

# Outness to Different Social Groups: Associations with Minority Stress, Mental Health Outcomes, and Well-being in a Sample of Sexual and Gender Minority Youth

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## Introduction

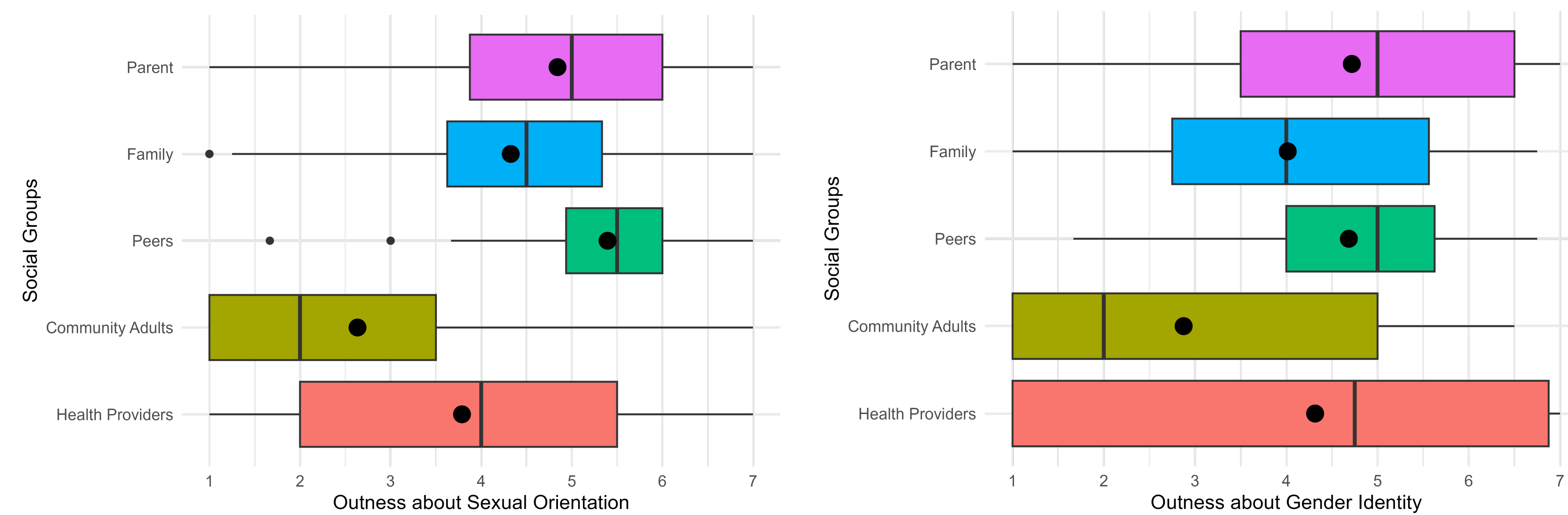
- Sexual and gender minority youth (SGMY) exhibit elevated risk for a wide range of mental health problems
- Outness, the degree to which one discloses their sexual orientation or gender identity, has mixed links with SGMY's mental health outcomes
- Minority stress (MS) linked with outness
  - Greater MS (e.g., internalized homophobia) associated with lower level of outness
  - Greater outness may increase susceptibility to MS (e.g., discrimination)
- Most studies used an overall outness score
- Present study:
  - Examine **outness associations by social groups**
  - For multi-person groups (e.g., family, peers), **assess/examine max and min levels of outness to any person in group**, as well as typical levels

## Methods

- N = 92 SGMY; M<sub>age</sub> = 16.45 (1.81), 12-19 yrs; 69% White
- 99% sexual minority, 36% gender minority
- Measures:
  - Outness Inventory (Modified Version)
    - 1 (definitely does not know) to 7 (definitely knows, openly talked about)
    - Typical level of outness for groups scored
    - Also **min and max outness levels** to any person within multi-person groups
  - Beck Depression Inventory-II (**BDI-II**)
  - Suicide Ideation Questionnaire-Junior (**SIQ**)
  - Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (**RSE**)
  - The Sexual Minority Adolescent Stress Inventory
    - NE (Negative Expectancy)
    - FR (Family Rejection)
    - ND (Negative Disclosure Experiences)
  - Daily Heterosexist Experiences Questionnaire
    - DH (Discrimination/Harassment)

## Results

**Graph 1. Outness to Different Social Groups**



- Participants with greater outness to parents about sexual orientation reported **lower SI and depression, and higher self-esteem**
  - Outness to family as a group had similar pattern of findings

**Table 1. Correlations between outness levels and psychological symptoms**

	Outness of Sexual Orientation (n=91)					Outness of Gender Identity (n=33)				
	Parents	Family	Peers	Com Adults	Heath Prov	Parents	Family	Peers	Com Adults	Heath Prov
BDI-II	<b>-0.23*</b>	-0.17	-0.06	-0.04	-0.04	0.03	0.03	-0.12	-0.06	0.05
SIQ	<b>-0.31**</b>	<b>-0.23*</b>	-0.08	-0.09	0.04	-0.04	0.08	-0.16	-0.13	0.10
RSE	<b>0.36**</b>	<b>0.35**</b>	0.14	0.14	0.17	0.16	0.11	0.13	0.15	0.04

- Minority stressors were **differentially associated with outness across social groups and sexual orientation vs gender identity**

**Table 2. Correlations between outness levels and minority stress**

	Outness of Sexual Orientation (n=91)					Outness of Gender Identity (n=33)				
	Parents	Family	Peers	Com Adults	Heath Prov	Parents	Family	Peers	Com Adults	Heath Prov
NE	<b>-0.23*</b>	<b>-0.21*</b>	-0.12	<b>-0.22*</b>	-0.02	-0.03	0.01	-0.24	-0.19	-0.15
FR	<b>-0.35**</b>	<b>-0.31**</b>	-0.06	-0.14	-0.01	-0.08	-0.07	-0.01	-0.04	0.11
DH	-0.09	0.08	<b>0.25*</b>	0.17	<b>0.23*</b>	<b>0.35*</b>	<b>0.41*</b>	0.25	0.09	0.05
ND	-0.09	0.03	<b>0.26*</b>	0.14	<b>0.32**</b>	0.17	0.25	0.01	0.12	<b>0.33*</b>

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01

## Results

- For gender identity, while typical level of outness to peers was not associated with mental health, **lower minimum degree of outness across peer group was linked to higher depression and lower self-esteem**
  - **Having any peers who GMY are less out to about gender identity was linked to worse mental health outcomes**

**Table 3. Selected minimum and maximum outness levels that differentially relate to symptoms**

	Outness -- Gender Identity		
	Peers Typical	Peers Min	Peers Max
BDI-II	-0.12	<b>-0.42*</b>	0.20
SIQ	-0.16	-0.41	-0.00
RSE	0.13	<b>0.57**</b>	0.10

- We didn't see this effect with other social groups

## Discussion

- Associations between outness and SGMY's mental health outcomes vary depending on specific social groups
- An open and supportive environment with parents and family may be particularly beneficial
  - Lower MS levels may contribute to outness with family
- For gender identity, being more consistently out across all peers seems protective
  - Could reflect an overall safer social environment
- Greater degree of outness about gender is linked to higher levels of some types of MS
  - Perhaps reflecting increased vulnerability discrimination
- Future work needed with longitudinal data and larger/diverse samples