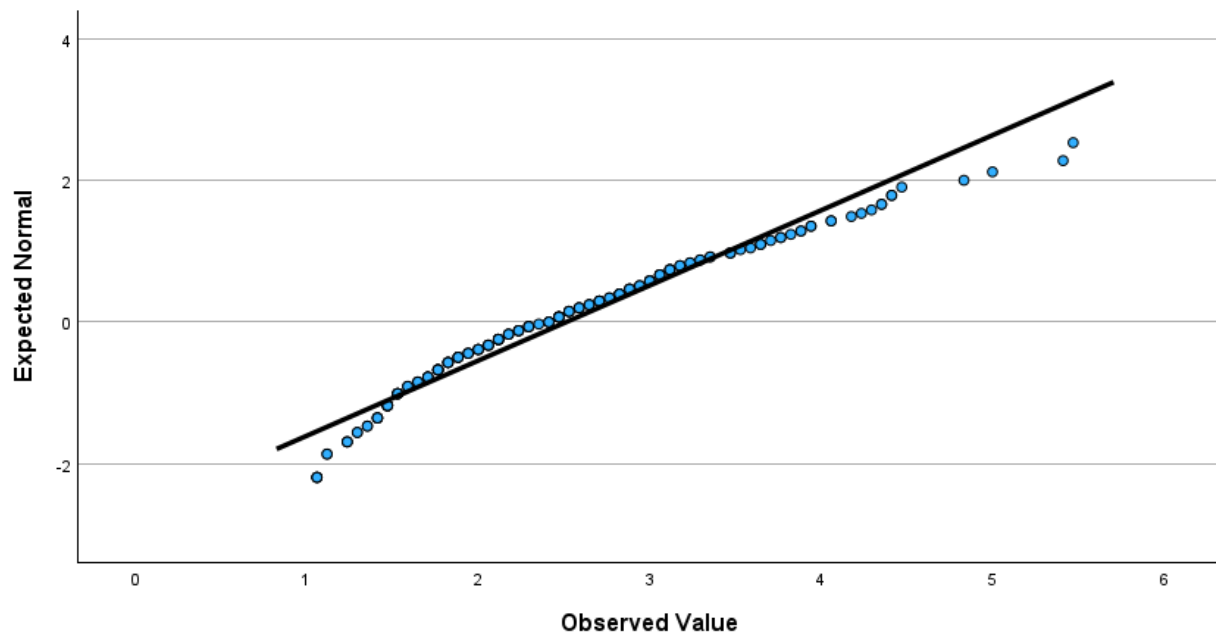
Normal Q–Q Plot of ISS for Lesbians
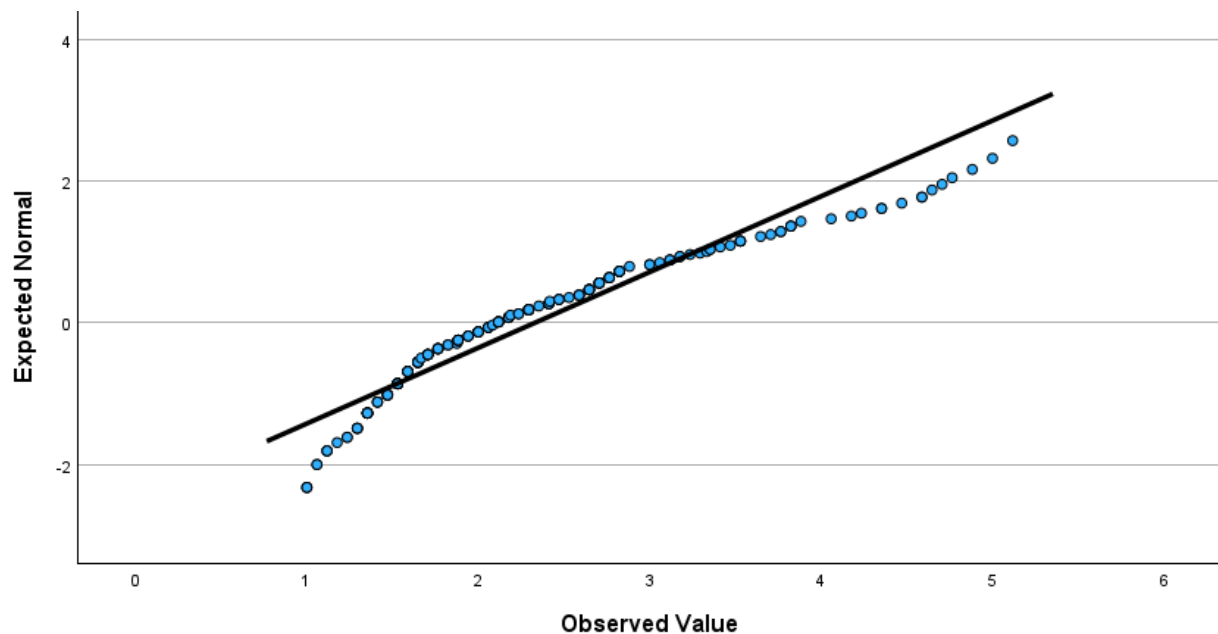
Figure B2

Normal Q–Q Plot of ISS for Bisexuals

We also checked the assumptions for the sequential mediation models. Scatterplots of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values suggested that both the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met (see Figures B3–B5). On the other hand, Q–Q plots of standardized residuals showed a slight violation of normality (see Figures B6–B8). Still, just as in the case of the one-way ANOVAs, this is not problematic. Next, collinearity diagnostics were performed and revealed no multicollinearity between the variables (VIF < 1.21). Lastly, the computation of Cook's distances (maximum values of .07, .05, and .04) indicated no outliers.

Figure B3

Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals Against Predicted Values for the Regression of Self-Esteem on Negative Meta-Stereotypes
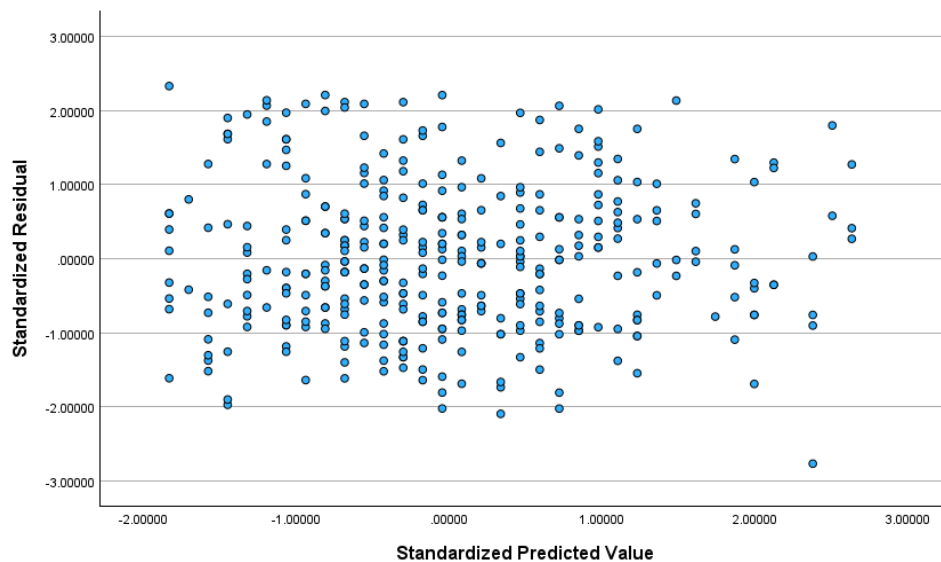
Figure B4

Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals Against Predicted Values for the Regression of ISS on Negative Meta-Stereotypes
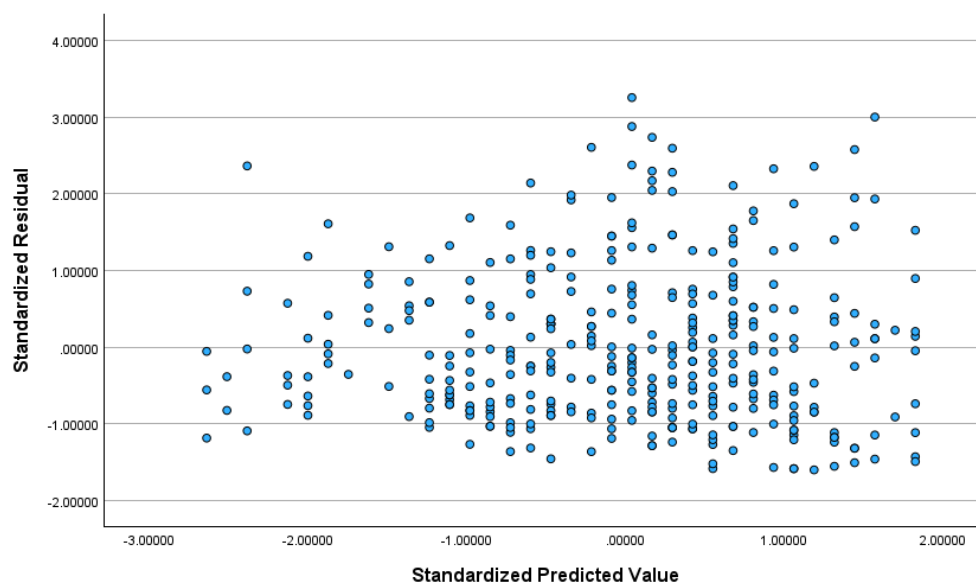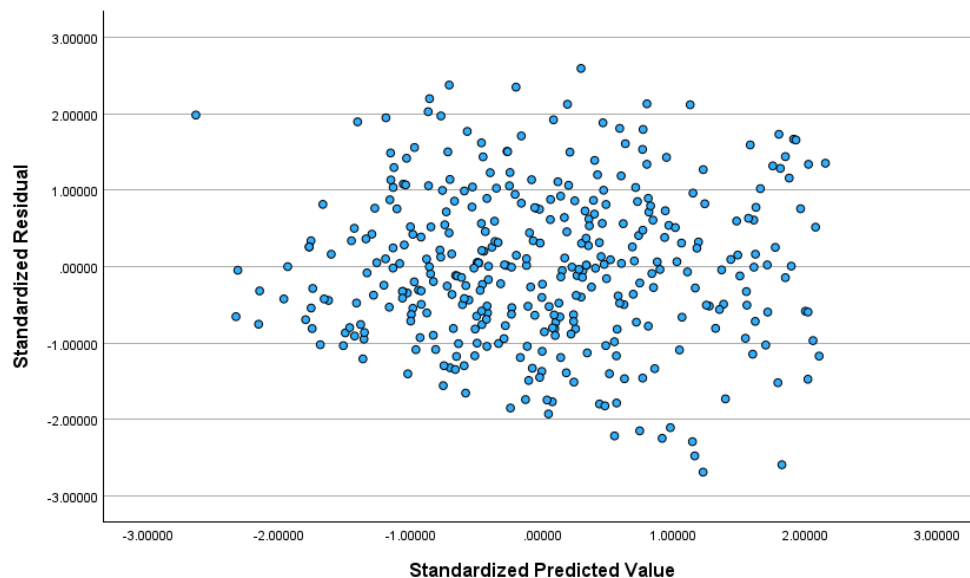
Figure B5

Scatterplot of Standardized Residuals Against Predicted Values for the Regression of Dating Intentions on Negative Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS

Figure B6

Normal Q–Q Plot of Standardized Residuals for the Regression of Self-Esteem on Negative Meta-Stereotypes
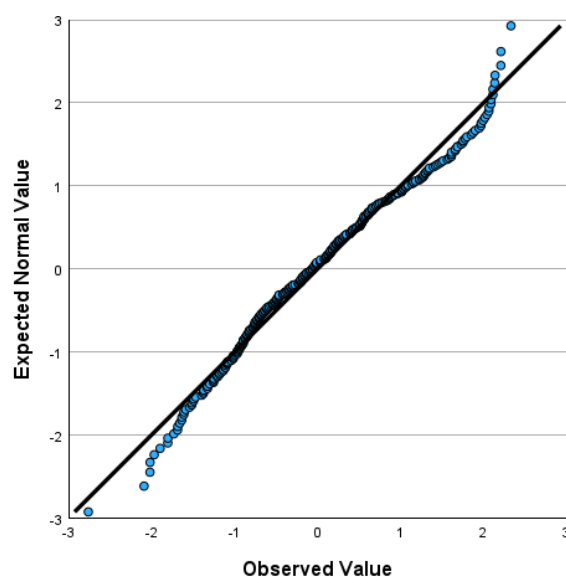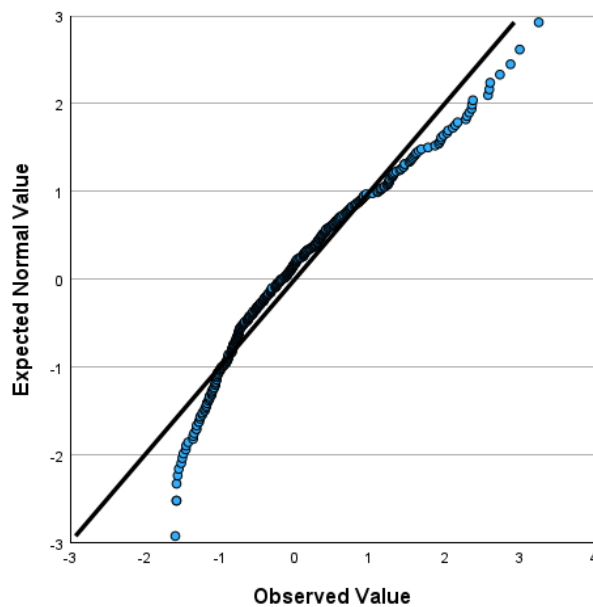
Figure B7

Normal Q–Q Plot of Standardized Residuals for the Regression of ISS on Negative Meta-

Stereotypes

Figure B8

Normal Q–Q Plot of Standardized Residuals for the Regression of Dating Intentions on

Negative Meta-Stereotypes, Self-Esteem, and ISS