



The Impact of Outness on Dimensions of Bisexuality and Alcohol Use Severity in Bisexual Women.

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INTRODUCTION

- Compared to heterosexual or lesbian women, bisexual women are at greater risk for alcohol use (Drabble & Trocki, 2005; Kelley et al., 2018; Schuler et al., 2018) and more alcohol-related consequences.
- Few studies have focused on the factors that may impact bisexual women's drinking behaviors (Hughes et al., 2020).
- Dimensions of bisexual identity formation involve both positive and negative aspects unique to bisexual individuals and could predict alcohol use severity in bisexual women (Paul et al., 2014).
- Outness has been examined as a risk factor for drinking behaviors in LGBTQ+ groups, but results have been inconsistent for bisexual women (Feinstein et al., 2017, 2019; Villarreal et al., 2021).
- Consequently, the present study examined whether level of outness (i.e., the extent to which someone discloses their identity) moderated associations between the dimensions of bisexual identity formation (anticipated binegativity, illegitimacy of bisexuality, internalized binegativity, and bisexual identity affirmation) and alcohol use severity.

METHOD

- The sample included 210 bisexual women.
 - Mean age was 22.90 (SD = 3.46) years.
 - Race: 59.0% Caucasian, 27.1% African American, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, 5.2% Asian, 0.5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander & 7.1% Other.
 - Ethnicity: 13.3% Hispanic
 - Employment: 30.0% part-time, 28.1% full-time, 7.6% unemployed, 2.9% Other.
- Measures: Participants completed an online questionnaire which included questions about typical alcohol use (The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test; Saunders et al., 1993), dimensions of bisexual identity (Bisexual Identity Inventory; Paul et al., 2014), and a single item identifier of outness.
- Data Analytic Plan: Using the multiple moderated linear regression PROCESS macro in SPSS, analyses were run with the four dimensions of bisexuality as the predictors, risky drinking behaviors as the dependent, and level of outness as the moderator. Follow-up simple slopes analyses were performed to investigate interactions.

Key Finding: Bisexual women who reported higher levels of Anticipated Binegativity, Illegitimacy of Bisexuality or Internalized Binegativity had increased alcohol use severity when they were also less out.

Figure 1: Internalized Binegativity Simple Slopes

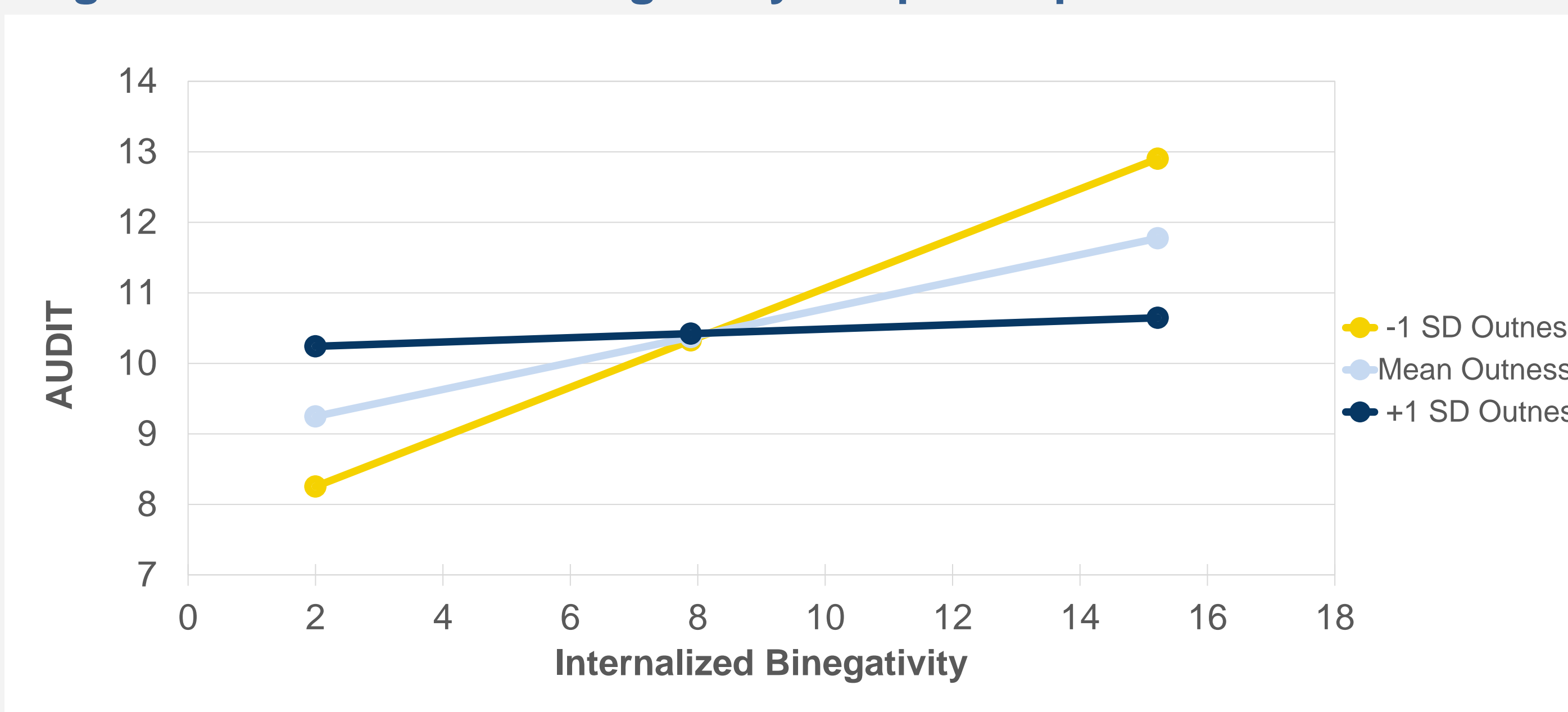


Figure 2: Anticipated Binegativity Simple Slopes

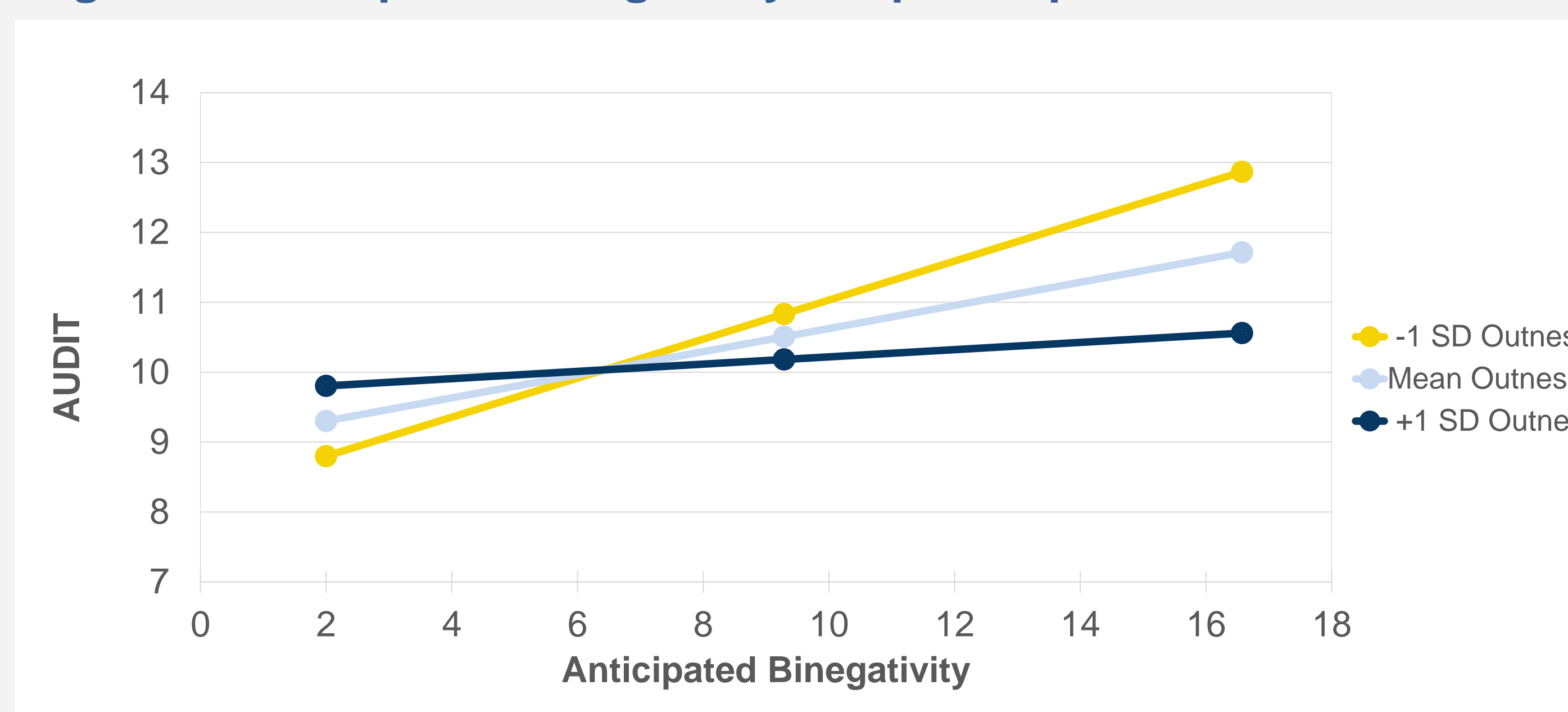
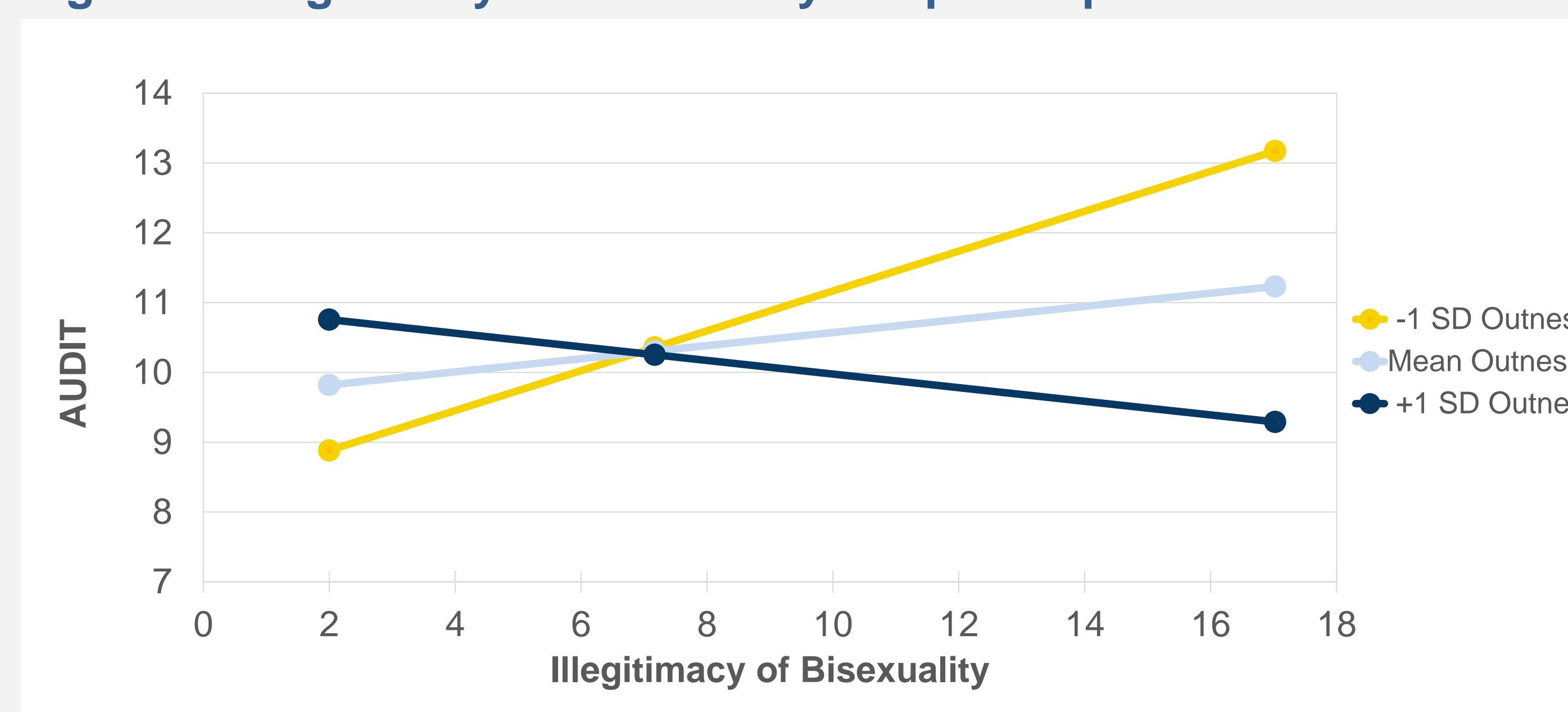


Figure 3: Illegitimacy of Bisexuality Simple Slopes



RESULTS

- Descriptives and bivariate correlations are presented in Table 1.
- Internalized Binegativity** had a main effect ($B = 0.19$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.004$) on alcohol use severity while level of outness was ns. The interaction was significant ($B = -0.13$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.003$).
 - Simple slopes (figure 1) analyses revealed that the association was positive and significant at mean levels of outness ($B = 0.19$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.004$) and -1 SD outness ($B = 0.35$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.001$) while +1 SD outness was ns.
- Anticipated Binegativity** had a main effect ($B = 0.17$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.01$) on alcohol use severity; level of outness was ns. The interaction was significant ($B = -0.09$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.04$).
 - Simple slopes (figure 2) revealed that the association between anticipated binegativity and alcohol use severity was positive and significant at mean levels of outness ($B = 0.17$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = 0.01$) and -1SD of outness ($B = 0.28$, $SE = 0.09$, $p = 0.001$) while +1SD was ns.
- Illegitimacy of Bisexuality:** Main effects for illegitimacy of bisexuality and level of outness were ns. The interaction was significant ($B = -0.16$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < 0.001$).
 - Simple slopes (figure 3) revealed that the association between illegitimacy of binegativity and alcohol use severity was positive and significant at -1 SD of outness ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$) while mean levels of outness and +1 SD of outness were ns.
- Identity Affirmation:** Main effects and interactions were ns.

DISCUSSION

- Findings reveal that bisexual women who reported higher levels of bisexual identity aspects (internalized binegativity, bisexual illegitimacy, and anticipated binegativity) had increased alcohol use severity if they were also less out.
- Greater identity affirmation was associated with higher level of outness and lower alcohol use severity.
- Study limitations include that data were cross-sectional, and we did not examine contextual factors (e.g., social environment) that may impact associations between level of outness, bisexual identity, and drinking.
- Professionals who work with bisexual women should be aware of potential risks associated with level of outness, which is a factor that can be identified early in the course of treatment, for individuals experiencing negative perceptions about their sexual identity.
- Facilitating identity disclosure and identity affirmation may improve outcomes in alcohol intervention efforts.

Poster presented at the annual American Psychological Association, August 2023. Correspondence may be directed to Anna Sherman at anna_sherman@uri.edu

Table 1: Aggregated Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	M.	SD
1. Level of Outness	—					3.36	1.226
2. AUDIT	-.10	—				10.77	6.66
3. Illegitimacy of Bisexuality	-.25**	.28**	—			13.10	9.85
4. Internalized Binegativity	-.34**	.26**	.68**	—		10.89	7.33
5. Anticipated Binegativity	-.32**	.20**	.30**	.49**	—	18.15	7.29
6. Identity Affirmation	.44**	-.11*	-.16*	-.03	-.34**	30.58	9.04

Note. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$