Experiences of Adversity and Resilience Among LGBTQ+ Young Adults
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LGBTQ+ young adults are at a greater risk than their same-age counterparts for experiencing a wide variety of general and identity-specific traumas and stress, that are in turn related to poor mental health. The consequences of these stressful exposures are influenced by a variety of risk and protective factors, yet the transdiagnostic relationships between these factors and LGBTQ+ mental health remains unclear. We sampled 69 LGBTQ+ 17-25-year-olds using an electronic self-report questionnaire to assess objective and subjective stress exposure, potential risk and protective factors, and mental health outcomes (i.e., depression, anxiety, PTSD and eating disorders). Consistent with our hypotheses, findings reflected a positive association between mental health symptom severity and the following factors: general lifetime stress, several aspects of minority stress, and difficulties with emotion regulation. We also discovered, as predicted, a negative association between mental health symptom severity and perceived social support, as well as self-esteem. Contrary to our hypothesis, we did not find a relationship between perceived stress and mental health, and interestingly, we found a positive association between positive identity and mental health symptom severity. We conclude that the minority stress theory continues to serve as a robust model for the elevated rates of psychological distress among marginalized communities. This work provides answers to important research questions about how individual characteristics and environmental factors maintain transdiagnostic relationships with the mental health of LGBTQ+ young adults, and poses further questions about how adversity and resilience will continue to shape the lives of individuals with sexual and gender minority identities post-pandemic.