

Case 9: Who's Up for an Outing?

If someone participates in a Pride march with their same-sex partner, knowing that media will be present, it doesn't seem problematic for others to assume that they identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. If the media is able to identify them and names them in a photo, this wouldn't violate any obvious ethical guidelines. But what if someone developed a website that listed names, addresses, and employers of "Known Gays"?

On August 12, 2017 a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, featured a large number of seemingly angry people, most of whom showed their faces openly, certainly cognizant of the significant media attention present. The most publicized part of the rally involved a purported white nationalist driving his car into a group of counter-protestors and vehicles at the event, killing one woman and injuring many others. On Twitter, *Yes, You're Racist* called upon people to identify rally participants, and the site then "outed" those who could be identified publicly and listed their information online. *Yes, You're Racist* incited controversy as some participants thus outed claim they received death threats, while others lost jobs and friends, and many experienced general shunning by family and social groups.

"Outing" traditionally refers to making public an individual's gender identity or sexual orientation. Outing has a long and storied history, including the outing of Kaiser Wilhelm II's confidant, Prince Eulenburg. LGBTQIA+ activists and critics alike have used outing on the one hand as a way to either call attention to gay rights issues and hatreds and prejudices, or on the other hand as a way to perpetuate negative reactions and stereotypes involving gay rights issues. Many argue that outing is morally problematic and involves at least a significant privacy invasion. But besides gender identity and sexual orientation, there are many personal issues that people often prefer to keep to themselves, like their ethnic ancestry or sexual history. Further, many prefer to keep their support of causes or groups that are not publicly popular to themselves, like membership in the Aryan Nations, communist organizations, or the American Civil Liberties Union.

Case from the 2019 National Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl



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