

# Risk and Protective Factors for Bullying and Mental Health among Racial and Sexual Minority Students

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- 1. Bullying Involvements and Adolescents' Perceived School Safety: The Role of Race/Ethnicity**
- 2. School Climate Moderates the Relations between Victimization and Suicidal Thoughts among Ethnic Minority Students**
- 3. Bullying and Mental Health Disparities Among Sexual Minority Youth**
- 4. Risk and Protective Factors for Bullying and Mental Health among Sexual Minority Youth**
- 5. Discussion**

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# Risk and Protective Factors for Bullying and Mental Health among Sexual Minority Youth

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# Overview - Born Brave Experiences Study

- The Born Brave Experiences (BBE) research project is a mixed-methods line of inquiry designed to help understand the factors that support youth empowerment, youth engagement, and to develop effective bullying prevention and intervention strategies that will be disseminated through unique outlets (i.e., web-based communities; in-person activations).
- Collaboration with Lady Gaga and Born This Way Foundation
- 3 versions (BBE 1.0, BBE 2.0, BBE 3.0); 8 datasets (6 datasets in English and 2 in Spanish).
- In total, over 12,500 youth (ages 13 – 18) and young adults (ages 19 – 25) worldwide have completed the BBE surveys.



If you're between the ages of 13-25, you're eligible to participate in the Born Brave Experiences Research Study!

Go to [www.bornthiswayfoundation.org](http://www.bornthiswayfoundation.org) and click on the "take our research study" link!



# Study 3

## Bullying and Mental Health Disparities Among Sexual Minority Youth

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# Introduction

## Bullying/Victimization

- Sexual minority youth are at increased risk for bullying and mental health difficulties compared with to their heterosexual peers (Burton et al., 2013; Coulter et al., 2016; Espelage et al., 2008; Jackman et al., 2020; Kaufman et al., 2019; Poteat et al., 2009; Swearer et al., 2008)
- 30 to 60% of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender report dealing with anxiety or depression – This rate is 1.5 to 2.5 times higher than straight or gender-conforming individuals (ADAA, 2019)

## Depression

- Sexual minority youth reported higher frequencies of depressive symptoms suicidality when compared to heterosexual youth (Burton et al., 2013; Muller et al., 2015)
- Within sexual minority groups (i.e., gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning), youth who identify as questioning/less certain frequently report higher accounts of psychosocial concerns (i.e., depression, suicidality)

## Anxiety

- In their longitudinal study, Kaufman et al. (2019) found that LGB youth that are persistently victimized experience significantly higher mean levels of anxiety than heterosexual youth across waves.
- Jones et al (2017) found that being bullied between the ages of 12 and 16 years was a “significant independent risk factor for an anxiety disorder at 17.5 years.”(UK sample)



Definition  
Bullying is defined by three distinct characteristics (CDC, 2019; Olweus, 1993)

1

Intent to cause harm by the bully perpetrator

2

An imbalance of power (e.g., the victim is not able to stop the bullying from happening)

3

Repetition of the bullying behavior (e.g., the bullying happens more than once time)

# Definitions

*Sexual Identity* - Sexual identity is how one thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is romantically or sexually attracted. Sexual identity may also refer to sexual orientation identity, which is when people identify or dis-identify with a sexual orientation or choose not to identify with a sexual orientation.

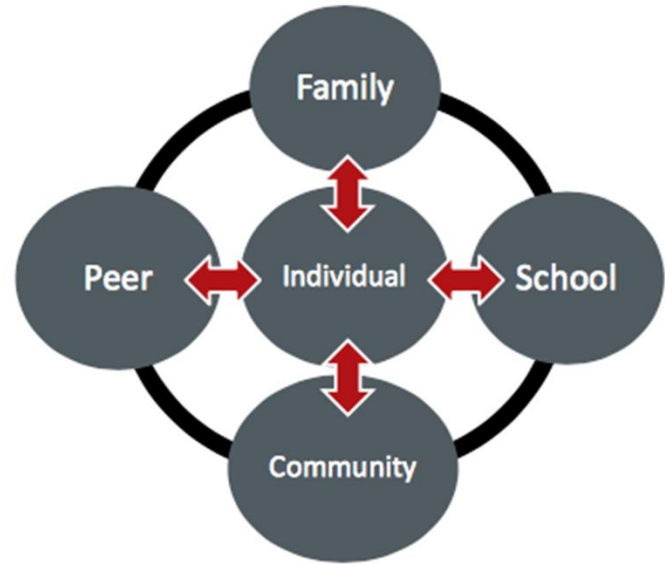
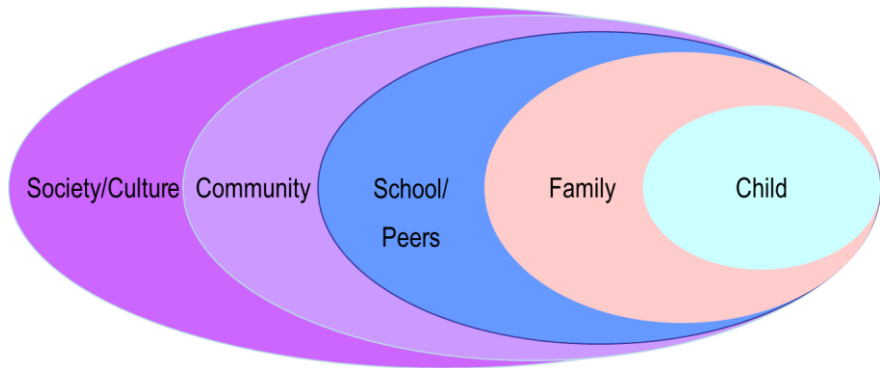
*Gender identity* - Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex at birth or can differ from it. Gender expression typically reflects a person's gender identity, but this is not always the case.

*The Genderbread Person* - <https://www.genderbread.org/> A useful site to help individuals understand the complexities of sexual identity (referred to as “attraction” in this website) and gender identity.



# Theoretical Framework

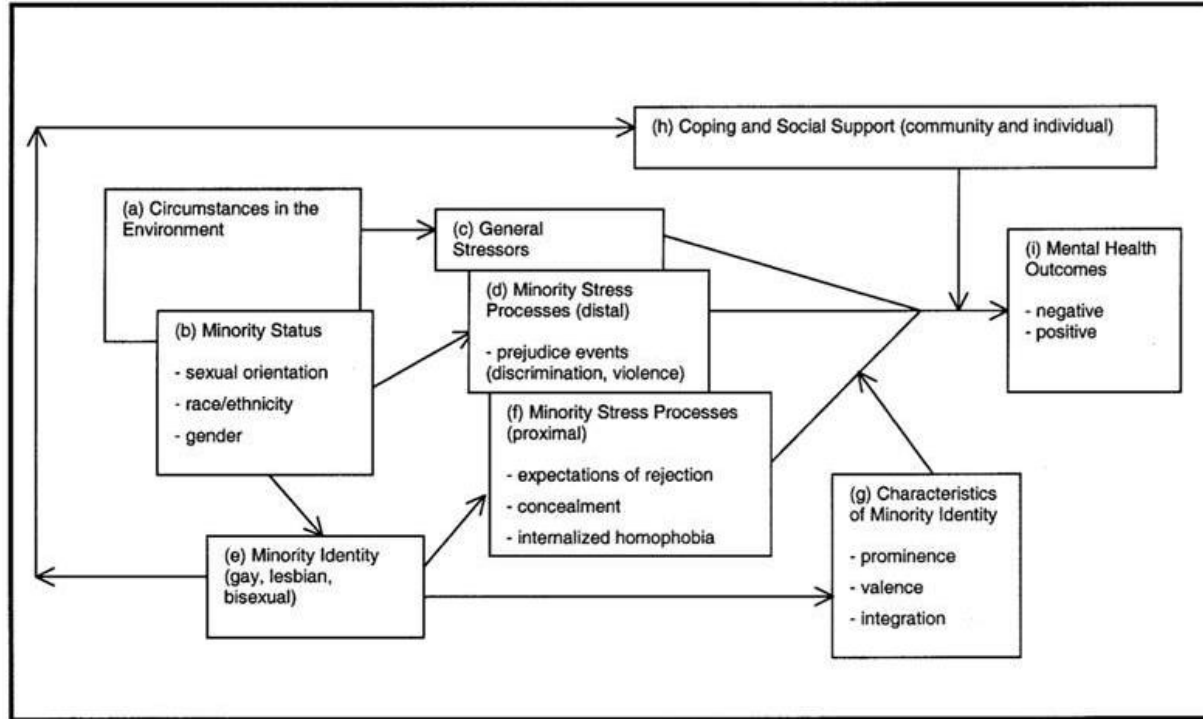
- Social-Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Swearer & Doll, 2001; Swearer & Espelage, 2004)





# Theoretical Framework

- Minority Stress Model (Meyer, 1995; Meyer, 2003)



# Questions/Hypotheses

## Bullying

Question 1: Are there differences in the mean total bullying victimization scores by sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual youth vs. non-heterosexual youth)?

**H1: Non-heterosexual youth will score significantly higher on bully victimization in comparison to heterosexual youth.**

Question 2: Do total bully victimization scores significantly differ between non-heterosexual youth (i.e., gay/lesbian, bisexual, questioning, pansexual)?

**Hnull: All group means are equal.**



# Questions/Hypotheses

## Depression

Question 3: Are there differences in depression scores by sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual youth vs. non-heterosexual youth)?

**H1: Non-heterosexual youth will endorse significantly higher depressive symptoms when compared to heterosexual youth.**

Question 4: Do depression scores significantly differ between non-heterosexual youth (i.e., gay/lesbian, bisexual, questioning, pansexual)?

**Hnull: All group means are equal.**

Question 5: Does sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual youth vs. non-heterosexual) moderate the relation between victimization on depression?

**H1: The relationship between bullying victimization and depression will be moderated by sexual orientation.**



# Questions/Hypotheses

## Anxiety

Question 6: Are there differences in the anxiety scores by sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual youth vs. non-heterosexual youth)?

**H1: Non-heterosexual youth will endorse significantly higher anxiety symptoms when compared to heterosexual youth.**

Question 7: Do total anxiety scores significantly differ between non-heterosexual youth (i.e., gay/lesbian, bisexual, questioning, pansexual)?

**Hnull: All group means are equal.**

Question 8: Does sexual orientation (i.e., heterosexual youth vs. non-heterosexual) moderate the relation between victimization on anxiety?

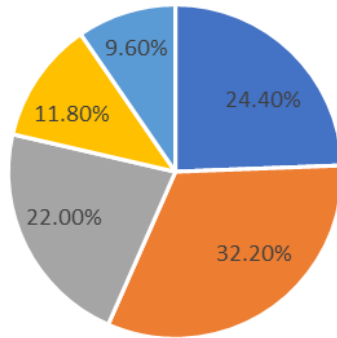
**H1: The relationship between bullying victimization and anxiety will be moderated by sexual orientation.**



# Methods

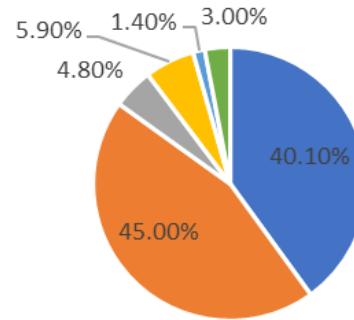
- BBE 3.0 youth (ages 13 – 18) survey;  $N = 1,178$
- 509 youth participants were included in this international study
  - 47.3% of participants were from the United States, 17.1% Brazil, 7.5% UK, 3.3% Canada

Demographics by Sexual Orientation



■ Straight ■ Lesbian/Gay ■ Bisexual ■ Queer/Questioning ■ Pansexual

Demographics by Gender Identity



■ Male ■ Female  
■ Pangender ■ Transgender  
■ Genderqueer ■ Other/Prefer not to disclose



# Measures

Table 1. *Description of Instruments Used in Study (With Internal Consistency)*

Measure	Scale used/ # of Items	( $\alpha$ )	Scale Response Options /Example Item
Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale (VPBS; Swearer, 2008)	Victimization Subscale / 13-items	.84	6-point Likert Scale/ "I was called bad names"
Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II; Beck , 1996)	Total Depression Score/ 21-items	.94	Within past 2 weeks, pick one statement: "I do not feel sad" "I feel sad much of the time" "I am sad all of the time" "I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it"
Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children (MASC; March et al., 1997)	MASC Total Anxiety Score / 39-items	.91	4-point Likert Scale/ "I feel tense or uptight"

# Results: Bullying

Figure 1. Mean VPBS-V Score by Sexual Orientation

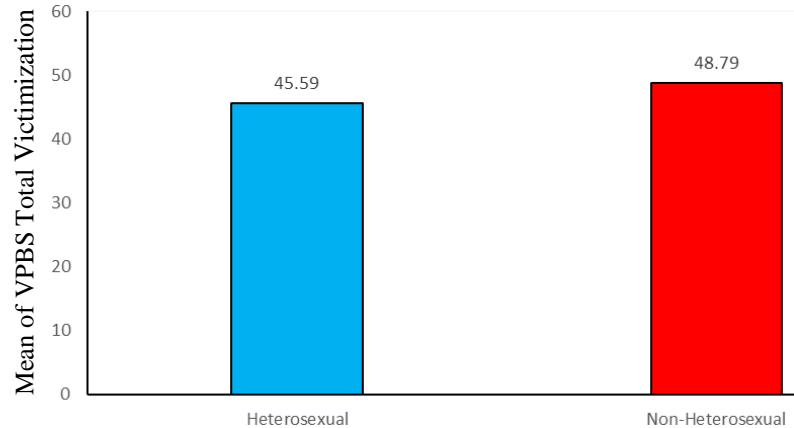
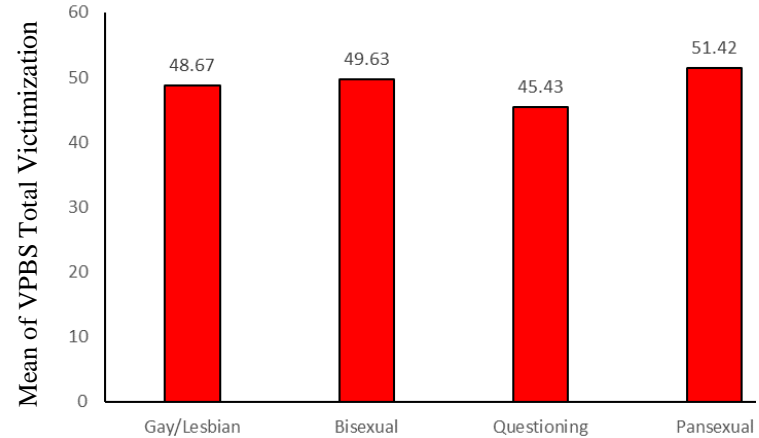


Figure 2. Mean VPBS-V Score Across Sexual Minority Youth



Question 1: There is a statistically significant difference between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth's mean VPBS Total Victimization score, as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(1,507) = 5.88, p = 0.016$ ].

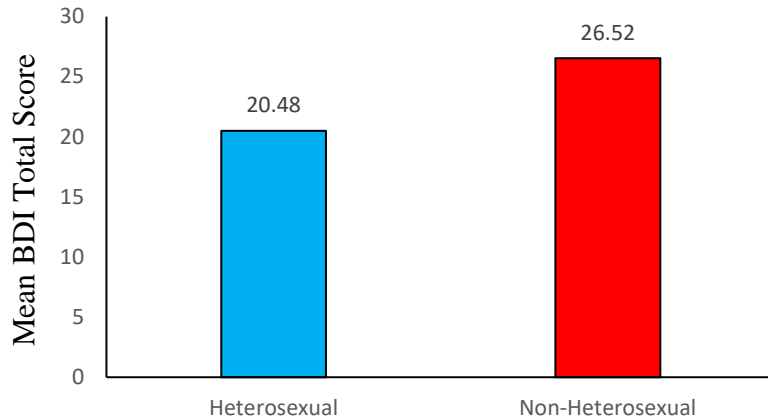
Question 2: Tukey HSD post hoc analysis did not reveal any significant mean differences for non-heterosexual youth's mean VPBS Total Victimization score.

Fail to Reject the Null Hypothesis



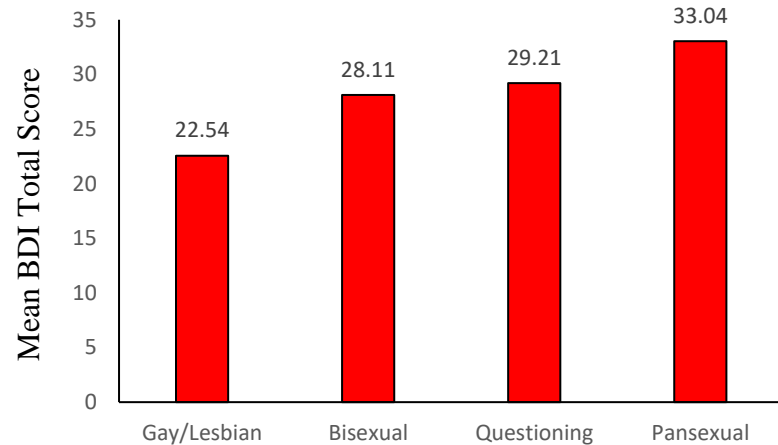
# Results: Depression

Figure 3. Mean Depression Score by Sexual Orientation



**Question 3:** There is a statistically significant difference between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth's mean BDI Total Score as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(1,476) = 15.06, p < 0.001$ ].

Figure 4. Mean Depression Score Across Sexual Minority Youth



**Question 4:** There is a statistically significant difference between Sexually minority youth's (SMY) mean BDI Total Score as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(3,360) = 8.14, p < 0.001$ ]. Tukey HSD post hoc analysis revealed significant mean differences for Total BDI Scores for sexual minority youth. SMY who identified as Gay/Lesbian demonstrated significantly lower Total BDI Scores than SMY who identified as bisexual, questioning, or pansexual. **Reject the Null Hypothesis**





# Results: Depression

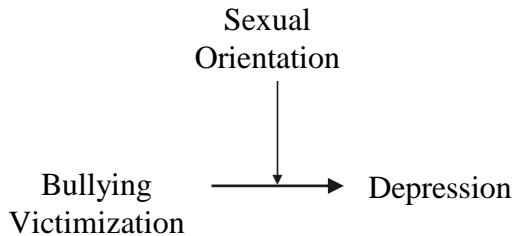


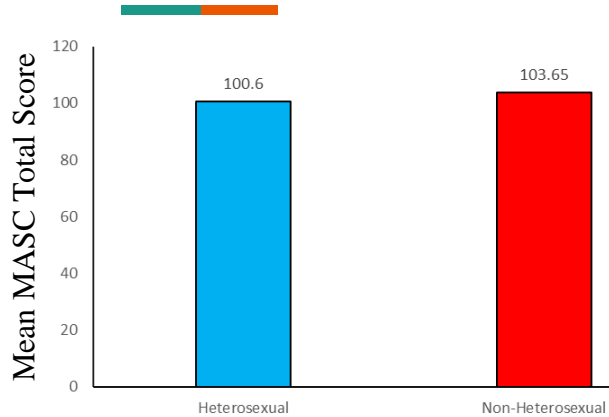
Table 2. Total Depression Predicted from Bullying Victimization and Sexual Orientation

Predictor	$\beta$	$p$	95% CI	
Bullying Victimization*	.59	.007	.166,	1.02
Sexual Orientation*	5.69	.025	1.614,	23.962
Bullying Victimization X Sexual Orientation	-.17	.157	-.403	.065

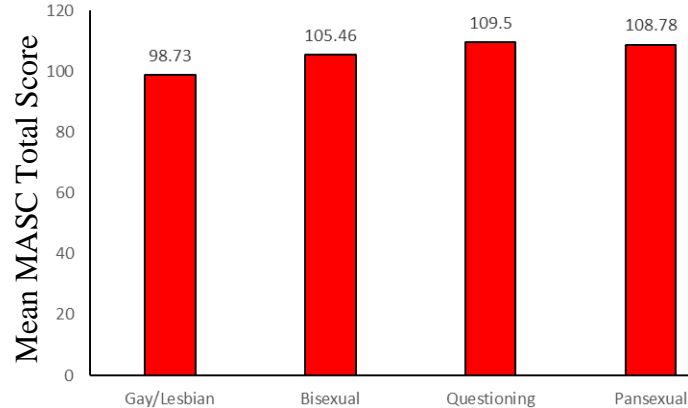
\* $p \leq .05$

- To test the hypothesis that sexual orientation moderates the relationship between bullying victimization and depression, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted.
- As shown in Table 2, depression was significantly related to bullying victimization.
- The interaction between bullying victimization and sexual orientation fell short of statistical significance.

# Results: Anxiety



Question 6: No statistically significant difference was found between heterosexual and non-heterosexual youth's mean MASC Total Score as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(1,460) = 2.22, p = .137$ ].



Question 7: There is a statistically significant difference between sexually minority youth's (SMY) mean MASC Total Score as determined by one-way ANOVA [ $F(3,346) = 6.88, p < 0.001$ ]. Tukey HSD post hoc analysis revealed significant mean differences for Total MASC Scores for sexual minority youth. SMY who identified as Gay/Lesbian demonstrated significantly lower Total MASC Scores than SMY who identified as bisexual, questioning, or pansexual.  
**Reject the Null Hypothesis**



# Results: Anxiety

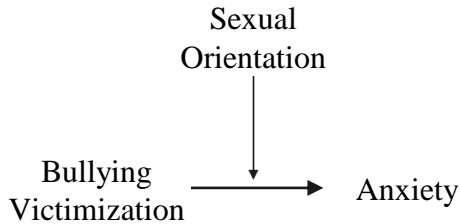
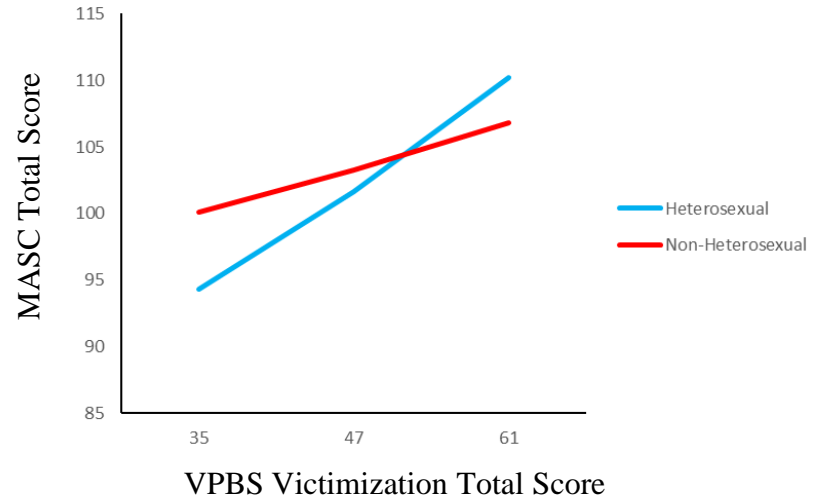


Table 3. Total Anxiety Predicted from Bullying Victimization and Sexual Orientation

Predictor	$\beta$	$p$	95% CI	
Bullying Victimization	.96	< .001	.402,	1.524
Sexual Orientation*	18.18	.0157	3.448,	32.919
Bullying Victimization X Sexual Orientation*	-.35	.025	-.661,	-.044

\* $p \leq .05$

Figure 5. Moderation by Sexual Orientation



## Discussion/Implication

- Consistent with past research, non-heterosexual youth endorsed significantly higher bullying victimization when compared to heterosexual youth.
- No group differences among SMY with regards to bullying victimization
- Non-heterosexual youth endorsed significantly higher internalizing symptoms (i.e., depression and anxiety) when compared to heterosexual youth.
- Gay/Lesbian group showed significantly lower levels of depression and anxiety when compared to the other three SYM groups (i.e., bisexual, questioning, pansexual)



# Limitations

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- Participants from this study were recruited through Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation and may display unique demographic features when compared to the general population.
- All data were based on youth self report.
- Since this study utilized a cross-sectional design, we cannot assume a temporal relationships between variables.



# Study 4

## Risk and Protective Factors for Bullying and Mental Health among Sexual Minority Youth

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# Introduction

- **Sexual minority youth are at increased risk for bullying compared with to their heterosexual peers** (Burton et al., 2013; Coulter et al., 2016; Espelage et al., 2008; Jackman et al., 2020; Poteat et al., 2009)
- **Intersectionality between sexual minority status and ethnic minority status**
- **All sexual minority and racial/ethnic minority boys, and bisexual racial/ethnic minority girls were at higher risk for bullying and victimization based on Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance data** (Jackman et al., 2020)





## Introduction

- Sexual minority youth are also at higher risk for depression, suicidal thoughts, alcohol-marijuana use (Esleplage et al., 2008), higher truancy, and lower grades (Aragon et al., 2014)
- Few research focused on protective factors





# Protective Factors for Mental Health Difficulties

- Coping: “conscious, volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behavior, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful life events or circumstances” (Compas et al. 2001, p. 89).
  - As a protective factor
- Effective coping may moderate the relationship between stressful events and mental health difficulties (Sasaki & Yamasaki, 2007)

# Protective Factors for Mental Health Difficulties

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- **Optimism is negatively related to depression** (Jackson et al., 2005)
- **Hope can also be a protective factor for depression** (Parker et al., 2015)
- **Few studies have examined coping, optimism, and hope) for sexual minority youth who experienced victimization**



# Questions/ Hypotheses

1

What are some protective factors for depression for sexual minority youth who experience peer victimization?

2

Does coping moderate the relationship between victimization and depressive symptoms?

3

Do optimism and hope moderate the relationship between victimization and depressive symptoms?

# Methods

- BBE 3.0 youth (ages 13 – 18) survey;  $N = 1,178$  (May 2016 to March 2017)
- 509 youth participants ( $M_{age} = 15.84$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ) experienced peer victimization
- 385 self-identified as sexual minorities
  - 47.3% of participants were from the United States, 17.1% Brazil, 7.5% UK, 3.3 Canada
  - 40.1% male, 45.0% female, 4.8% transgender, 5.9% genderqueer, 1.4% pangender, 3.0% prefer not to disclose/other
- Demographics by Sexual Orientation

Straight	Lesbian/ Gay	Bisexual	Queer/ Questioning	Pansexual	Total
124 (24.4%)	164 (32.2%)	112 (22.0%)	60 (11.8%)	49 (9.6%)	509 (100%)



# Measures

Measure	Scale used/ # of Items	( $\alpha$ )	Scale Response Options /Example Item
Verbal and Physical Bullying Scale (VPBS; Swearer, 2008)	Victimization Subscale / 13-items	.84	6-point Likert Scale/ "I was called bad names"
Beck Depression Inventory – Second Edition (BDI-II; Beck, 1996)	Total Depression Score/ 21-items	.94	Within past 2 weeks, pick one statement: "I do not feel sad" "I feel sad much of the time" "I am sad all of the time" "I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it"
Optimism (Sabatelli & Anderson, 2005)	Total Score/ 4-items	.68	4-point Likert Scale/ "In uncertain times, I usually expect the best."
Brief Resilient Coping Scale (Sinclair & Wallston, 2004)	Total Score/ 4-items	.73	5-point Likert Scale / "I look for creative ways to alter difficult situations."
The Hope Scale (Synder et al., 1991)	Hope Total Score/ 12-items	.80	4-point Likert Scale/ "I can think of many ways to get out of a difficult situation."

# Analyses


- Regression using SPSS
- Mean centering when examining moderation effects



# Results: Group Differences by Sexual Minority Status

		N	Mean	SD	t
Depression	Straight	124	45.59	12.41	30.12***
	Sexual minority	385	97.59	25.87	
Optimism_M	Straight	124	0.60	1.87	3.16**
	Sexual minority	385	0.00	1.80	
Hope_M	Straight	65	1.02	4.33	1.76+
	Sexual minority	196	-0.21	5.04	
COPE_mean	Straight	115	3.66	0.86	0.38
	Sexual minority	368	3.62	0.91	
Total Victimization	Straight	124	45.59	12.41	-2.42*
	Sexual minority	385	48.79	12.94	

## The Empowerment Initiative



		N	Mean	SD	t
Depression	Ethnic minority	186.00	85.55	32.86	0.33
	White	323.00	84.56	32.00	
Optimism_M	Ethnic minority	186.00	0.34	1.80	1.83
	White	323.00	0.03	1.85	
Hope_M	Ethnic minority	96.00	0.01	4.59	-0.23
	White	165.00	0.15	5.07	
COPE_mean	Ethnic minority	172.00	3.62	0.90	-0.27
	White	311.00	3.64	0.89	
Total Victimization	Ethnic minority	186.00	47.87	13.43	-0.19
	White	323.00	48.10	12.56	

●No group differences by race

●No interactions between sexual minority status \* race





# Results

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	62.926	4.816		13.066	.000
	VPBS Total Victimization	.275	.048	.240	5.682	.000
	Optimism Total Score	-2.837	.384	-.349	-7.385	.000
	Identity Affirmation Total	-.266	.200	-.058	-1.330	.184
	Coping Total Score	-1.211	.194	-.295	-6.254	.000

a. Dependent Variable: BDI Total Score

- Protective factors for depression:
  - optimism ( $\beta = -0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), coping ( $\beta = -0.30$ ,  $p < .001$ )
  - hope ( $\beta = -0.46$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No significant moderation effects
- Optimism, hope and coping did not predict victimization.

## Discussion & Implication

It is important to support sexual minority youth at school by

- Reducing bullying/peer victimization
  - Promote peer support & school belonging
- Teaching positive coping strategies
- Promoting resilience factors such as optimism and hope



## Limitations

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- Participants were recruited through Lady Gaga's Born This Way Foundation and may display unique demographic features when compared to the general population.
- All data were based on youth self report.
- Utilized a cross-sectional design, and cannot assume a temporal relationships between variables.
- Future studies should use parent-report in addition to self-report, recruit a more diverse sample, and collect longitudinal data.



## Resources/Discussion

- [Stopbullying.gov/bullying/lgbtq](https://stopbullying.gov/bullying/lgbtq)
  - Create a safe environment for LGBTQ (e.g. safe spaces)
  - Strong connections with sexual minority youth to demonstrate acceptance
  - Protection of privacy (e.g., confidentiality, consent to disclose with youth's permission)
  - Create Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)
  - Conduct social-emotional learning activities
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
  - [Understanding Anxiety and Depression for LGBTQ People](#)
- GLAAD - <https://www.glaad.org/resources>
- The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA)  
<https://ilga.org/resources>
- Born This Way Foundation “To Get Help”  
<https://bornthisway.foundation/get-help-now/>

