

## ***“But you do not look like a lesbian!?”***

*The role of LGBT stereotypes and representation of the LGBT community in the Dutch web series Anne+ and how they affect the development of a queer identity*



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Date of submitting: 25-01-2019

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## Short summary

For this thesis I analysed the Dutch (web) series *Anne+* to find out what stereotypes were being used, why they were being used and what effects these stereotypes have. Using stereotypes is a way of negative representation, since stereotypes are inherently negative. Being represented is of utmost importance for minority groups, as this makes them visible in society and gives them social as well as political power. I will also analyse how the usage of stereotypes in *Anne+* is linked to the formation of one's individual identity as well as their queer group identity. Identity is partly formed by other members of society and how they identify you, affects your own perception of the self as well. Establishing a group identity can engender positive and negative effects. Being inside a group with people who have shared experiences strengthens the political position, yet the group identity will often still be based on some sort of norm, excluding the people who do not fit in all the boxes. Negative representation not only has political disadvantages, but psychological ones as well, as it can result in people having a lower self-esteem, internalized homophobia, and self-hatred. The makers of *Anne+* tried to create representative queer role models, however they still ended up using certain stereotypes. Even though stereotypes might appear in a humorous way, they still reinforce the negative imagery of the sexual minorities that they are representing.

## Introduction

“What does a lesbian bring on the second date? – A moving van.”

There are a lot of lesbian stereotypes, both inside and outside of the queer community. The joke above is a common one within the lesbian community, meaning that lesbians tend to move rather quickly once they are in a relationship. It is one of many stereotypes and while it is often used in a humorous manner, using these kind of stereotypes can have serious consequences on how a marginalized group, in this case lesbians, is looked at by the rest of the society. A positive representation means higher chances of acceptance by society. While not being represented is troublesome, negative representation is also problematic. When we look at lesbian representation in the media, the characters often lack depth and tend to follow a standard pattern. For example there is the typical straight-girl-goes-lesbian plot, in which a seemingly straight girl falls in love with a woman, but struggles with accepting her sexual identity and is scared to come out of the closet. These films/series are filled with drama and rarely ever have a happy ending.

A series that tries to conquer this negative image of lesbians on television, is the Dutch web series *Anne+* which premiered only a couple months ago, on September 30<sup>th</sup> at the Dutch Film Festival in Utrecht. After that, it aired online and after a month it could also be seen on television. The makers created this series because they missed good lesbian role models when they were growing up, so with this series they want to provide representative role models for younger lesbians to identify with. This is why Anne, the main character, has no issues with her lesbian sexuality and does not think of her sexuality as a problem, it is a given. This is refreshing, as many lesbian movies are about women struggling with accepting their sexual identity.

For this thesis, I will analyse *Anne+*, focusing on how the series uses some of the lesbian stereotypes, looking at the effects of a negative representation and how this contributes to the identity forming of queer women. The research question I will try to answer is: “Which LGBT stereotypes are being used in *Anne+* and how does the usage of these stereotypes affect the forming of a queer identity?”

It is important to do research on topics such as stereotypes and representation, since in this digitalized era there are more stereotypes and different kinds of representation than there used to be. In magazines, in commercials, on the internet and on television, everywhere you look there is some sort of representation. In this thesis I want to emphasize that using stereotypes in the media has serious consequences for the consumers. Furthermore I think it is important to conduct this research into lesbian stereotypes in a Dutch context, since most of the research on this topic solely focuses on American media.

## **Method**

The method that I will be using for my research is feminist media analysis. I will base my method on the book “Feminist research practise - a primer” edited by Sharlene Nagy Hesse – Biber. I will be using chapter 9, Feminist Media Research, which is written by Heather McIntosh and Lisa M. Cuklanz. They write: “Feminist media research draws on the insights of feminist theories about media, and these theories differ according to what form of mediated text is under examination” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 266). They also state that the commonality between these theories, is the notion that ideas about gender in the mainstream media show us which ideologies are most prominent in society. One of the reasons I chose to focus on lesbian stereotypes, is because within these stereotypes lie the dominant ideas about lesbians of the Dutch society (society meaning the non-marginalized groups, the ones that hold the power).

“Feminist media research provides critique of media representations that support traditional power structures” (Hesse-Biber 2014, 267). In the theoretical framework I will explain these power imbalances that occur when representing a marginalized group. What makes a feminist media research different from a regular media analysis, is that it is not just about analysing what you can see, but also what political and social impact this can have.

While examining representation, there are three approaches that can be used to explain how representation of meaning works through language. These are called the reflective, the intentional and the constructionist approach (Hall 2013, 10). The reflective approach sees language as a mirror, and stipulates that meaning lies in the object/person/idea itself. For example, if you see a rose, it represents just that: a rose. The intentional approach states the opposite, arguing that words only mean what a person intends for them to mean. So if you see a rose, but the author’s intention was for the meaning of the rose to be love, then the rose became a symbol represents love. Lastly, the constructionist approach states that meaning in language is not fixed, but meaning is constructed by society. A clear distinction is being made between the material world and symbolism, with symbols producing meaning instead of material objects (Hall 2013, 11). Thus one can see the materials for what they are, but their meaning depends on what it symbolizes and thus what it wants to represent.

The constructionist approach, the most common one within feminist media analysis, will be used. In this approach meaning is produced within language. Thus, in order to analyse lesbian stereotypes, I will not only look at what is being said or how characters are being dressed, but also at what the meaning behind this is. What are they trying to represent? What do their words really indicate?

I chose to analyse a television show because television is a popular medium with a broad audience, which means that many people have access to the show and its audience is diverse therefore the impact possible stereotypes can have is also bigger. For the analysis I will focus on the main characters of each episode, to see what stereotypes can be found and what these stereotypes tell. I will examine dialogue (what do these characters say, how do they say it, what are their words indicating?), as well as physical appearance (how they dress/their facial expressions, what their body language is telling and what can be deducted from this?).

The series has put a lot of work into creating positive representations of young lesbian women however, there are still some lesbian stereotypes being used. I analysed each of the six episodes of *Anne+*, each episode lasting roughly about ten minutes, but they will not be all elaborated upon for not all of them demonstrated explicit stereotypes. I will focus my research on which stereotypes can be seen and what the function of a particular stereotype is. How do

they dress, what do they say, how do they act? All these factors together form the representation. By finding answers to these questions, I will get a critical feminist analysis of the series which can be used to challenge and further improve lesbian representation. An analysis can be called feminist when “it is grounded in the set of theoretical traditions that privilege women’s issues, voices and lived experiences” (Hesse- Biber 2014, 3). My research includes the issues surrounding the representation of lesbian women and therefore, it can be called a feminist approach. What makes it critical, is the fact that it will not only be an analysis of what can be seen but it will also include a closer look at the politics that are being created within the series and the different power relations that the stereotypes are constructing.

The first part of my analysis will address the first sub question, which is “What bisexual stereotypes are being used in the web series *Anne+* and which ideas do these stereotypes reinforce?” Here I will pick out the bisexual stereotypes that I found in some of the episodes of the series, and look at the possible consequences using these stereotypes can have. For the second sub question I will look at what lesbian stereotypes are being used in the series and what effects they have on, for example, the forming of queer identity. As someone who is a part of the Dutch LGBT community myself, I used my own knowledge about queer stereotypes while picking these examples of stereotypes. Then I looked these up on the internet to see whether more people encountered these stereotypes, and how these stereotypes came into existence.

In the theoretical framework I will expand on some of the theories on representation and the negative effects of using stereotypes. In my conclusion I will link these theories together to my analysis and answer the main question of this thesis, which is “Which LGBT stereotypes are being used in *Anne+* and how do the usage of these stereotypes affect the forming of a queer identity?”

## **Theoretical framework**

Having explained my method for this thesis, I will now move on to the theoretical framework. I chose to divide this into three sub questions, in which I will go deeper into the theories surrounding stereotypes, representation and identity forming.

*What are stereotypes and why are they being used?*

To answer this question, I compared multiple definitions that I found in books and articles. The first book I used was “Media Studies. Texts, Production, Context”, written by Paul Long and Tim Wall, and I chose this book because it is often used in introductory courses about Media Studies, making it a good starting point. In the book the following definition of stereotyping is stated: “Stereotyping is a process involving the expression of an exaggerated belief about a group that serves to qualify or justify the conduct towards that group of those who hold and express that belief”(Long and Wall 2012, 107). So they state that stereotyping is a process of having enhanced beliefs about a social group, which is used to justify the way they behave towards this group. This definition lacks the explicit notion that stereotypes are always negative. This definition makes it seem like stereotypes can also be positive beliefs about a social group, which is not the case.

Another book that discusses stereotypes is “The Matter of Images : Essays on Representations” by Richard Dyer. This book was chosen since it has a more political approach towards representation and stereotypes, and also explains the power dynamics involved. Dyer mentions Orrin E. Klapps who wrote the book *Heroes, Villains and fools* in 1962:

Klapp defines social types as representations of those who ‘belong’ to society. They are the kinds of people that one expects, and is led to expect, to find in one’s society, whereas stereotypes are those who do not belong, who are outside of one’s society. (Dyer 1993, 14)

Using this definition of stereotypes, it can be said that stereotypes only exist about marginalized groups within society, since they are the ones that are not seen as the norm. This means stereotypes go hand-in-hand with power relations and that the group of people seen as the norm, hold the power to represent the marginalized groups in the way they want. Since, as Kay Siebler says in his book “Learning Queer identity in the Digital Age”, “The identity is created not by one person, but by others without the permission of the one who is being represented”(Siebler 2016, 9). Those ‘others’ that are shaping the identity of minorities, are the dominant group. In a capitalist society, this dominant group will base its representations of minorities in the media on what sells best. If the consumer will be more likely to buy a magazine or to watch a show in which a lesbian looks or acts a certain way, this is the stereotype they will end up using.

What is consumed, both visually and through products peddled and purchased, is not only a representation of queerness, it becomes the epitome of queerness, the

standard of how the LGBT viewer should be or what they must aspire to be, and what the non-LGBT viewer expects and believes LGBT to be.” (Siebler 2016, 18)

Thus the viewers will believe this representation based on a power imbalance between the dominant group and the marginalized group to be the truth even when they themselves, are inside this group.

This power imbalance brings up the problem of two different forms of representation, which Gayatri Spivak called ‘Vertretung’ and ‘Darstellung’ (Buikema 2009, 91). Vertretung means that someone is speaking for the marginalized group in a political way. However, the danger with this is that the marginalized group might lose their own agency. Then there is the level of Darstellung which has more of a symbolic meaning. This is a type of representation as re-presentation; a portrayal of the marginalized group. If we link this to the analysis of *Anne+*, Darstellung is how the characters are being portrayed, merely focusing on the visual aspects and symbols. Vertretung is in what manner the characters speak on behalf of lesbians, what are the signals they send to the rest of society and how are they using their power? When a group is represented negatively by an individual character, this affects everyone of this social group and they all suffer a loss of political power. However, the marginalized group has little say in the way they are being represented.

The reason for using stereotypes is therefore on the one hand a political one, to justify any kind of negative behaviour towards the marginalized group and to deny them their social rights. On the other hand it also has a rather practical reason, as Richard Dyer writes:

The role of stereotypes is to make visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unaware; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit (Dyer 2013, 16).

Thus stereotypes are a way of quickly knowing what to expect and being prepared for that. It is a way to keep yourself safe, by being able to know in a split second whether someone has good or bad intentions. Unfortunately, people are not that fixed and cannot be put into boxes that easily.

*What is representation and how does representation work in the media?*

In my method, I already discussed the three different approaches to explain representation. Representation is a way of giving meaning to things by how we describe them, what images we produce of them or what stories we tell about them. This meaning is important to find our



own identity and to find out in which groups we belong (Hall 2013, xix). Being represented in the media means being visible, seeing characters on television that you can relate to or feeling recognition while you read a magazine. However, being represented is not always positive. There can also be negative representation, which is always the case when stereotypes are used. The definition of representation that is used by Long and Wall, is the following:

To represent something is to describe or depict it, to call it up in the mind by description, portrayal or imagination. To represent also means to symbolise, to stand for, to be a specimen of or to substitute for. (Long and Wall 2012, 103)

This is a rather practical definition, yet it says nothing about the importance of a proper representation or the effects this can have. Richard Dyer, however, discusses this in his work. He writes:

How a group is represented, presented over again in cultural forms, how an image of a member of a group is taken as representative of that group, how that group is represented in the sense of spoken for and on behalf of (whether they represent, speak for themselves or not), these all have to do with how members of groups see themselves and others like themselves, how they see their place in society, their right to the rights of society claims to ensure its citizens. (Dyer 1993, 1)

So not only does representation affect how others see a specific group of people, it also affects how they see themselves. People are treated in a certain way, because of how they are being represented in the media. When people are being treated poorly by society, this will instantly affect their own self-esteem and self-worth as well.

*How do stereotypes influence the forming of queer identity?*

To answer this, I will first explain more about how identities are being formed and how politics play a big part in the construction of a group identity. One's individual identity is linked with their group identity. A group identity is based upon shared experiences, shared histories and traditions which are significant for maintaining the individual identity (Mc Claren 2002, 119). However, there are some disadvantages to talking about group identity. One of the problems is that a group identity can be easily be exclusive. If we look at the group identity "women", who should feel included in this? Who speaks for this group of "women"? What is not taking into account, are the intersections with race, class, sexuality, et cetera. When 'women' as a social group is being spoken for, they often mean white, middle-class, straight women. Feeling excluded from a group you seek to identify with, also has consequences on

your individual identity since they can lead to internalized oppression and low self-esteem. The group identities are formed by separating the normal from the abnormal. Normal is the dominant group in society, the ones that are not included in this norm are marginalized. This marginalized group has less economic power but also less cultural authority to speak (Mc Claren 2002, 123).

Linking the formation of a group identity to the usage of stereotypes, it can be argued that the stereotypes create a negative image of the entire social group. As Richard Dyer says in his book *The matter of images: Essays on Representation*, stereotypes are used to express a general agreement about a specific group of people, making it seem like this agreement came into existence before the stereotype even existed. However, we often gather information about social groups from the existing stereotypes (Dyer 14, 2013). By using lesbian stereotypes in the media, the mainstream audience will get ideas about the lesbian community, which derived from this negative way of representing. The way LGBT people are represented and presented affects how they construct their own identities and the way they see themselves (Siebler 2016, 6).

Siebler writes how in this digital era, we have an easy access to many LGBT images yet these are often scripted and stereotypical, even though they might seem dynamic at first (Siebler 2016, 6). What makes it hard is that, if lesbian stereotypes cannot be used, there is the danger of having no representation at all. By not being represented, accepting your own identity as a queer person becomes even harder and a lack of representation means a loss in political and cultural power as well (Siebler 2016, 30).

## **Research Analysis**

Now that I have discussed different theories about stereotypes and representation, I will begin with the analysis of the episodes of *Anne+*. My analysis will be based on two sub questions: the first one focuses on lesbian stereotypes, and the second one on the bisexual stereotypes.

*What lesbian stereotypes are being used in Anne+ and which ideas do these stereotypes reinforce?*

First, in the fifth episode *Anne + Sara*, the character of Sara fits into the stereotypical closeted lesbian plotline. If we look at the main storylines in lesbian movies, a lot of them will involve

a girl that has never dated women before who might even be in a relationship with a man. Then she falls head over heels in love with another girl, but she tries to deny it, since she is struggling with her sexual identity. They then have a sexual affair and the rest of the movie is just one big romantic drama. Examples of these storylines are the movies *Below Her Mouth* and *Disobedience*.

There are several reasons why such a plotline is a negative representation of lesbian relationships. First of all, this makes it seem like lesbian women are some sort of sexual predator, who constantly try to ‘turn’ straight girls. I even found out that there is a term for this in the urban dictionary, which is ‘Lesbianage’ – the act of turning straight girls gay, especially when they have unsuspected boyfriends. Secondly, the story of the closeted lesbian who struggles with her identity makes it seem like being a lesbian is a bad thing. Even though *Anne+* features mostly lesbian girls that have no issue with their sexual identity, the character of Sara still gives into this notion of having to be ashamed of who you are as a non-straight person. We can see in the episode that Sara does not want to be touched by her girlfriend in public, or even be a little bit affectionate with her. Since the episodes are only ten minutes, her struggle cannot be shown in a more layered manner so it actually reinforces the stereotype they tried so hard to avoid.

Something that can also be found in the episode *Anne + Sara*, is a joke Anne made when she was with Sara in the kitchen, asking her to move in together because ‘they were lesbians so they were already a month too late.’ This joke is quite similar to the one I started this thesis with, since they both refer to the stereotype of the Uhaul – lesbian. The term Uhaul-lesbian derived from the name of a moving and storage company, named Uhaul. A Uhaul-lesbian is a lesbian who falls in love and who wants to move in with her lesbian lover after only a few dates. Where does this stereotype come from? In an article on the website [bustle.com](http://bustle.com), Dr. Lauren Costine explains why lesbians might move faster in relationships, saying:

We live in a society that tells all women being in a relationship is one of the, if not the most important life goal. Combine those two factors with low self-esteem caused by internalized lesbianphobia, and you’ve got the U-haul recipe (Emery, 2016).

Thus she argues that the stereotype comes from a combination of women believing their value depends on whether they are in a relationship or not, and a low self-esteem coming from internalized lesbianphobia. On her own website, she describes lesbianphobia as the following:

On top of growing up in a patriarchal culture, women who are same-sex oriented also live and evolve in a homophobic society. So, because lesbians are women, misogyny

and homophobia work in conjunction to form what is called a double oppression, making an already tough world even tougher for lesbians (Costine, n.d.)

Here she is using an intersectional approach to explain double oppression of lesbian women, meaning they face both misogyny and homophobia at the same time and these two types of oppression are intertwined. Women with internalized lesbianphobia might grow up believing women are indeed less valuable because of misogyny and believing they themselves hold even less value because of homophobia and them being same-sex oriented.

This explanation however, lacks scientific evidence and therefore cannot be proven. Scientifically there might be an explanation as well, says Dr. Costine:

Biologically our brains are wired for a relationships and connection. We emit much more Oxytocin than men. Oxytocin is a hormone women emit when they're falling in love, having sex, or breastfeeding. It's biological encouragement to attach. It feels so good that for some women, in this case lesbians, they can't get enough. Since there's two women, there's twice as much Oxytocin floating around... (Costine, n.d.)

Thus presumably the stereotype derived from a combination of social factors as well as the biological reason of women producing more oxytocin. Looking back at how this stereotype was used in *Anne+*, it was meant merely as a joke. However, making jokes about certain stereotypes might be reinforcing them as well. Jokes about minority groups, even made by members of this group, can contribute to oppression. This is also discussed in an article about jokes and ethnic stereotypes, written by Walter P. Zenner. He writes: "In the case of jokes told by members of subordinate in-groups, emphasis has been placed on such mechanisms as covert aggression, self-hate, and self-criticism" (Zenner 1970 ,93). While I understand that a television series makes these kind of jokes to establish a humourful yet recognizable storyline, it must be noted that jokes are not always harmless.

In the episode *Anne + Janna*, another stereotype is shortly mentioned within the first minute. A lesbian friend of Anne mentions Janna is now dating with her ex Maya, and Anne answers "I wonder how long those two will last." This hints toward the idea that everyone within the lesbian community is dating each other and that you might end up with the ex of an ex of your best friend's ex. I understand where this stereotypical idea comes from, since there are a lot less non-straight women and the dating pool is slightly limited. This stereotype is something that gets joked about often in the LGBT community. In a column on [elitedaily.com](http://elitedaily.com), the struggles of being a lesbian are being explained in a humorous way, one of the struggle being the small lesbian dating pool:

You can be on Mars. You can be in rural Pennsylvania. You can live in West Hollywood and meet someone while you're on a job in Manhattan. But after a few drinks with her, you will discover that you have three exes and one hookup in common. And then you will get a Facebook message from some dyke you've met ONCE, saying, "Oh, I heard you met so-and -so! She's one of my realllllly good friends (Barrie, 2016).

The reason I am calling this a stereotype, is because it raises the idea that all lesbians do is constantly sleeping together, going from one lesbian to the other which results in having connections with everyone in the community. This stereotype is also used in the popular lesbian series *The L Word*, where in one of the episodes they create a diagram of who dated/slept with whom, ending in everyone being linked to each other. Thus it makes it look like lesbians all live in some sort of hook-up culture, while there are plenty of lesbians who are not into that.

*What bisexual stereotypes are being used in Anne+ and which ideas do these stereotypes reinforce?*

In the episode with Janna and with Sara, some bisexual stereotypes are either being used or denied. In the episode about *Anne + Janna*, Janna's friends ask Anne whether she thinks it is odd that Janna is attracted to both men and women (4:11) and whether she is scared that there might be something that men can give her, but Anne cannot. Both Anne and Janna turn it into a joke, with Janna saying that her friend is just jealous she would not sleep with him and Anne jokingly asking Janna whether she thinks it is a shame that she does not have a penis. She then ends with "I don't think I need one (a penis), because at the end she is sitting here next to me instead of you." This comment of Janna's friend is one that is often used, by both the straight and the gay community and it is based upon the assumption that bisexuals will never be satisfied with either a man or a woman, but will always need both in their lives (Israel and Mohr 2008, 122). Even though there are bisexuals that are polyamorous, there are also many that are monogamous.

Janna is being portrayed as your typical "bad girl" who goes to all the parties, drinks and who uses drugs on a regular basis. Her friends are the same, one of her friends even wants Anne to smuggle his cocaine into the club by putting it in her bra, which she agrees to. It also seems like Janna is quite a flirt, who has no problem fixing girls at parties. This corresponds with the stereotype of the highly sexual, predatory bisexual (Eisner 2013, 38). This stereotype is built upon monosexism, which is the idea that monosexuality (meaning being sexually attracted to one gender) is right and bisexuality/pansexuality is wrong. Monosexists have the

idea that bisexuals are overly sexual beings, a belief that was shared by Sigmund Freud who thought adult bisexuality was a continuation of the “polymorphous perversity” of infancy (Israel and Mohr 2008, 122).

In the episode *Anne + Sara*, the word bisexual is never mentioned, yet the fact that Sara is in love with Anne but her also being the first girl she ever fell in love with, suggest Sara is bisexual. In the episode Anne makes a joke about moving in together, after only knowing each other for two months, saying “We are lesbians, we are already one month too late.”(2:12) Sara then tells Anne that she is not even sure whether she is a lesbian, and that she just likes Anne for who she is as a person. After this, they show Sara’s struggle of accepting her sexual identity, how she doesn’t want anyone to know about her relationship with Anne and how they eventually break up because of this.

What I found interesting, is that they only discuss whether or not Sara is a lesbian, never even bringing up the fact that she might be bisexual. This not explicitly naming bisexuality has been an issue for the representation of bisexuals on television and in movies, and it is called bisexual erasure. In an article by Nicole Richter about Bisexual Erasure in Lesbian Vampire Film Theory, this “appropriation without representation” is mentioned. This strategy was provided by Christopher James in 1996, he said it occurred when a theorist would call “behaviorally bisexual people or texts with bisexual characters as content, as ‘queer,’ ‘gay,’ or ‘lesbian’” (Richter 2013, 274). The reason that bisexuality is often not specifically mentioned in the media, is the stigma that is attached to it. The bisexual stereotype that is often used, makes it look like bisexuals are confused, highly sexual, unfaithful and emotionally unstable. Because of this negative image, characters in television series and movies are often acting bisexual, even having romantic relationships with both men and women, yet never really stating that they are in fact, bisexual. An example of this is the character of Clarke, in the television series “the 100”. Clarke is romantically involved with a man, named Finn, and later on she is kissing with a woman, Lexa. This romance quickly comes to an end when Lexa dies, and Clarke never talks about her being bisexual, making it look like she was just heteroflexible and it was nothing more than a short fling. This is problematic because when bisexuals are either represented in a negative manner or not at all, there are no decent bisexual role models to look up to and for people who are already struggling with their sexuality, it will only be more difficult to accept their bisexual feelings.

The fourth episode, *Anne + Esther*, shows Anne getting into a sexual affair with her boss Esther. Esther is in an open relationship with her girlfriend Noa, meaning they are allowed to have sex with other people as well. This young girl - older woman scenario, is not a new

one. It can also be seen in movies like *Carol*, where a young, aspiring photographer falls in love with an older woman whose marriage is quite loveless, and the movie *Loving Annabelle*, where a young girl falls in love with her female teacher at an all-girls Catholic high school. This time, however, it breaks with the stereotypical storyline, where the older woman is married to a man and eventually goes back to him instead of being with the younger girl. This episode ends with Anne and Esther being caught by Noa, while they were hooking up in Esther's house even though they had rules about only doing this outside of their own house. Noa notices the way Esther looks at Anne, and asks Esther to look her in the eyes, which she is unable to do and the only thing she says is "sorry". We can then hear the two of them fight while Anne sneaks out of the house.

I found this to be a negative representation of open relationships, making it seem like they are dysfunctional and perpetuating the idea of monogamy being the norm for loving relationships. However, biologically humans were not made for a monogamous lifestyle. In fact, there exist very little species that are known for mating for life (Brandson 2010, 9). By representing an open relationship in this negative manner, society's negative view on a non-monogamous lifestyle is being intensified.

## Conclusion

Now I will be linking the theories I discussed previously in the theoretical framework to my own analysis of the web series *Anne+*. This will form the answer to my main question which was:

*Which LGBT stereotypes are being used in Anne+ and how do the usage of these stereotypes affect the forming of a queer identity?*

In my first sub question I talked about the closeted lesbian and the Uhaul lesbian stereotypes. One of the effects that the usage of lesbian stereotypes can have, is a lowered self-esteem and internalized homophobia / lesbianphobia. This happens because queer identity is partly created by the way in which they see queer characters being represented in the media. What can be seen, or what is being represented as “being queer identity” eventually forms the identity, making the representation true. If this representation happens to be negative, it will increase self-doubt.

Then, in my second sub question, I discussed the bisexual stereotypes, one of them being the promiscuous bisexual who needs sexual relationships with both men and women to remain satisfied. On the other end of the bisexual stereotype spectrum, was the closeted, more or less ‘bicurious’ girl who was still struggling with embracing and exploring her sexuality. Both are common representations of bisexuality, if bisexuality is being represented at all. This feeds into the insecurity that bisexuals might encounter, feeling like they need to choose between either loving men or women since these stereotypes are based upon monosexist thoughts.

The usage of queer stereotypes also affects the political power of queer people. By being represented in a negative way, they will have less power in society which in the end, influences how they sees themselves as well for the ones that hold the power, the dominant group, creates the identity of the “others”. In the series some stereotypes are used as a joke, but by doing this, they are reinforcing and acknowledging those stereotypes.

In conclusion, there are some LGBT stereotypes to be found in the series *Anne+*, but there are also some episodes in which this is not the case. The stereotypes that are being used have negative effects on how queer people might see themselves (individually) but it also affects their group identity. Marginalized groups often cannot speak for themselves, because



they lack the political power to do so, therefore by representing them it is important to be as inclusive as possible. It is positive to see that there is LGBT representation in the Dutch media nowadays, however it remains of utmost importance to remain critical of the way in which they are being represented.

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