

# Moderators of the LGBTQ Campus Climate and College-Related Outcomes Links $\Psi$

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## Abstract

In this study, we explored the concurrent and moderating roles of sexual orientation-based microaggressions, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) campus community connection, and positive peer group relations in the links between perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and college-related outcomes (college satisfaction, dropout intentions, and academic and emotional adjustment). Further, we examined if these relations would be stronger for undergraduate versus graduate students. Participants were 873 sexual minority college students who completed a web-based survey. Results indicated several main effects of negative LGBTQ campus climate, sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection, positive peer group relations, and graduate student status in predicting college-related outcomes. In addition, two interaction effects emerged. The first revealed that students with high negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate and high sexual orientation-based microaggressions had the lowest college satisfaction. The second indicated that LGBTQ community connection exacerbated the LGBTQ campus climate–dropout intentions link for undergraduate but not graduate students.

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**Keywords**

sexual minority, persistence intentions, academic well-being, college adjustment, microaggressions

**Significance of the Scholarship to the Public**

*Findings from our study suggest sexual minority students who experience their college campuses as being LGBTQ unfriendly may experience more dissatisfaction with college—especially if they have experienced microaggressions related to their sexual orientation—as well as more intentions to drop out and worse emotional adjustment. These findings offer important insights for university officials, community organizers, and mental health providers regarding the impact of negative campus climates and marginalization for sexual minority students.*

A significant number of college students in the United States identify as sexual minority (SM) persons. For example, the [Association of American Universities \(2020\)](#) found that about 11% of undergraduate and graduate students identified with a minoritized sexual identity (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer). Research also shows disparities between SM college students and their non-SM counterparts on college-related outcomes. For example, researchers have consistently found that SM college students report lower levels of belongingness to their college, greater intentions of dropping out, and more mental health struggles while in college (e.g., depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation) than their heterosexual counterparts ([O'Neill et al., 2022](#); [Rankin et al., 2010](#); [Wilson & Liss, 2022](#)). Minority stress theory ([Brooks, 1981](#); [Meyer, 2003](#)) posits that these disparities are due to negative contextual and interpersonal experiences associated with one's minoritized SM identity.

A salient and important contextual variable for SM college students is their campus's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) climate, which includes LGBTQ stigma on campus and their college's response to LGBTQ students and their issues ([Szymanski & Bissonette, 2020](#)). SM students report more negative perceptions of both the general campus climate and the LGBTQ campus climate more specifically than their heterosexual counterparts ([Rankin, 2003](#); [Waldo, 1998](#); [Wilson & Liss, 2022](#); [Yost & Gilmore, 2011](#)). Improving the measurement of and using a psychometrically supported scale, [Szymanski and Bissonette \(2020\)](#) found that more negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate were related to poorer academic outcomes (less satisfaction with college and intentions to persist in college) and mental health outcomes (more depression and anxiety) among SM college

students. These relations held true even after controlling for sexual orientation-based victimization experiences on campus, underscoring the importance of the campus climate in understanding college-related outcomes among SM students. However, scant research has examined what factors might exacerbate or buffer these links.

Counseling psychologists frequently work in educational settings and/or provide services for SM college and college-aspiring students ([American Psychological Association, 2022](#)). Furthermore, because of the field's emphasis on advocacy and recognition of systems of power and oppression in the well-being of individuals ([DeBlaere et al., 2019](#); [Toporek & Daniels, 2018](#)), counseling psychologists are in a unique position to address issues related to the experiences of SM college students. As such, it is important for counseling psychologists to have a deeper understanding of the impact of SM college students' experiences of connection and marginalization on their college-related outcomes and adjustment to better inform treatment, advocacy, and training.

Thus, the purpose of our study was to examine the concurrent and moderating roles of sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection on campus, and positive peer group relations in the links between perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and four college-related outcomes: college satisfaction, dropout intentions, and both academic and emotional college adjustment. Further, we examined if these relations would be stronger for undergraduate versus graduate students.

### ***Sexual Orientation-Based Microaggressions as a Moderator***

*Sexual orientation-based microaggressions* at the interpersonal level are everyday nonverbal and verbal rejections or insults that communicate negative, disparaging, or hostile messages to SM persons based solely upon their SM identity ([Sue, 2010](#); [Woodford, Chonody et al., 2015](#)). Examples of sexual orientation-based microaggressions on college campuses include hearing messages that imply that being a SM person is sinful or wrong (e.g., being prayed for or told that SM people shouldn't be around children), having others make unwarranted assumptions based on one's SM identity (e.g., engaging in unsafe sex, not wanting to have children), and invalidations about one's SM identity (e.g., "it's just a phase") and experiences of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., being told you are overly sensitive for being treated unfairly or that you talk about SM issues too much; [Woodford, Chonody et al., 2015](#)). Consistent with minority stress theory, sexual orientation-based microaggressions are related to more academic developmental challenges, perceived stress, anxiety, and depression among SM college students ([Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019](#); [Kulick et al., 2017](#); [Woodford, Chonody et al., 2015](#); [Woodford & Kulick, 2014](#)). In addition, personal experiences of heterosexist

harassment have been linked to more disengagement from academic activities, lower grade point average, and reduced intentions to persist in college (Morris & Lent, 2019; Woodford & Kulick, 2014).

Moving beyond the direct links posited by minority stress theory (Meyer, 2003), sexual orientation-based microaggressions might also exacerbate the links between perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and college-related outcomes. For a SM college student in an unsupportive college environment, being the target of sexual orientation-based microaggressions might make the contextual and institutional messages that LGBTQ students are not welcomed or valued on campus more impactful and personal (e.g., I am not welcomed or valued on this campus because of my SM identity). Thus, experiences at the interpersonal level can interact with contextual factors to worsen college-related outcomes.

Previous research has identified ways in which receiving microaggressions and attending a hostile campus impacts SM students' psychological and emotional well-being (Greathouse et al., 2018; Pitcher et al., 2018). Qualitative evidence has further noted the additive impacts of microaggressions and unsupportive campus climates to SM students' overall perceptions of campus, feelings of isolation, and desire to transfer institutions (Crane et al., 2022; Garvey et al., 2015; Miller & Dika, 2018). Thus, the associations between negative perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and less college satisfaction, more dropout intentions, and less academic and emotional college adjustment might be intensified by interpersonal experiences of sexual orientation-based microaggressions.

### *Community and Individual Supports as Moderators*

In addition to risk factors, it is important to also identify potential protective factors in the link between negative LGBTQ college campus climate and poorer college-related outcomes. We examined LGBTQ community connection on campus and positive peer group relations as potential moderators because minority stress theory posits buffering effects of both community and individual level social supports in the link between contextual level sexual orientation-based minority stressors and mental health outcomes (Meyer, 2003).

**LGBTQ Community Connection.** *LGBTQ community connection* on campus refers to a SM student's relationship with and involvement in their college LGBTQ community. It encompasses a sense of belonging to this community and feeling understood, accepted, and cared for (Liang et al., 2002). LGBTQ community connection has been linked to less depression and greater psychological and social well-being (Frost & Meyer, 2012; Kertzner et al., 2009) and more posttraumatic growth associated with experiences of sexual

orientation-based rejection, harassment, and discrimination among SM persons (Szymanski et al., 2023). Moving beyond direct links, campus community connection can provide SM students with validation, empathy, and support for their experiences with minority stress and the coming out process, as well as boost self-esteem and self-confidence, which may buffer the associations between a negative LGBTQ campus climate and poorer college-related outcomes (Westefeld et al., 2001).

Providing indirect support for our assertions, LGBTQ community connectedness has previously been shown to buffer the association between experiences of sexual orientation-based victimization and psychological distress. Specifically, connection with the LGBTQ community, involvement in LGBTQ college leadership, and affiliating with LGBTQ organizations have helped shield the impacts of sexual orientation-based microaggressions and psychological distress (Craney et al., 2018; Kulick et al., 2017; Toomey et al., 2011). Alternatively, involvement in LGBTQ campus activities has been found to strengthen the association between sexual orientation-based microaggressions and depression (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019). It may be that involvement in these types of activities exposes SM students to more discrimination through increased visibility and/or involves increased emotional and physical labor which takes an emotional toll. These mixed findings among SM students further reinforce the need to understand the complex role LGBTQ community connection plays in the relations between sexual orientation-based victimization and psychological and academic outcomes for SM students.

*Positive Peer Group Relations.* *Positive peer group relations* refers to having close personal relationships with other students that are personally satisfying and promote personal and intellectual growth (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980). Positive peer group relations are positively associated with better academic performance, mental health, and psychosocial competence for college students (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Fass & Tubman, 2002; Swenson et al., 2008). For SM students, having a greater number of SM-identifying friends was associated with reduced academic disengagement (Woodford & Kulick, 2014). However, these associations were not significant for satisfaction with college or grade point average, and these null findings could be attributed to measurement issues (quantity vs. quality of friends, narrow focus on SM friends). These findings highlight the important role friendships and social support play in shaping college-related outcomes among SM students.

Because positive peer group relations have been proposed to be helpful in navigating social transitions and environmental stressors associated with college; it may also serve as an important personal resource for attenuating poorer college-related outcomes associated with a negative LGBTQ campus climate. For example, positive peer group relations may help with social

integration on campus, improve one's ability to cope with stressors, offer emotional support, minimize the threat appraisal of a stressor, and validate a person's SM identity and experiences (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019). Thus, when encountering a negative LGBTQ campus climate, SM students who have positive peer group relations may seek support and comfort from their peers, which may protect them from poor college-related outcomes.

Providing indirect support for our assertions, previous research has demonstrated how social support from friends and/or family members can buffer the links between sexual orientation-based minority stress, victimization, and poor mental health outcomes such as negative affect and psychological distress (Doty et al., 2010; Fingerhut, 2018; Verrelli et al. 2019). However, when examining the role of social support for SM college students, previous research provides inconsistent evidence among these constructs. For instance, although the quantity of SM friends played a protective role in the relation between heterosexist harassment experienced on a college campus and alcohol abuse, it did not moderate its relation to other forms of psychological distress (Woodford, Kulick et al., 2015). Similarly, Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) found that positive peer group relations did not moderate the links between sexual orientation-based discrimination and depression among SM college students. It may be that the moderating role of social support is partially contingent on a match between the demands of the stressor and the kind of support and may vary for different mental health and college-related outcomes (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Doty et al., 2010).

### *Student Status as a Moderator*

Lastly, we examined if our proposed relations differ across undergraduate and graduate SM students. Graduate students may have a qualitatively different relationship with their campus environment than undergraduate students (Onorato-Hughes, 2019). Given that most undergraduate students experience a university's academic and social environment for the first time, they tend to experience greater issues adjusting to their campus atmosphere and academic demands than graduate students who have relatively more experience with higher education. Further, undergraduate students tend to be more nested and involved in campus life (e.g., attending sport events, joining student groups, socializing on campus hotspots) than their graduate counterparts (Brown, 2022; Onorato-Hughes, 2019); thus, suggesting that one's college environment may be more salient and impactful for undergraduate students than graduate students. A qualitative investigation revealed similar themes among SM undergraduate and graduate students and their relationship with their college campus; specifically, SM undergraduate students were more broadly involved on campus and were more likely to experience identity-related stress

in response to campus-wide instances (Vaccaro, 2012). On the other hand, SM graduate students were predominantly involved with their academic program, were detached from campus units beyond their department, and experienced identity-stress in response to their professional environments. As a result of significantly smaller cohort sizes, graduate programs allow students to access other sources of interpersonal support (e.g., advisors and mentors, research lab members) which may provide acceptance and comfort in the face of a negative LGBTQ campus climate. Alternatively, unlike undergraduate programs, graduate students do not readily have access to transferring academic institutions, and their degree-specific coursework may contribute to perseverance and lower dropout intentions.

In addition to involvement-level factors, graduate and undergraduate students also differ in their degrees of identity development. For many traditional, undergraduate-age SM college students, attending college is marked by developing emotional and social maturity, assuming greater responsibility and independence in their personal and academic lives, determining career aspirations, and navigating the coming out process, all of which could become overwhelming when coupled with a negative LGBTQ campus climate (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Sanlo, 2004). Given undergraduate students limited experience with the college environment, greater collegiate involvement, and unique developmental needs, we posit that our proposed direct and interactive relations might be stronger for undergraduate students than their graduate counterparts.

### *The Current Study*

Our study moves beyond a largely descriptive research base on LGBTQ college campus climates by examining the concurrent and moderating roles of sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection on campus, and positive peer group relations in the links between perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and college-related outcomes. Identifying correlates as well as risk and protective factors is important so that university personnel can work to develop targeted interventions and more robust resources for SM students. Our hypotheses were:

1. When examined concurrently, perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate, sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection on campus, and positive peer group relations would each be significantly and uniquely related to our four college-related outcomes. Negative perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and sexual orientation-based microaggressions would be negatively related to college satisfaction and both academic and emotional college adjustment and positively related to dropout

intentions. LGBTQ community connection on campus and positive peer group relations would be positively related to college satisfaction and both academic and emotional college adjustment and negatively related to dropout intentions.

2. Sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection on campus, and peer group relations would moderate the relations between perceptions of the LGBTQ college campus climate and poorer college-related outcomes. Sexual orientation-based microaggressions would play an exacerbating role; whereas, LGBTQ community connection and positive peer group relations would play buffering roles.
3. Student status would moderate the 2-way interactions described above such that the relations would be stronger for undergraduate versus graduate students. Thus, we hypothesized 3-way interaction effects.

## Method

### Participants

Our initial sample comprised of 1,291 individuals who began our online survey. During data cleaning, we removed 380 participants who did not finish the survey (144 left the entire survey blank and 236 left at least one measure blank). We also removed six participants who did not identify as a SM person. We removed two participants who either incorrectly answered two or more of the three attention check items (e.g., “To check that you are paying attention, mark *Strongly Agree*”) or who failed Aust et al.’s (2013) seriousness check item. Following Parent’s (2013) recommendations for handling missing data, we also removed 15 participants with more than 20% missing data on at least one measure. Finally, we removed 15 participants because we could not code them into our undergraduate versus graduate student status variable (13 selected “other” as their student status and two left that question blank). Thus, our final sample consisted of 873 participants.

The majority (75%;  $n = 658$ ) of our participants were undergraduate students, with 20% ( $n = 132$ ) identifying as first years, 22% ( $n = 142$ ) as sophomores, 26% ( $n = 173$ ) as juniors, and 32% ( $n = 211$ ) as seniors. Twenty nine percent of participants identified as first-generation college students (i.e., neither of their parents went to college and earned a bachelor’s degree or higher). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 35 years ( $M = 22.21$ ,  $SD = 3.50$ ). In terms of sexual orientation, 30% ( $n = 264$ ) identified as gay or lesbian, 30% ( $n = 262$ ) as bisexual, 11% ( $n = 95$ ) as pansexual, 10% ( $n = 87$ ) as asexual, and 19% ( $n = 165$ ) as a different orientation (e.g., queer, asexual lesbian, omnisequal). In terms of gender identity, 38% ( $n = 334$ ) identified as a woman, 37% ( $n = 322$ ) as genderqueer/nonbinary/gender-nonconforming, 19% ( $n =$



166) as a man, and 6% ( $n = 51$ ) as another gender (e.g., agender, genderfluid, fluidflux). Forty percent ( $n = 346$ ) also identified as transgender. In terms of race/ethnicity, 79% ( $n = 688$ ) identified as White/European, 7% ( $n = 61$ ) Biracial/Multiracial, 5% ( $n = 40$ ) Hispanic/Latino/a/x, 5% ( $n = 32$ ) African American/Black, 4% ( $n = 37$ ) Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, 1% ( $n = 4$ ) Native American/Alaskan Native, and 1% ( $n = 10$ ) a different race/ethnicity (e.g., Jewish, Middle Eastern, North African). Participants resided in the U.S. Midwest (29%;  $n = 255$ ), South (27%;  $n = 231$ ), Northeast (22%;  $n = 193$ ), and West (22%;  $n = 193$ ). Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding. Frequencies may not add up to 873 due to missing responses.

## Procedure

After receiving university institutional review approval, we recruited participants via two methods from October 2021 to March 2022. First, we sent research announcements by email to the contact person for a variety of university and college LGBTQ-related centers and groups. We asked this person to forward the research announcement to their listserv and/or to eligible students, colleagues, and friends. Second, we bought Facebook advertisements that targeted Facebook users who indicated they were at least 18 years old, lived in the United States, and had interests in keywords associated with the LGBTQ community. Potential participants were invited to participate in our study about SM college students' attitudes and experiences. Once participants clicked on the Facebook ad, the embedded hypertext link directed them to our anonymous online survey.

Participants affirmed consent to participate and then completed an online survey that included our study measures (randomly ordered) and a demographic questionnaire. As a token of appreciation, participants were given the chance to enter a raffle drawing awarding a \$50 gift card to four randomly chosen individuals. The raffle database was separate from the survey database to keep the survey database anonymous. Most of the participants heard about our survey from the paid Facebook ad (84%;  $n = 736$ ); followed by a LGBTQ-related group, organization, or listserv (6%;  $n = 50$ ); friend or colleague (2%;  $n = 20$ ); and a different method (8%;  $n = 67$ ).

## Measures

**LGBTQ College Campus Climate.** We used the 6-item Perceptions of the LGBTQ College Campus Climate Scale (Szymanski & Bissonette, 2020) to assess participants current views of their university or college campus climate concerning LGBTQ students and issues across two dimensions, LGBTQ stigma and college response to LGBTQ students. Example items are, "Negative attitudes toward LGBTQ persons are openly expressed on my

university/college campus” and “My university/college is unresponsive to the needs of LGBTQ students.” Participants rated each on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying a more negative LGBTQ campus climate. Szymanski and Bissonette (2020) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .85$  and  $.87$ ) and structural validity (via both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses), construct (via negative relations with intention to persist in college and college satisfaction and positive relations with LGBTQ victimization on campus, depression, and anxiety), and incremental (by demonstrating that its relations with academic and mental health outcomes held true even after controlling for LGBTQ victimization experiences) validity among LGBTQ college students. For the current sample,  $\alpha = .88$ .

*Sexual Orientation-Based Microaggressions.* We used the 15-item Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer Microaggressions on Campus Scale-Interpersonal Subscale (Woodford, Chonody et al., 2015) to assess participants experiences of sexual orientation-based interpersonal microaggressions that occurred on campus within the past year. Example items are, “Straight people assumed that I would come on to them because they thought or knew I am lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer,” and “Someone told me they were praying for me because they knew or assumed I am lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer.” Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying more experiences of sexual orientation-based microaggressions. Woodford, Chonody et al. (2015) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .94$ ), structural validity (via both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses), and construct validity (via negative associations with social acceptance on campus and positive associations with sexual orientation-based victimization, academic developmental challenges, and depression) using LGBTQ samples. For the current sample,  $\alpha = .94$ .

*LGBTQ Community Connection on Campus.* We used the 5-item Relational Health Indices Community Engagement subscale (Liang et al., 2002) to assess participants’ connection to the LGBTQ community on their college campus. Participants were asked to respond to each item as they relate to their current relationship with or involvement in their university or college’s LGBTQ community. Example items are, “I feel a sense of belonging to this community,” and “This community provides me with emotional support.” Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying more LGBTQ community connection on campus. Szymanski et al. (2023) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .90$ ) using a SM sample. Liang et al. (2002) provided support for structural validity (via confirmatory factor analyses) and construct validity (via positive associations with self-esteem and two other measures of

relational health and negative associations with perceived stress, loneliness, and depression). For the current sample,  $\alpha = .92$ .

**Peer Group Relations.** We used the 7-item Peer Group Interactions subscale (Pascarella & Terenzine, 1980) to assess peer-group relations at participants' university or college. Example items are, "Since coming to this university I have developed close personal relationships with other students," and "It has been difficult for me to meet and make friends with other students (reverse-scored)." Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We used mean scores. Higher scores signify more positive peer group relations. Bissonette and Szymanski (2019) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .85$ ) support using a SM sample. Pascarella and Terenzine (1980) provided support for structural validity (via exploratory factor analyses) and construct validity (by distinguishing between students who dropped out of college and those that did not). For the current sample,  $\alpha = .85$ .

**Undergraduate vs. Graduate Student Status.** We asked participants "What is your student status?" with the following response options: First-year/Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior, Graduate, and Other. We used these data to code participants as either undergraduate (0) or graduate (1) student. As noted above, those selecting "Other" were not included in this study.

**Satisfaction With College.** We used the 5-item College Satisfaction Scale (Helm et al., 1998) to assess participants' current overall satisfaction with their university or college. Example items are, "Overall, my educational experience at this university has been a rewarding one," and "I feel as though I belong in the university community." Participants rated each on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying greater college satisfaction. Szymanski and Bissonette (2020) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ ) with a LGBTQ sample. Helms et al. (1998) provided support for structural validity (via exploratory factor analyses) and construct validity (via positive correlations with perceived fair treatment by instructors and students, respect for other cultures, comfort in cross-cultural interactions, and negative correlations with lack of support from faculty and perceived racial tension) among a racial and ethnically diverse sample. For the current sample,  $\alpha = .87$ .

**Dropout Intentions.** We used the 6-item Intention to Drop Out of University Scale (Morelli et al., 2021) to assess participants' dropout intentions. Example items are, "Have you ever seriously talked to your parents (or someone) about abandoning your university?" and "I intend to drop out of my university."

Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying greater intentions to drop out. Morelli et al. (2021) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .89$ ), structural validity (via exploratory factor analyses), and construct validity (via negative associations with academic self-efficacy, academic integration with other students, and both attachment to and satisfaction with the university) among Italian university students. For the current sample,  $\alpha = .89$ .

**Academic and Emotional Adjustment to College.** We used the 5-item Academic/Educational Functioning and 4-item Emotional/Psychological Functioning subscales of the College Adjustment Questionnaire (O'Donnell et al., 2018) to assess participants' current ("at this point in time") academic and emotional adjustment to college. Example items are, "I am doing well in my classes," and "I have felt the need to seek emotional counseling since coming to college (reverse-scored)." Participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 5 (*very accurate*). We used mean scores, with higher scores signifying greater academic and emotional college adjustment. O'Donnell et al. (2018) provided support for reliability ( $\alpha = .89$  [academic] and  $.79$  [emotional]), structural validity (via confirmatory factor analyses), and convergent validity (via positive associations with another measure of college adjustment). For the current sample,  $\alpha = .93$  for academic adjustment and  $.78$  for emotional adjustment.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

We conducted missing data analyses at the item level for the 873 participants included in this study. Findings showed that the amount of missing data on the survey measures was extremely small (0.11%). All items had  $< 1\%$  of missing values and 95% of participants had no missing data. Therefore, we used available case analysis procedures at the scale level to address missing data points (Parent, 2013).

We present means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables assessed in this study in Table 1. Examination of variable means suggests that most students viewed their LGBTQ campus climate positively, experienced low levels of sexual orientation-based microaggressions, were satisfied with their college, had low dropout intentions, and reported high academic adjustment but low emotional adjustment.

We examined absolute values for skewness (range =  $.04$ – $1.18$ ) and kurtosis (range =  $.26$ – $1.02$ ) for each variable, which indicated sufficient normality (i.e., skewness  $< 3$ , kurtosis  $< 10$ ; Weston & Gore, 2006). We observed two

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among All Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	Correlations							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. LGBTQ College Campus Climate	3.49	1.35	—							
2. Sexual Orientation-Based Microaggressions	1.36	1.17	.56*	—						
3. LGBTQ Community Connection on Campus	2.89	1.02	-.17*	-.02	—					
4. Peer Group Relations	3.34	0.89	-.21*	-.15*	.50*	—				
5. Student Status	—	—	.06	.03	-.08*	.04	—			
6. Satisfaction with College	5.19	1.31	-.62*	-.37*	.34*	.44*	-.05	—		
7. Dropout Intentions	2.46	1.09	.34*	.33*	-.21*	-.35*	-.03	-.47**	—	
8. Academic Adjustment	4.00	0.97	-.10*	-.12*	.10*	.25*	.23*	.22*	-.45*	—
9. Emotional Adjustment	2.63	0.93	-.30*	-.23*	.28**	.36*	.10*	.42**	-.56*	.46*

Note: Student status coded as 0 = undergraduate student, 1 = graduate student.

\* $p < .05$ .

multivariate outliers (Mahalanobis distance  $p < .001$ ) but they did not have a significant bearing on the overall model as their Cook's distances were well below 1 (Field, 2013); therefore, we retained them.

Because we were able to recruit a diverse sample in terms of gender and SM identities, we conducted preliminary analyses exploring associations between transgender identity (coded 1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*), monosexual (i.e., *lesbian/gay*; coded 1) versus nonmonosexual (e.g., *bisexual/pansexual*; coded 2) identity, and asexual identity (coded 1 = *no*, 2 = *yes*) and the variables assessed in our study. For participants identifying their sexual orientation as "another orientation," we recoded them into our identity categories if they provided enough description in the text box to do so. Transgender identity was related to less positive peer group relations ( $r = -.09, p = .008$ ), less graduate student status ( $r = -.15, p < .001$ ), less satisfaction with college ( $r = -.09, p < .007$ ), more dropout intentions ( $r = .14, p < .001$ ), and less academic adjustment ( $r = -.13, p < .001$ ). Non-monosexual identity was related to less graduate student status ( $r = -.09, p = .03$ ), more dropout intentions ( $r = .11, p = .006$ ), and less academic ( $r = -.14, p < .001$ ) and emotional adjustment ( $r = -.09, p = .02$ ). Asexual identity was related to less graduate student status ( $r = -.09, p = .01$ ). These findings are consistent with previous research indicating poorer mental health and well-being outcomes for SM individuals with transgender and nonmonosexual identities (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2019; Kerr et al., 2022; Wardecker et al., 2019); however, the effect sizes were very small, with all significant correlations accounting for less than 2.5% of the variance.

## Hypotheses Testing

To test our hypotheses, we conducted four hierarchical multiple regression analyses, one for each outcome variable. Before conducting the analyses, we centered scores for LGBTQ college campus climate, sexual orientation-based microaggressions, LGBTQ community connection, and peer group relations. We entered main effects in Step 1, 2-way interaction effects in Step 2, and 3-way interaction effects in Step 3. Multicollinearity was not a problem in any of the regression analyses performed as variance inflation factors (VIF) were well below 10 (highest VIF = 2.11; Field, 2013).

The results predicting satisfaction with college were significant  $R^2 = .51$ ,  $F(15, 857) = 59.45, p < .001$ . Perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate, LGBTQ community connection, peer group relations, the 2-way Campus Climate X Microaggressions interaction, and the 3-way Campus Climate X Peer Group X Student Status significantly and uniquely predicted college satisfaction (see Table 2). To interpret the significant 2-way interaction effect, we used Hayes' (2018) SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 1). When decomposing each significant interaction, we controlled for all independent variables

**Table 2.** Hierarchical Multiple Regression Models Predicting College Satisfaction and Dropout Intentions

Variables	College Satisfaction					Dropout Intentions				
	B	$\beta$	t	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	B	B	t	$\Delta F$
LGBTQ College Campus Climate	-.49	-.50	-14.50*	.498	.498	172.18*	.11	.13	3.04*	2.24
Sexual Orientation-Based Microaggressions	-.01	-.01	-0.37				.22	.23	5.43*	50.18*
LGBTQ Community Connection	.17	.13	4.08*				-.02	-.02	-0.58	
Peer Group Relations	.40	.27	8.38*				-.34	-.28	-6.91*	
Student Status	-.07	-.02	-0.84				-.12	-.05	-1.39	
CC x Microaggressions	-.07	-.09	-3.05*	.507	.008	2.07*	.02	.03	0.77	.232
CC x Community Connection	.01	.01	0.24				.07	.10	2.47*	.007
CC x Peer Group	-.01	-.01	-0.31				-.01	-.01	-0.31	
CC x Student Status	-.09	-.05	-1.36				.03	.02	0.44	
Microaggressions x Student Status	.01	.01	0.18				-.11	-.06	-1.30	
Community Connection x Student Status	-.09	-.03	-0.99				-.11	-.05	-1.26	
Peer Group x Student Status	-.04	-.01	-0.43				.10	.04	0.96	
CC x Microaggressions x Student Status	.05	.03	1.03	.510	.003	1.97	-.02	-.02	-0.41	.239
CC x Community Connection x Student Status	-.06	-.04	-1.12				-.14	-.10	-2.40*	.007
CC x Peer Group x Student Status	.17	.08	2.39*				-.01	-.01	-0.12	.281*

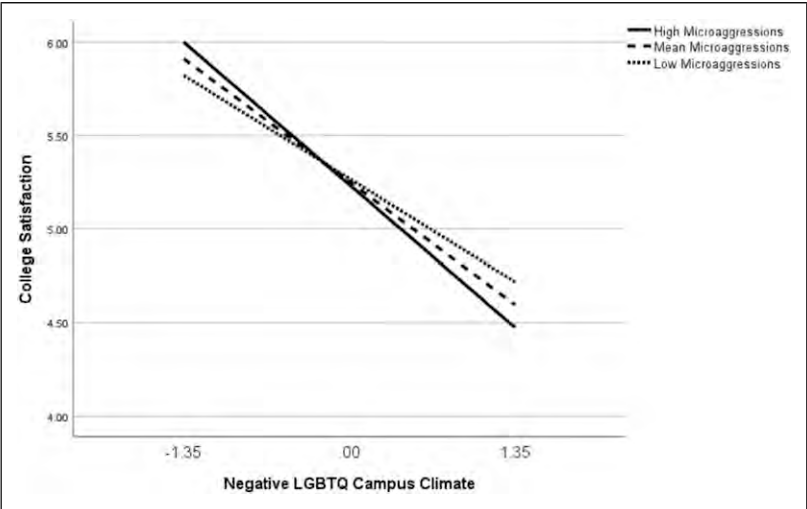
Note.  $\beta$  and t reflects values from the final regression equation. CC = campus climate. Student status coded as 0 = undergraduate student, 1 = graduate student.  
\* $p < .05$ .

not included in the significant interaction in the regression model. Results showed that sexual orientation-based microaggressions moderated the link between LGBTQ campus climate and college satisfaction. LGBTQ campus climate predicted satisfaction with college for students with levels of sexual orientation-based microaggressions that were low ( $-1\ SD$ ;  $B = -.41$ ,  $t = -9.47$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI  $[-.494, -.325]$ ), at the mean ( $B = -.49$ ,  $t = -14.50$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI  $[-.553, -.421]$ ), and high ( $+1\ SD$ ;  $B = -.57$ ,  $t = -13.72$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI  $[-.646, -.484]$ ). This effect was stronger for those with high sexual orientation-based microaggressions. As shown in [Figure 1](#), those with high negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate and high sexual orientation-based microaggressions had the lowest satisfaction with college. Although the beta weight for the 3-way interaction of Campus Climate X Peer Group X Student Status was significant, the increment in  $R^2$  at Step 3 was not significant, suggesting that the interaction effects did not help explain additional variance in college satisfaction scores. Thus, we did not plot or interpret this interaction effect.

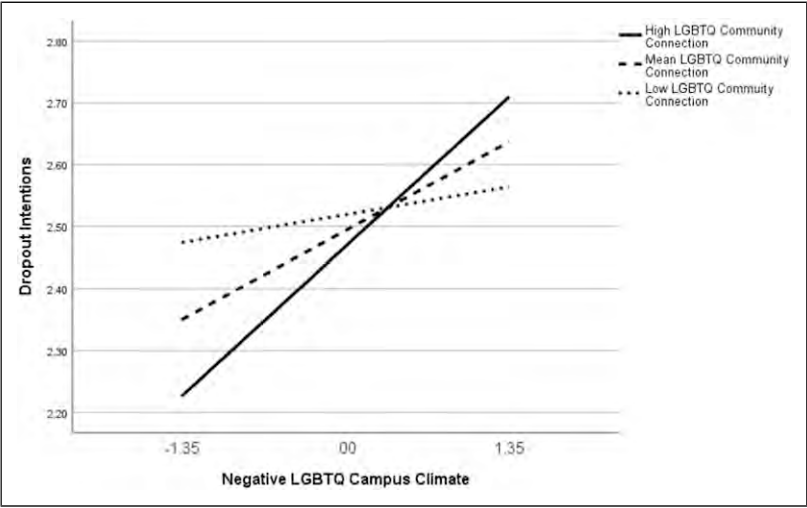
The results predicting dropout intentions were significant  $R^2 = .24$ ,  $F(15, 857) = 17.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . Perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate, sexual orientation-based microaggressions, peer group relations, the 2-way Campus Climate X Community Connection interaction, and the 3-way Campus Climate X Community Connection X Student Status significantly and uniquely predicted college satisfaction (see [Table 2](#)). Although the beta weight for the 2-way interaction of Campus Climate X Community Connection was significant, the increment in  $R^2$  at Step 2 was not significant, suggesting that the interaction effects did not help explain additional variance in college satisfaction scores. Thus, we did not plot or interpret this interaction effect. To interpret the significant 3-way interaction effect, we used [Hayes' \(2018\) SPSS PROCESS macro \(Model 3\)](#). Results showed that LGBTQ community connection moderated the link between LGBTQ campus climate and dropout intentions for undergraduate ( $B = .07$ ,  $F = 6.11$ ,  $p = .01$ ) but not graduate ( $B = -.78$ ,  $F = 1.84$ ,  $p = .17$ ) students. As shown in [Figure 2](#), LGBTQ campus climate predicted dropout intentions for undergraduate students with high ( $+1\ SD$ ;  $B = .18$ ,  $t = 4.32$ ,  $p = .000$ , 95% CI  $[.098, .261]$ ) and at the mean ( $B = .11$ ,  $t = 3.038$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI  $[.038, .175]$ ) levels of LGBTQ community connection but not low ( $-1\ SD$ ;  $B = .03$ ,  $t = .67$ ,  $p = .502$ , 95% CI  $[-.064, .131]$ ).

As shown in [Table 3](#), the results predicting academic adjustment were significant  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F(15, 857) = 8.86$ ,  $p < .001$ . Peer group relations and student status were the only significant predictors in the model, indicating that more positive peer group relations and graduate student status were related to better academic adjustment. The results predicting emotional adjustment were also significant  $R^2 = .21$ ,  $F(15, 857) = 15.45$ ,  $p < .001$ . All main effects were significant, indicating that more negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus





**Figure 1.** Sexual orientation-based microaggressions as a moderator for all students.



**Figure 2.** LGBTQ community connection as moderator for undergraduate students.

**Table 3.** Hierarchical Multiple Regression Models Predicting College Adjustment

Variables	Academic Adjustment					Emotional Adjustment				
	B	$\beta$	t	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	B	t	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$
LGBTQ College Campus Climate	-.02	-.02	0.63	.118	.118	23.20*	-.11	-.16	.206	.206
Sexual Orientation-Based Microaggressions	-.07	-.09	-1.91				-.09	-.12		
LGBTQ Community Connection	.01	.01	0.29				.13	.14		
Peer Group Relations	.28	.26	6.07*				.24	.23		
Student Status	.51	.23	6.10*				.30	.14		
CC x Microaggressions	.00	.00	0.05	.130	.012	1.72	.02	.03	.208	.002
CC x Community Connection	-.03	-.05	-1.05				-.04	-.06		
CC x Peer Group	-.04	-.05	-1.19				.03	.03		
CC x Student Status	.03	.02	0.47				-.02	-.02		
Microaggressions x Student Status	.00	.00	0.01				.03	.02		
Community Connection x Student Status	-.09	-.05	-1.06				-.03	-.02		
Peer Group x Student Status	-.16	-.07	-1.62				-.02	-.01		
CC x Microaggressions x Student Status	.00	.00	0.04	.134	.004	1.33	-.02	-.02	.213	.004
CC x Community Connection x Student Status	.09	.07	1.67				.08	.06		
CC x Peer Group x Student Status	.01	.00	0.10				.04	.02		

Note.  $\beta$  and t reflects values from the final regression equation. CC = campus climate. Student status coded as 0 = undergraduate student, 1 = graduate student.  
 \* $p < .05$ .

climate and more experiences of sexual orientation-based microaggressions on campus were related to poorer emotional adjustment; whereas, greater connection to the LGBTQ community on campus, more positive peer group relations, and graduate student status were related to better emotional adjustment.

## Discussion

Given the college-related and mental health disparities found between SM students compared to their heterosexual counterparts (O'Neill et al., 2022; Rankin et al., 2010; Wilson & Liss, 2022), it is important to understand the unique factors that might contribute to these disparities in order to support SM students' adjustment, retention, and success in college. Consistent with Bissonette and Szymanski's (2019) findings, our study demonstrates that negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate were uniquely related to less satisfaction with college, more intentions to dropout, and less emotional adjustment to college. The fact that these relations held true when considering other relevant correlates of college-related outcomes (microaggressions, community connection, peer group, student status), and in light of the variable means suggesting that SM students generally have positive experiences in college, highlights the significance of this contextual factor in understanding college-related outcomes for SM students.

Our study advances prior research by examining LGBTQ contextual and interpersonal minority stressors and community and individual supports concomitantly (rather than separately). Although all bivariate correlations between these variables and our college-related outcomes were significant, the results of our regression analyses highlight which variables are most important. In terms of college satisfaction, LGBTQ campus climate, LGBTQ community connection, positive peer group relations, and the interaction of LGBTQ campus climate and sexual orientation-based microaggressions emerged as unique predictors. Supporting our hypotheses, sexual orientation-based microaggressions intensified the relation between LGBTQ campus climate and college satisfaction. Students with high negative perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate and high sexual orientation-based microaggressions had the lowest college satisfaction. This supports other work suggesting (but not empirically testing) that campus climate and experiences of microaggressions may interact toward worse outcomes and lower college satisfaction (Crane et al., 2022; Garvey et al., 2015; Pitcher et al., 2018). This may be due to the interaction of the messaging received by students. For example, in an unsupportive college environment, being the target of sexual orientation-based microaggressions might make the contextual and institutional messages that SM students are not wanted on campus more hurtful which adds to their university and college dissatisfaction.

Supporting our hypotheses, perceptions of the LGBTQ campus climate, sexual orientation-based microaggressions, peer group relations, and the 3-way Campus Climate X Community Connection X Student Status interaction emerged as unique predictors. However, contrary to minority stress theory and our hypotheses, our results suggest that in the face of a negative LGBTQ campus climate, undergraduate (but not graduate) students with a high connection to the LGBTQ community on campus had the most intentions of dropping out of college. As shown in [Figure 2](#), at low levels of negative LGBTQ campus climate, students with high LGBTQ connection had the lowest dropout intentions. However, as perceptions of a negative LGBTQ climate increased, this relation reversed and those with high LGBTQ community connection had the most dropout intentions. Thus, community connection played a risk rather than protective factor. This unanticipated finding runs contrary to typical conversations about what SM college students need and suggests the importance of more nuanced discussions about when or under what conditions LGBTQ community connection can be helpful or not helpful.

This finding is not consistent with previous research demonstrating a buffering role of community connectedness ([Crane et al., 2018](#)), campus leadership involvement ([Kulick et al., 2017](#)), and membership in a gay-straight alliance ([Toomey et al., 2011](#)) in the link between external sexual orientation-based minority stressors and psychological distress, but is consistent with findings indicating that involvement in LGBTQ campus activities ([Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019](#)) and LGBTQ activism ([Kulick et al., 2017](#)) exacerbated the link between sexual orientation-based minority stressors and depression. SM students who are more connected to the LGBTQ campus community may be more aware of the realities of a harsh campus climate, which might propel them to drop out. Connection to the LGBTQ community on campus might also increase vicarious traumatization through exposure to and stress from sexual orientation-based oppression experienced by peers. It could also be that this connection provides opportunities for validation and support for one's experiences with LGBTQ stigma on campus and a lack of institutional support, which in turn empowers SM students to consider leaving a bad situation.

Contrary to our hypothesis, only student status and peer group relations were significant predictors of academic adjustment, as measured by self-reported perceptions of one's academic success in their classes. Being a graduate student, as opposed to an undergraduate student, was related to reports of greater academic performance by SM graduate students. This may be that, because of their extended time in academic institutions, graduate students have a greater knowledge of how to utilize existing support structures to establish greater academic adjustment. Further, graduate students experience greater access to individualized support than undergraduate students,

which in turn might foster greater academic adjustment for graduate students. For instance, [Blanchard and Haccoun \(2020\)](#) demonstrated how supportive advisor–advisee relationships enhance academic and other well-being related factors for graduate students. Our findings for peer group relations are consistent with previous research suggesting that peer relationships and support can be beneficial to academic adjustment ([Fass & Tubman, 2002](#); [Swenson et al., 2008](#)). Our findings also suggest that sexual orientation-based minority stressors and supports are less important in understanding academic adjustment.

Supporting our hypothesis and extending previous findings concerning mental health-related experiences for SM college students ([Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019](#); [Szymanski & Bissonette, 2020](#)), results demonstrated that encountering a hostile and unsupportive college environment was related to poorer emotional adjustment for SM college students. These findings highlight the role that one's college environment plays in the emotional well-being of SM students and emphasizes the importance of community and social support for SM college students.

Finally, a strength of our study is its representation of gender diversity, as 43% of our population identified with a gender outside of the binary, and 40% of our entire sample (i.e., binary and nonbinary gender identities) also identified as transgender. Although some research has suggested that SM transgender and nonbinary (TNB) individuals may experience greater levels of distress than their straight TNB and cisgender SM counterparts (e.g., [Eisenberg et al., 2019](#)), other research indicates that gender identity does not moderate the impact of microaggressions on stress and emotional outcomes ([Seelman et al., 2017](#)). Our findings that negative LGBTQ campus climates were related to poorer college-related outcomes parallels other research with TNB college students that suggest hostile campus climates are related to dropping out, emotional concerns, and poor academic outcomes (e.g., [Goldberg et al., 2019](#); [Wilson & Liss, 2022](#)). Our findings that both transgender identity and nonmonosexual identity were related to more dropout intentions and less academic adjustment suggests the importance of targeted interventions to meet the unique needs of these subpopulations of SM persons.

### *Limitations of Current Study*

The current study advances the literature as it further expands our understanding of the role campus climate plays for SM students; however, it is imperative to acknowledge some of its limitations. First, our study is limited by our focus on sexual orientation-based microaggressions on campus and fails to investigate the impact of gender identity-based microaggressions on the well-being of TNB students. Additionally, research with TNB individuals suggests that current language and labels to describe sexual orientation may

not adequately conceptualize their experiences (Galupo et al., 2016; Kuper et al., 2012; Nagoshi et al., 2012); thus, measures of sexual orientation-based microaggressions may not be able to fully capture SM TNB college students' experiences of these microaggressions.

Second, despite our efforts to recruit a racially diverse sample of SM individuals, the generalizability of our findings is predominantly limited to White SM individuals. A systematic literature review on queer students of Color highlights the unique experiences of these students as compared to their White counterparts; specifically, queer students of Color were more likely to encounter higher rates of identity-based oppression targeting their multiple minority identities and struggle with a lack of intersectional identity-centered spaces, representation, and resources (Duran, 2019). Due to the limited representation of racially diverse SM individuals in our sample, we weren't able to examine the intersectional nuances between identity connection, community perception, and academic achievement.

Third, although the current study begins to highlight some of the differences in sexual identity-related experiences between SM undergraduate and graduate students, it is important to note that most of our sample identified as undergraduate students. Consequently, the trends observed in our results may not be accurately and equally representative of SM graduate students. This limitation warrants further examination as it will allow the field to gain deeper insight into the mechanisms adopted by SM graduate students to navigate adjustment to their institution and its LGBTQ climate.

Lastly, our recruitment strategies (i.e., Facebook ads, announcements on LGBTQ-campus listservs) further serve as a limitation for our study. These recruitment strategies are more likely to yield a sample that reported greater community connection, outness, community involvement, and lower levels of internalized heterosexism, as evident by their engagement with LGBTQ-specific listservs and Facebook pages. Consequently, such recruitment strategies potentially omitted the experiences of those SM individuals who avoid interacting with LGBTQ-specific organizations, are currently concealing their sexual identity, or experience greater levels of internalized heterosexism.

### *Directions for Future Research*

The framework of the current study, along with the limitations acknowledged above, may be applied to guide future research to better understand the experiences of SM individuals on college campuses. Although some research has suggested that campus climates are generally improving (for a review, see Rankin et al., 2019), anti-LGBTQ sentiments and legislature, such as gender-affirming care bans and "divisive concepts" bans, have recently increased and impacted college campuses (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023; Kinney

et al., 2022). Thus, future research may benefit from investigating how encountering gender identity- and sexual orientation-based microaggressions on a college campus shape adjustment-related outcomes for gender diverse SM students amidst a changing landscape of anti-LGBTQ legislature in education.

Similarly, future research may also benefit from exploring how encountering intersectional microaggressions impact campus climate perceptions and campus connections for SM students of Color. Scholars may also examine how experiencing singular identity microaggressions (i.e., either sexual orientation-related microaggressions or race-related microaggressions) impact identity development, identity integration, and identity salience for students with both intersecting identities.

Additionally, although we highlight our two significant interaction effects in discussing our results, it is important to note that our other hypothesized interaction effects were not significant. Future research is needed to identify additional risks and protective factors. For instance, most campuses have LGBTQ-affirming resources and organizations to serve SM students' academic, emotional, and social needs; thus, future research may explore how utilizing such campus resources and organizations act as moderating factors in the relations between LGBTQ campus climate and college-related outcomes for SM students. Further, we recommend that future investigations explore what coping strategies are adopted by SM students to navigate their campus climate and encountered microaggressions and the role of these coping strategies, i.e., studying the role of formal (psychotherapy LGBTQ centers, etc.), informal (friends, family, etc.), and avoidance (alcohol, drugs, procrastination, etc.) coping strategies in exacerbating or buffering the impacts of identity-based oppression on college-related outcomes. Finally, although intentions are a good predictor of behaviors (for a review, see Sheeran, 2002), we did not assess actual dropout rates; thus, future research following students over time to examine this outcome variable is warranted.

### *Implications for Practice, Advocacy, Education and Training, and Research*

Findings from our study highlight the impact of a negative climate and experiences of microaggressions on SM students' success in higher education—aspects that can depend on the policies and practices of an institution and its professional members. Indeed, previous research has discussed the importance of the classroom climate in determining overall campus climate for SM students. For example, students have discussed the role of faculty members' permissiveness of anti-SM rhetoric and general heteronormativity in the classroom in perceptions of campus climate (Garvey et al., 2015; Ueno et al., 2021; Zamani-Gallaher & Choudhuri, 2016). Thus, it is important that institutions address discrimination and anti-SM actions (e.g.,

microaggressions) occurring both in the classroom and across the campus, broadly. Counseling psychologists as therapists, faculty, staff, and/or administrators at university counseling centers and training programs can also advocate for interventions and accountability at multiple systemic levels that impact campus climate. Specifically, drawing from current and previous findings, counseling psychologists may choose to utilize their positionality and power to sanction university committees that focus on reforming current discriminatory policies that target LGBTQ students, establishing affirmative policies that offer systemic protection against identity-based microaggressions and assaults, and utilizing university funding and resources to develop spaces and campus units that specialize in offering identity affirming care (Pitcher et al., 2018; Woodford, Chonody et al., 2015; Woodford & Kulick, 2014). Further, to allow campus administrators and policymakers to understand the need for systemic reform and affirmative campus environments, counseling psychologists can participate in scholar activism by producing and/or disseminating research highlighting how systemic barriers and oppressive policies impact LGBTQ students and their mental health, physical wellness, and campus engagement.

Furthermore, our findings regarding community connection may offer important insights into community perspectives of campus climate. For example, when encountering a negative LGBTQ campus climate, undergraduate students with strong connections to their LGBTQ campus community may experience a sense of institutional betrayal about a lack of protective structures and general lack of care and responsiveness to SM students and their issues, which may contribute to their stronger intentions to drop out (Pitcher et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2016). Thus, administrators, faculty, and other college professionals should actively work with LGBTQ student groups and the LGBTQ community on campus to improve climate and address issues specific to the needs of these groups. For example, providing access to funding to help develop and maintain LGBTQ student groups and their initiatives; enhancing LGBTQ visibility on campuses by showcasing and celebrating the efforts of LGBTQ students, organizations, and other campus members; volunteering as faculty or staff mentors and sponsors to facilitate institutional support for LGBTQ student groups; and protecting LGBTQ student groups and their programming from being dismissed or penalized due to anti-LGBTQ sentiments held by other campus members. Additionally, the observed differences in the associations between SM undergraduate and graduate students allow us to understand how to specifically reform and construct supportive structures for SM students based on their student status. Although campus-wide affirming initiatives and advocacy may be more beneficial at enhancing psychological and academic well-being for undergraduate students, investing in smaller departmental-specific trainings, events, and LGBTQ organizations may be more beneficial for supporting SM graduate students.



Our findings also have significant implications for mental health professionals working with SM college students. Previous research has called for counseling psychologists to engage in liberatory practices in and out of therapy when working with LGBTQ clients (Russell & Bohan, 2007). Providers may consider interventions that directly address experiences of marginalization in hostile campus climates by building resilience in navigating systems of oppression and working toward transformative systemic change (Singh et al., 2020; Szymanski et al., 2023). Because LGBTQ campus communities will have specific needs depending on their campus and the local sociopolitical environment, providers should meet and work with leaders from the student cohort in community-inclusive and directive practices, such as frequent needs-assessments and participatory-action research, to determine and implement campus-specific interventions (Renn, 2020; Singh et al., 2020).

## Conclusion

Our results indicate the importance of SM minority stressors and supports and student status in understanding SM students' college satisfaction, dropout intentions, and emotional adjustment. Further, our findings reveal that when encountering a negative LGBTQ campus climate, students experiencing more sexual orientation-based microaggressions on campus are the least satisfied with their college experience, and undergraduate students reporting higher connection to their LGBTQ campus community express the most dropout intentions. These findings may be used by mental health professionals, college staff, faculty, and administrators to develop helpful resources and policies for SM students and to combat heterosexism and bisexism on campus.

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