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Within-Person Predictors and Outcomes of Daily Sexual Orientation Self-Presentation Among Plurisexual Women

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Research suggests that plurisexual individuals face ongoing decisions about whether and how accurately to present their sexual orientation to others, in part because of stereotypes and negative attitudes specific to plurisexuality. This study tested a within-person model of theoretical predictors and outcomes of self-presentational accuracy in a sample of 165 cisgender plurisexual women. Participants completed online surveys to report on situations involving self-presentation decisions as they occurred over a 14-day period. Participants also completed nightly surveys assessing facets of well-being. Self-presentational accuracy varied substantially from day to day. Several contextual and relational factors, including acceptance and rejection cues, interaction partners' sexual orientation, and interpersonal closeness, predicted self-presentational accuracy, both directly and through the mediator of anticipated acceptance. Self-presentational accuracy predicted daily life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect through the mediator of social support. Finally, exploratory analyses underscored the relevance of goals related to authenticity, closeness, privacy, communication, educating others, and safety in self-presentation decisions. Discussion highlights the importance of context in identity management decisions among plurisexual women and the impact of these decisions on day-to-day well-being.

P S a S a

The present study suggests that plurisexual women's sexual orientation self-presentation varies significantly from day to day and is influenced by interpersonal context. Furthermore, the accuracy of plurisexual women's self-presentation predicts daily social support and well-being.

Keywords: identity management, plurisexuality, sexual orientation, stigma

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Like other groups with concealable stigmatized identities, sexual minority (SM) individuals must continually make decisions

about whether to share their sexual orientation with others. Disclosure of a stigmatized identity may lead to discrimination and

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dictors and outcomes of identity management behaviors among a sample of PS women using an experience sampling methodology. We examined contextual factors believed to influence self-presentation among PS women, including factors that have been shown to be relevant for SM people in general as well as plurisexuality-specific factors. We also tested the impact of self-presentational accuracy on daily social support and well-being.

Discrimination and Identity Management Among Plurisexuality

PS individuals operate within a unique context of discrimination. Like LGs, PSs encounter heterosexism (i.e., a collection of common negative attitudes about homosexuality) from heterosexual friends, family members, and coworkers. However, PSs also confront monosexism (i.e., a collection of common negative attitudes about plurisexuality), which may be perpetrated by both heterosexuals and LGs (Roberts, Horne, & Hoyt, 2015). In fact, research suggests that PSs may experience monosexism from LGs as particularly painful, because LGs are perceived as fellow members of the SM community (McLean, 2008). Negative stereotypes include that plurisexuality is an illegitimate sexual orientation, PSs are sexually irresponsible or attention-seeking, and PSs are hiding their true LG orientation (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Israel & Mohr, 2004). Many scholars have suggested that the extremely high rates of psychopathology found among PSs may result from the unique and profound discrimination they encounter (e.g., Bostwick, Boyd, Hughes, & McCabe, 2010). Because of this discriminatory context, the stakes of identity management are particularly high for PSs.

Likely as a result of monosexist stigma, PS individuals display complex patterns of sexual orientation identity management. Overall, PSs tend to be less “out” than LGs (Balsam & Mohr, 2007). Mohr et al. (2017) found that PS participants were more likely than LGs to present their identity differently to different people and to use diverse identity labels, such as heterosexual, LG, and nonspecific SM labels (e.g., queer). These results suggest that PSs actively engage in identity management, varying the way they present their identities from situation to situation. Existing research on identity management has several limitations with regard to PS populations. It has often excluded PSs or lumped them in with LGs (obscuring potential differences between PS and monosexual groups), it has been mostly cross-sectional (limiting its ability to examine within-person variability in self-presentation, which may be particularly relevant for PS individuals), and it has tended to focus on the disclosure of specific sexual orientation labels (which may be less relevant for PS individuals, as discussed below).

Women are significantly more likely than men to report experiencing their sexual orientation as fluid over time, and PS women are particularly likely to endorse such fluidity (Diamond, 2008; Ross et al., 2012). This suggests that PS women may exhibit even greater variability in their identity management patterns than PS men. This possibility has been supported by evidence that, among people who report sexual attraction to multiple genders, women are much more likely than men to use a variety of sexual orientation labels (Katz-Wise, 2015; Morandini, Blaszczyński, & Dar-Nimrod, 2017). Again, however, very little research has examined identity management among PS women specifically.

Predictors and Outcomes of Identity Management

Previous research has demonstrated that SM individuals consider their social environment when engaging in identity management. For instance, they are (a) more likely to reveal their sexual orientation to interaction partners from whom they have perceived acceptance cues related to homosexuality, (b) less likely to reveal to interaction partners from whom they have perceived rejection cues related to homosexuality, (c) less likely to conceal around SM others, and (d) more likely to disclose to others with whom they share close relationships (King, Mohr, Peddie, Jones, & Kendra, 2017; Wessel, 2017). Anticipated acceptance is theorized to be a mechanism through which an individual with a concealable stigmatized identity can aggregate perceived acceptance- and rejection-related information. Anticipated acceptance then serves as the heuristic by which the individual makes the decision to reveal or conceal their identity (Kelly, Klusas, von Weiss, & Kenny, 2001; Rodriguez & Kelly, 2006). However, some of these cues may directly impact identity management behavior, regardless of anticipated acceptance (e.g., revealing one’s SM identity to educate an interaction partner who has communicated negative views about homosexuality; Cain, 1991).

The effect of these interpersonal factors on identity management may be more complicated for PSs than LGs. For example, PSs may be more sensitive to plurisexuality-specific acceptance and rejection cues than to general SM-related cues, given that PSs face significant plurisexuality-specific stigma from both heterosexuals and LGs (Israel & Mohr, 2004). Similarly, it is possible that PSs would be more comfortable revealing their sexual orientation to other PS individuals than to LGs or heterosexuals. However, to our knowledge, no research has examined the impact of contextual factors on identity management among PSs specifically.

Many researchers have also suggested that inter- and intrapersonal goals may serve as antecedents to identity management decisions among people with concealable stigmatized identities (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). Disclosure-related behaviors are

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to be accepting) seems to mitigate these risks (King et al., 2017). Few studies have examined the impact of identity management behaviors on well-being and social support among PSs, an important gap in the literature given PSs' low levels of perceived social support and high levels of mental illness compared with LGs (Hsieh, 2014; Bostwick et al., 2010).

Self-Presentational Accuracy

Self-presentation is the part of the identity management process that includes an individual's explicit communication and behaviors that are aimed at influencing how one's identity is perceived by others (Goffman, 1963). *Self-presentational accuracy* can be defined as the extent to which the impression of the self that one attempts to produce accurately reflects one's internal sense of self. Research suggests that individuals with concealable stigmatized identities regularly vary the accuracy with which they present their stigmatized identity (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010; Omarzu, 2000).

The concept of self-presentational accuracy has significant advantages compared to traditional frameworks for characterizing sexual orientation identity management behaviors, such as disclosure and concealment. The accuracy perspective shifts the focus away from the disclosure or concealment of a sexual orientation label to the sharing of information that allows the other person to gain an accurate understanding of the discloser's sexual identity. This perspective also reflects the reality that disclosures vary in the extent to which they fully convey a person's experience of their own sexual orientation, in contrast to the conceptualization of disclosure as an all-or-nothing outcome that is common in SM research (e.g., Beals et al., 2009; Pachankis, Cochran, & Mays, 2015). Self-presentational accuracy can therefore reflect the use of complex identity management behaviors that are typically measured separately from disclosure and concealment (e.g., signaling, avoidance; King et al., 2017). Finally, the accuracy perspective more fully acknowledges the SM person as a self-directed actor within the identity management process, recognizing that SM individuals make conscious, strategic decisions about how accurately to present their identities to others based on factors such as the social context and their goals. Although several studies have examined self-presentation among SM individuals (e.g., Mohr et al., 2017), the present study may be the first to use the construct of self-presentational accuracy.

Self-presentational accuracy may be a particularly appropriate construct for PS individuals. PSs have more options for presenting their sexual orientation somewhat accurately than do LGs, adding an additional layer of complexity to their self-presentation behaviors (Mohr et al., 2017). For instance, a PS woman's inaccurate self-presentation may be the result of a strategy that is intended to present her orientation as either more homosexual (e.g., referring to herself as a lesbian or only mentioning female partners) or more heterosexual (e.g., referring to herself as straight or only mentioning male partners) than her actual orientation. Traditional disclosure and concealment frameworks, which typically focus on the disclosure of a specific identity label, would likely obscure these nuanced self-presentational strategies. Additionally, PSs are more likely than other SMs to identify with multiple labels, to feel that available sexual orientation labels do not accurately reflect their identities, and to identify with different labels in different situations (Dyar, Feinstein, & London, 2015; Galupo, Mitchell, &

Davis, 2015; Mohr et al., 2017). This complexity highlights the value of studying the identity management experiences of PSs in terms of self-presentational accuracy rather than disclosure or concealment.

Conceptualizing identity management through the lens of self-presentational accuracy may also help correct certain negative

in the United States, and possessing a smartphone (to access surveys).
There were 165 eligible participants, the majority of whom identified

they felt each of 10 positive emotions (e.g., “enthusiastic”) and each of 10 negative emotions (e.g., “guilty”; Watson & Clark, 1994). Scores on the positive and negative affect scales have demonstrated acceptable reliability with SM samples (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .85$ and $.86$, respectively; Mohr & Sarno, 2016). The positive affect scale is related to approach goals, while the negative affect scale is related to avoidance goals (Elliot, Gable, & Mapes, 2006). Multilevel reliability estimates for the positive and negative items were calculated for the current study (Geldhof, Preacher, & Zyphur, 2014). Positive affect showed good reliability at the within-person level ($\alpha = .89$) and excellent reliability at the between-person level ($\alpha = .99$). Negative affect showed acceptable reliability at the within-person level ($\alpha = .76$) and excellent reliability at the between-person level ($\alpha = .92$).

Life satisfaction. Participants completed the five-item Satisfaction with Life scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). Participants rated on a scale from 1 (

This item has been shown to be related to communication frequency (Roberts & Dunbar, 2011).

Goals. Prior to this study, we developed and pilot tested a measure of goals for sexual orientation self-presentation. Items were generated from a review of the literature on goals related to identity management (e.g., Cain, 1991; Derlega, Winstead, Greene, Serovich, & Elwood, 2004; Omarzu, 2000). Participants were asked “How much did each of these reasons play a role in your decisions about whether and how to share information about your sexual orientation during this interaction?” and rated nine items (e.g., “To become closer to my interaction partner”) on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*). Each item represents a distinct goal. The measure was pilot tested with 75 SM adults from

Table 4
Within-Person Model Coefficients

Predictor	<i>B</i> (<i>SE</i>)	95% CI
Outcome: Anticipated acceptance		
Acceptance cues toward PSs	0.35* (0.07)	[0.21, 0.49]
Acceptance cues toward SMs	0.24* (0.07)	[0.11, 0.36]
Rejection cues toward PSs	-0.23* (0.09)	[-0.41, -0.05]
Rejection cues toward SMs	-0.48* (0.09)	[-0.65, -0.30]
IP = Plurisexual	0.24* (0.09)	[0.06, 0.43]
IP = Heterosexual	-0.21* (0.08)	[-0.37, -0.05]

dicted self-presentational accuracy. Furthermore, social support mediated the relationship between self-presentational accuracy and all three well-being outcomes: life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect.

Exploratory Analysis: Goals for Self-Presentation

The within-person associations between participants' inter- and intrapersonal goals for an interaction and their level of self-presentational accuracy are reported in Table 6. Five goals were positively associated with self-presentational accuracy: to become closer to one's interaction partner, to be true to oneself, to make communication easier, to relieve feelings of tension, and to educate one's interaction partner. Furthermore, four goals were negatively associated with self-presentational accuracy: to avoid hostility, to gain one's interaction partner's approval, to avoid negative consequences, and to protect one's right to privacy.

To examine the unique predictive contribution of each goal, we ran a multilevel regression model in which the nine goals were predictors of self-presentational accuracy at both levels of analysis. Taken together, the goals accounted for approximately 34% of the within-person variance in accuracy. Six of the goals remained statistically significant predictors of accuracy: closeness, authenticity, communication, education, avoidance of hostility, and privacy.

Discussion

We examined the within-person predictors and outcomes of self-presentational accuracy among a sample of cisgender PS women. Past research has suggested that context plays an important role in sexual orientation identity management and has demonstrated a relationship between sexual orientation disclosure and well-being. By studying self-presentation processes using an experience sampling design, this study adds to the literature by examining how contextual factors are linked to self-presentation decisions as they occur, as well as the impact of these decisions on daily well-being. To our knowledge, this is the first study examine within-person variability in self-presentation among PS women, a group that cross-sectional research has suggested may display particularly complex patterns of identity management. Furthermore, this study utilized the novel framework of self-presentational accuracy to capture the identity management process; this framework's flexibility may be especially appropriate for PS women.

orientation self-presentation is needed, particularly as these processes occur.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has a number of limitations that should be noted. First, the sample contains a high proportion of White, young, and educated participants, and all participants were cisgender women. Caution should be exercised when attempting to generalize our

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