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Bisexual+ Women of Color and Microaffirmations

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Bisexual+ Women of Color and Microaffirmations

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St. Louis

Dissertation

Dr. Susan Kashubeck-West

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Abstract

In the last decade, there has been an interest in exploring affirming identity factors for bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.) individuals that would promote positive mental wellbeing. However, there is a dearth in the current research that focuses on bisexual+ women of color and affirming factors unique to their intersecting racial/ethnic, sexual, and gender identities. By understanding what potential affirming factors, including bisexual microaffirmations, protect bisexual+ women of color from binegativity (bisexual specific discrimination), mental health professionals can provide and advocate for bisexual+ specific affirming care. This dissertation contains three studies: the first study explores how the experiences of binegativity and positive experiences of bisexuality predict social appearance anxiety (social anxiety around one's appearance) for bisexual+ women of color; the second study explores how the experiences of binegativity and racial/ethnic experiences predict social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color; and the third study explores the psychometric properties of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) when used with a sample of bisexual+ women of color. Findings for the first study suggest that bisexual+ collective self-esteem is a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color when considering the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. For the second study, findings suggest that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem is not a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color when considering the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. Finally, findings from the third study suggested some convergent and discriminant validity of the BMSFW but also a different factor structure when used with this sample of bisexual+ women of color.

Further findings, limitations, and implications for counselors, researchers, and other mental health professionals are also presented and discussed.

Keywords: bisexuality, women of color, microaffirmations, identity affirmation

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Section 1 - Introduction

Discrimination, both perceived and actual, can have harmful relationships with marginalized people's mental well-being. Research within the last decade (Craney et al., 2018; DeBlaere et al., 2014; Lim & Hewitt, 2018; Sutter & Perrin, 2016) has looked at the psychological distress related to societal and cultural discrimination experienced by those with marginalized racial and sexual identities. Understanding how racial and LGBTQ-based discriminations impact the mental well-being of individuals with these identities, individually and together, has therefore been the focus for recent research on intersecting identities of LGBTQ+ people of color (Craney et al., 2018; DeBlaere et al., 2014; Lim & Hewitt, 2018; Sutter & Perrin, 2016). For example, DeBlaere and colleagues (2014) surveyed a sample of 134 self-identified sexual minority cisgender women of color. They found that participants' perceptions of racist, sexist, and heterosexist experiences were each related to psychological distress. This finding suggests that for women with both marginalized sexual and racial identities, experiences of perceived discrimination overlap and intersect in unique ways that can be harmful for their mental wellbeing. In a survey of 200 LGBTQ people of color, Sutter and Perrin's (2016) found that experiences of racism and LGBTQ-based discrimination had direct negative relationships with mental wellbeing. Also, LGBTQ-based discrimination has been found to be an important predictor of suicidal ideation for LGBTQ people of color (Sutter & Perrin, 2016). This may mean that a person of color with a marginalized sexual identity may not have as many protective buffers for LGBTQ-based discriminations as they do with racism. Studies such as DeBlaere et al. (2014) and Sutter and Perrin (2016) explored the relationship between different forms of discrimination and psychological

wellbeing in LGBTQ+ people of color. However, these studies did not look at the unique experiences of discrimination that plurisexual people (those attracted to more than one gender identity) of color experience.

In the last decade, there has been a call to explore further how discrimination may predict psychological well-being for sexually marginalized people of color by analyzing the unique experiences of discrimination that non-monosexual people face. Lim and Hewitt (2018) interviewed five Australians of color and five White Australians who self-identified as plurisexual. All participants shared experiences of biphobia, or bisexual specific discrimination, and compulsory monosexuality; in addition, the participants of color also reported experiences of tension between their sexual identity and their ethnoracial/ethnoreligious identities, as well as the feeling of exclusion from White LGBTQ communities (Lim & Hewitt, 2018). In other words, the participants of color dealt with both sexual and ethnoracial discriminations, as seen in previous studies (DeBlaere et al., 2014; Sutter & Perrin, 2016). Lim and Hewitt's (2018) participants dealt with biphobia that complicated instances of perceived discrimination in the LGBTQ community and their ethnoracial community in ways that their White counterparts did not experience. Understanding how societal bias may predict psychological well-being in individuals with intersecting marginalized identities can be helpful to mental health professionals working with these clients to identify the potential sources of their presenting problems and help them affirm their clients' marginalized identities.

One form that affirmation can take are microaffirmations. Rowe (2008) first defined microaffirmations as "small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur

wherever people wish to help others succeed” (p. 46). In the last decade, microaffirmations have emerged as a potential construct to predict the psychological well-being of individuals in the LGBTQ+ community (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014; DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Flanders et al., 2017; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019; Salim et al., 2019; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020; Sterzing et al., 2018) and those with marginalized racial identities (Huber et al., 2021; Rolón-Dow & Davison, 2020). Several studies have started to look specifically at the relationship between microaffirmations and mental wellbeing in bisexual and other plurisexual individuals in samples that were predominantly White (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Flanders et al., 2017; Salim et al., 2019). More research is needed on microaffirmations and their potential relationships with the mental wellbeing of marginalized people facing discrimination, including those with intersecting marginalized identities. Therefore, the studies in this dissertation focused on bisexual specific microaffirmations. Study one looked at bisexual specific factors as potential moderators of the relationship between discrimination and a facet of psychological distress (social appearance anxiety) in bisexual women of color. Study two looked at racial/ethnic collective self-esteem as a potential moderator of the relationship between bisexual microaffirmation and bisexual microaggression, respectively, and social appearance anxiety. Finally, study three assessed the psychometric properties of a scale measuring experiences of microaffirmations for bisexual women in a sample of bisexual women of color.

Section 2 - Articles

Study 1:

The Moderating Effects of Bisexual Specific Factors in Bi+ Women of Color

With having both marginalized sexual and racial identities, bisexual, pansexual, queer, and fluid identified (plurisexual) people of color have the potential of experiencing challenges in negotiating multiple marginalized identities (Ghabrial, 2019; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). Bisexual women of color, for example, are believed to be at increased risk of isolation and poor mental health due to being alienated from the LGBTQ+ community and their racial/ethnic communities (Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). The majority of research that has looked at these intersecting identities has focused on social and cultural discriminatory factors that affect this population (Lim & Hewitt, 2018; Logie & Rwigema, 2014; Paul, 2021). However, there has been a shift to explore identity affirmation for bisexual and other plurisexual adults instead of focusing solely on a deficit perspective (Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020; Salim et al., 2019). Emerging evidence suggests a diversity of affirmative experiences among plurisexual identities (Mitchell et al., 2015) and within racial groups (Huber et al., 2021; Rolón-Dow & Davison, 2020) that need to be appropriately explored. Literature that has focused on sexually marginalized populations (Gray & Desmarais, 2014; Mason et al., 2015) suggests that other factors, such as collective self-esteem, may also create protective buffers against binegativity. The current study sought to consider how women (both cisgender and transgender) and nonbinary femme individuals of color with differing plurisexual identities experience affirming bisexual-specific factors in the face of societal binegativity.

Bisexual Specific Negativity

Binegativity is a unique form of discrimination in the lesbian, gay, and bisexual community (LGB) due to bisexual individuals experiencing discrimination about their sexual identity from both the lesbian and gay communities as well as the heterosexual community (Arriaga & Parent, 2019; DeCapua, 2017; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Ross et al., 2018; Yost & Thomas, 2012). In a study of 253 predominantly White heterosexual undergraduate cisgender men and women, Yost and Thomas (2012) found that respondents were more positive and accepting of bisexual cisgender women than they were of bisexual cisgender men, suggesting that gender may be a salient factor in binegativity. DeCapua (2017) interviewed ten predominantly White bisexual cisgender women between the ages of 19 to 24 in romantic relationships. Participants' responses suggested that although bisexual cisgender women may be more accepted by the heterosexual community, their sexual identity is still objectified and perceived as more novelty than as a valid part of their identity (DeCapua, 2017). A qualitative community-based study with thirty-five predominantly White young bisexual women (Flanders et al., 2015) proposed that a bisexual woman may be perceived as being more promiscuous compared to bisexual individuals of other gender identities. Participants in this study (Flanders et al., 2015) expressed worries about falling into bisexual stereotypes in others' eyes (i.e., being promiscuous, unfaithful, always non-monogamous, etc.). Arriaga and Parent's (2019) findings with a sample of 350 predominantly White bisexual cisgender men and women suggest that although bisexual women may experience binegativity from both the LGB and heterosexual communities, experiences of bisexual stigma from lesbian and gay individuals were significantly related to internalized binegativity for bisexual women. These findings (Arriaga & Parent, 2019; DeCapua, 2017; Flanders et al., 2015)

indicate a need to address binegativity in our society. Bisexual-specific stereotypes perpetuate sexual objectification of bisexual women, potentially facilitating and normalizing sexual violence against bisexual women (Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019).

Ethnoracial identity may also play a factor in how bisexual individuals experience binegativity. Over the last decade, a small amount of literature has looked at the specific experiences of bisexual and other plurisexual people of color (Brooks et al., 2008; Ghabrial, 2019; Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018; Paul, 2021). In a content analysis of quantitative bisexual mental health research, Ghabrial and Ross (2018) suggested that bisexual individuals who are also racial minorities may face shared and compounded stressors related to these marginalized identities. These compounded stressors could make it challenging for bisexual women of color to disclose their sexual identity, especially in their racial and cultural communities where they anticipate binegativity and/or heterosexist responses (Ross et al., 2018). In terms of community, bisexual women of color are also at an increased risk of isolation and poor mental health due to possible alienation from the LGBTQ+ community and their racial/ethnic communities (Brooks et al., 2008; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). In a study of bisexual women and gender-diverse people of color (Ghabrial, 2019), the 348 participants reported feeling like they had to choose between their identities, being forced to choose to present, or identify, with one identity in order to avoid distress or harm. In sum, bisexual-specific negativity, or binegativity, has been suggested to be related to adverse mental health in bisexual women, and more specifically, bisexual women of color. However, potential protective buffers against binegativity at the intra-and interpersonal levels are currently lacking exploration in the literature. One example of binegativity is bisexual specific

microaggressions. Nadal et al. (2016, p. 488) defined microaggressions as “behaviors and statements, often unconscious or unintentional, that communicate hostile or derogatory messages, particularly to members of targeted social groups.” This study was designed to contribute to the literature on binegativity and will operationalize binegativity via bisexual specific microaggressions.

Social Appearance Anxiety

Objectification theory states that people in western culture are socialized to sexualize women's and girls' bodies and to view them as objects (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Women and girls are being evaluated and sexualized primarily through the male gaze, but they are also evaluating their own bodies and being evaluated by other women. Forms of objectification have been found to have negatively impacted both cisgender and transgender women's mental health (Comiskey et al., 2020; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Fredrickson et al., 1998) and also, more specifically, bisexual women's, both cisgender and transgender, mental health (Brewster et al., 2014; Katz-Wise et al., 2017; Paul, 2021; Serpe et al., 2020; Tebbe et al., 2018). Bisexual women have reported objectification experiences through over-sexualization, meaning others believe that bisexual women are more promiscuous than their lesbian and heterosexual counterparts and bisexual individuals of other gender identities (Brewster et al., 2014; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019). This negative perception of bisexual women, especially for bisexual women of color (Brooks et al., 2008), is believed to be connected to the perpetuation of adverse mental health issues (Flanders et al., 2015; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018; Ross et al., 2018) as well as to sexual violence against bisexual women (Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019).

Self-objectification is when a woman internalizes the outsider perspective she experiences from the culture and society around her; she begins to unconsciously monitor and objectify her body through that same lens of evaluation (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Fredrickson et al., 1998). After surveying 316 predominantly European American bisexual cisgender women, Brewster et al. (2014) found that body shame, a component of self-objectification (Fredrickson et al., 1998), mediated the relationship between antibisexual discrimination and eating disorders symptoms. For these majority cisgender bisexual women, increased self-objectification experiences also increased the risk of eating disorder symptoms when antibisexual discrimination was a predictor (Brewster et al., 2014). This finding suggests a relationship for cisgender bisexual women between antibisexual discrimination and how they view their appearances through a western societal lens that may predict adverse mental health outcomes. Paul (2021) surveyed 292 predominantly cisgender bisexual women of color. They (Paul, 2021) found that body surveillance was a mediating factor in the relationship between internalized discrimination factors (internalized racism and internalized biphobia) and body dissatisfaction. More specifically, greater discrimination, in the form of either internalized racism or internalized biphobia, significantly predicted higher scores of body dissatisfaction for these participants. Paul (2021) also found that there was a relationship between internalized biphobia and internalized racism, respectively, with body surveillance. For these participants, greater body surveillance also predicted greater body dissatisfaction (Paul, 2021). These findings indicate that bisexual cisgender women of color experience objectification due to both their racial identities and their sexual identities. These findings also suggest that there is a relationship between internalized

discrimination and self-objectification via body surveillance for bisexual women of color. These experiences of objectification can lead to not only body surveillance but also social appearance anxiety.

Social appearance anxiety is defined by Hart et al. (2008) as anxiety about being negatively evaluated by others because of one's overall appearance, including, but not limited to, their body shape. As a potential influence on body image similar to objectification, social appearance anxiety has been associated with social anxiety and eating disorder symptoms (Hart et al., 2015; Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2012; Levinson et al., 2013). In a study that examined the properties of the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale in 389 Canadian gay and bisexual men of color, racism experiences were significantly associated with higher scores on social appearance anxiety (Hart et al., 2015). This study (Hart et al., 2015) also found a significant relationship between social appearance anxiety and body image dissatisfaction and suggested that future research should look more into factors related to marginalized group status and experiences of discrimination.

Hart and colleagues (2015) also proposed that having a lot of social support may be associated with less social appearance anxiety. In a study of 218 predominantly White male LGB youth between the ages of 14 and 22 years old, Detrie and Lease (2007) found that social support was not a significant predictor of psychological well-being for older participants (over the age of 18) but was an important factor for younger LGB individuals and their development (under the age of 18). However, social connectedness and collective self-esteem, constructs that involve a person having positive feelings and beliefs about the group(s) they belong to - were significantly correlated and related to all

aspects of psychological well-being in the LGB adults in their sample, ages 18 to 22 (Detrie & Lease, 2007). At this time, it appears that no studies have looked at bisexual women of color and social appearance anxiety and whether Detrie and Lease's findings (2007) in regard to the relationship that collective self-esteem has with psychological well-being are applicable to this population. Therefore, the current study examined the potential relationships between objectification via social appearance anxiety and collective self-esteem.

Collective Self-Esteem

As Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) defined, collective self-esteem is a person's positive self-identity based on the value they place on their social group (racial/ethnic group, sexual identity group, etc.). A person with high collective self-esteem has their individual identity associated positively with the group they are a member of (Barrie et al., 2016; Gray & Desmarais, 2014; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Mason et al., 2015). Several studies have looked at collective self-esteem in regard to ethnically and racially marginalized groups. It has been found that for African American adolescent girls, collective self-esteem provides protective buffer against negative mental health effects of racial discrimination (Barrie et al., 2016) and for Asian American college students, collective self-esteem can be dependent in some ethno-racial groups based on intergroup differences (Kim & Lee, 2011).

When looking at the collective self-esteem of individuals with marginalized sexual identities, the findings from a study of predominantly White sexual minority cisgender women (Mason et al., 2015) suggested that high collective self-esteem buffered against the internalization of societal discrimination. These findings suggest that for these

women, collective self-esteem created a protective buffer against internalized homonegativity. Previous studies' (Barrie et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2011; Mason et al., 2015) findings demonstrate that collective self-esteem may be an essential buffering factor for racially and sexually marginalized individuals against adverse discrimination-related outcomes. Based on these studies (Barrie et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2011; Mason et al., 2015), collective self-esteem, specifically bisexual collective self-esteem, was believed to moderate the association between external discrimination and social appearance anxiety in bisexual and other plurisexual women of color.

Bisexual Microaffirmation

In 2008, Rowe presented one of the first mentions of the term microaffirmations, defined as, "small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed" (p. 46). According to Rowe (2008), receiving consistent and appropriate microaffirmation has the potential of not only raising morale but also productivity in the individual being affirmed. Rowe (2008) also proposed that appropriately and consistently affirming others via microaffirmations can reduce discriminatory behavior of the one affirming. Since then, microaffirmations have been studied as racial specific microaffirmations (Huber et al., 2021; Rolón-Dow & Davison, 2020), transgender-specific microaffirmations (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019), and bisexual specific microaffirmations (Dyar & London, 2018; Flanders, 2015; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019).

Rolón-Dow and Davison (2020) created a Critical Race/LatCrit theoretical framework for racial microaffirmations by using narrative interviews of racially

marginalized students, sixteen graduate students and eighteen undergraduate students, at a predominantly White institution (PWI). From these interviews, microaffirmations were broken down into four types: microrecognitions are actions, verbal remarks, or cues from that environment that make a person with marginalized racial identity feel seen, appreciated, and/or included; microvalidations which are actions, verbal remarks, or cues that lead a racially marginalized person to feel that their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are accepted, validated, and appreciated; microtransformations are actions, verbal remarks, or cues from the environment that a racially marginalized person is successful in their social and academic life; and microprotections are actions, verbal remarks, or cues from the environment that a racially marginalized person will be protected from harmful and discriminating behaviors, practices, and policies because of their marginalized identity (Rolón-Dow & Davison, 2020). Huber and colleagues (2021) expanded on Rolón-Dow and Davison's (2020) theory and explored psychological protective factors of racial microaffirmations, specifically in relationship with racial microaggressions. After conducting three focus groups over seven months with a total of thirty graduate level students of color, Huber and colleagues (2021) found that for their participants, perceived racial microaffirmations not only protect but also believed to heal them from the negative psychological outcomes of racial microaggressions. This can be done by having supportive faculty members who also have racially marginalized identities, positive racially diverse representation in class related texts, everyday validations and affirmations, and safe spaces, or counterspaces, for racially marginalized students (Huber et al., 2021). However, despite racial microaffirmations potential to protect and heal from

racial microaggressions, Huber and colleagues (2021) stated that it does not completely erase the harm done by racial microaggressions for the individual.

Pulice-Farrow and colleagues (2019), in a study that looked at 339 predominately White self-identified transgender adults in romantic relationships, found that microaffirmations from a romantic partner seemed to mean more than from an acquaintance. Participants reported microaffirmations occurring when partners allowed them to negotiate their marginalized identities, acknowledged milestones, and had overall positive interpersonal relationships (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019). Because transgender people belong to a marginalized community where they may experience discrimination and bias from even their close relationships, microaffirmations, therefore, are believed to be noticeable in romantic relationships and affirm not only the participants' transgender identity but also affirm the strength and love of the romantic relationship (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019). Pulice-Farrow and colleagues (2019) showed that microaffirmations may have a relationship with mental wellbeing depending on the strength and closeness of interpersonal relationships.

In a study looking at the 30-day diaries of predominantly White cisgender bisexual individuals, Flanders's (2015) findings suggested that microaffirmations for bisexual individuals had the potential to decrease anxiety and depression. Flanders's (2015) findings also suggested that further research was needed to understand positive identity events in bisexual individuals' relationships with others and their relationship with mental well-being. After surveying 180 predominantly White well-educated, middle class, bisexual, cisgender women for three weeks via weekly surveys, Dyar and London's (2018) findings suggested that experiencing frequent inter-and intrapersonal bipositive

events (defined as positive events related to a person's bisexual identity) helped to increase these women's strength in identity as bisexual, their bisexual identity affirmation, and decrease their anxiety and depression. These findings also suggest that bipositive events may be an essential protective factor for bisexual individuals and may decrease binegative internalization (Dyar & London, 2018). More research on bipositive events is needed.

Salim and colleagues (2019) used a newly developed scale by Flanders et al. (2019), the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) that measured microaffirmations experienced by bisexual women using a sample of 89 predominantly White, bisexual, cisgender women to explore the relationship between bisexual microaffirmation and mental health of bisexual women. No significant relationship was found between participants' reports of bisexual microaffirmations and depression, suicidality, and happiness, respectively. Due to the small sample, Salim et al. (2019) suggested that may explain why a significant relationship was not found. Therefore, it may have been that the relationship of microaffirmations with depression, suicidality, and happiness in bisexual women were not detected. DeLucia and Smith (2021), after surveying 274 predominantly White bisexual+ individuals that had seen a mental health professional within a year, also found that greater levels of outness predicted more bisexual specific microaffirmation experiences from their provider. At the time of this study, the BMSFW is the only developed scale that has been designed to assess for bisexual microaffirmations and it has only been tested on primarily White samples (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Salim et al., 2019). Understanding microaffirmations in bisexual women of color may reveal potential protective buffers against objectification

and social appearance anxiety in this population. Understanding microaffirmations may also potentially provide mental health professionals working with this population with bisexual-specific affirming tools and techniques.

The Current Study

This study looked at the relationship between social appearance anxiety and bisexual related protective and harmful factors. More specifically, this study examined the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety as moderated by bisexual microaffirmations and bisexual collective self-esteem. The question this study wanted to answer was, “How do bisexual+ women/femmes of color’s experiences of bisexual microaggressions and positive experiences of bisexuality (via bisexual microaffirmations and bisexual collective self-esteem, respectively) predict their level of social appearance anxiety?”. Hypothesis 1 was that the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by bisexual microaffirmation. More specifically, when bisexual microaffirmations were low, the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be stronger than when bisexual microaffirmations were high. Hypothesis 2 was that the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by bisexual collective self-esteem. When bisexual collective self-esteem was low, the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be stronger than when bisexual collective self-esteem was high. Hypothesis 3 was that the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and social appearance anxiety would be significantly moderated by bisexual collective self-esteem. More specifically, when bisexual collective self-esteem was low, the relationship between bisexual

microaffirmations and social appearance anxiety would be weaker than when bisexual collective self-esteem was high.

Method

Participants

The final sample size was 209 bisexual+ women with marginalized racial/ethnic identities. The average age was 29.73 ($SD = 6.96$, range 18 – 69). For sexual identity, approximately 53.6% self-identified as bisexual, 21.1% identified as pansexual, 19.6% identified as queer, 1.9% identified as fluid, 1.9% had sexual identities that were not listed, 1% identified as asexual, and 1% identified as two-spirit. For gender identity, approximately 80.9% identified as cisgender women, 8.1% identified as non-binary femme, 4.3% identified as genderqueer, 2.4% identified as transgender women, 1.9% as intersex women, 1% identified as two-spirit, 1% identified as a sexual identity not listed, and 0.5% identified as intersex femme. Regarding racial/ethnic identity, approximately 38.8% identified as Black/African American, 30.1% identified being Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin, 26.3% identified as being mixed racially/ethnically, 15.3% identified as Asian/Asian American, 9.1% identified as White Latinx, 7.7% identified as a racial/ethnic identity not listed, and 2.4% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. For highest level of education, approximately 37.8% reported having a master's degree, 22.5% had a bachelor's degree, 13.4% had a doctoral degree, 11% had some college or no degree, 7.7% had a high school degree or equivalent, 3.3% has an associate degree, 2.4% had less than a high school diploma, and 1.9% had a professional degree. Regarding relationship status, 35.9% reported their status as dating, 30.1% reported being single, 25.8% identified as being married, in a domestic partnership, or

civil union, 4.3% had a relationship status that wasn't listed, 3.3% were divorced/separated, and 0.5% identified as widowed. When asked about their level of outness, 37.3% said they were out to some friends only, 22.5% identified as being out to specific people and were allowed to write in who, 17.2% reported being out to everyone, 12.9% said they were out to both friends and family, 6.7% identified as not out, and 3.3% said they were out to some family only. Approximately 86.6% of participants during the time of the study lived in the United States, 7.7% were currently living in Canada, and 5.7% lived in a U.S. territory.

Procedure

This study was approved by the researcher's institutional review board. Based on suggested procedures, data was collected using an anonymous online survey (Buchanan & Smith, 1999). Participant recruitment was via snowball sampling through social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Reddit, and listservs associated with LGBTQIA+ groups. Recruitment posts stated that this was a study on bisexual+ women of color/ gender non-conforming people of color who identified as femme and identity affirmation. Potential participants were offered a chance to enter a raffle to win one of fifty \$25 gift cards.

This study initially collected data from 405 participants. The call for participants asked for individuals who identified as bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.) or have the potential to be attracted sexually, emotionally, and/or romantically to more than one gender identity, cisgender or transgender women of color or nonbinary/gender nonconforming femmes of color who were 18 years old or older, and currently living in the United States, Canada, or U.S. territories during the time they participated in this

study. Participants were removed for being under 18 years old ($n = 19$), identifying with a sexual identity that is not bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.; $n = 41$), not identifying as a woman/non-binary femme ($n = 12$), not a person of color ($n = 14$), not currently living in the United States or Canada during the time of the survey ($n = 1$), did not complete more than two measures of the survey ($n = 80$), did not meet at least three out of five validity checks ($n = 19$), were believed to be bots based on online survey recommendations ($n = 9$; Griffin et al., 2021), and for being an univariate outlier ($n = 1$; Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Parent, 2013; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The final sample size was 209 participants, ranging in age between 18 and 69 with a mean age of 29.73 ($SD = 7.0$). Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Measures

Demographic Measures

The demographic variables of interest included ethno-racial identity, sexual orientation, age (years), geographic location, the highest level of education completed, and outness.

Experiences of Bisexual Microaggressions

Experiences of bisexual microaggressions were measured using a modified version of the Bisexual Microaggression Scale for Women which consists of 34 items that measure bisexual dismissal, mistrust, sexualization, social exclusion, and denial of complexity (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). Examples of items include "Someone suggested my [bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid] identity is a phase" and "Someone asked me to prove that I'm [bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid] by discussing my sexual history." Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Every day*) with 7 being N/A based on the last six months. The score is averaged with

"not applicable" scores either excluded or coded as "0" before averaging all items. The higher the score, the more bisexual specific microaggression the participant has experienced in the last six months. In a sample of primarily White cisgender bisexual women (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), the entire scale's reported alpha was .97. The Microaggressions Scale has good concurrent validity and was strongly positively correlated with both versions of the Anti-Bisexual Experience Scale (ABES): Heterosexual version ($r = .65, p < .001$) and the ABES-Lesbian/Gay version ($r = .65, p < .001$). The alpha for this study was .98.

Bisexual-Specific Microaffirmation

Bisexual microaffirmations were measured using the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), which consists of 16 items that measure bisexual acceptance, social support, recognition of bisexuality, and emotional support. Examples of items include "Someone accepted my being bi without any questions" and "Someone was happy for me regardless of the sex or gender of my partner(s)". Each item was rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Every day*), with 7 being *N/A based on the last six months*. The score is averaged with "not applicable" scores either excluded or coded as "0" before averaging all items. The higher the score, the more bisexual-specific microaffirmations the participant has experienced in the last six months. In a sample of primarily White cisgender bisexual women (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), the entire scale's reported alpha was .92. The BMSFW also had good concurrent validity ($r = .24, p < .001$) with the Bisexual Identity Inventory Identity Affirmation subscale (Paul et al., 2014). The subscales of the BMSFW, except for the Recognition of Bisexuality and Biphobia subscale, were also

positively correlated with the Affirmation subscale: Acceptance ($r = .30, p < .001$), Social Support ($r = .18, p < .001$), and Emotional Support ($r = .29, p < .001$). The alpha for this study was .93.

Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem

Bisexual+ collective self-esteem was measured using the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), consisting of 16 items that focus on participants' positive feelings about being part of the bisexual+ community. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale was designed to be adapted for any social group. It will be used twice in this study to measure bisexual+ collective self-esteem. Examples of items include "I am a worthy member of the social groups that I belong to" and "I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do". Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Applicable item responses are reversed scored as necessary and averaged, with higher scores indicating more collective self-esteem. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale reported alpha was .85 in a sample of predominantly White cisgender sexual minority women participants when looking at sexual identity collective self-esteem (Mason et al., 2015). For adolescent African American girls, the reported alpha was .79 when looking at African Americans' racial collective self-esteem (Barrie et al., 2016). In terms of convergent validity, the Collective Self-Esteem scale was moderately correlated ($r = .36, p < .001$; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a measure of personal, or individual, self-esteem. The alpha for this study was .82.

Social Appearance Anxiety

Social appearance anxiety was measured using the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008), which consists of 16 items that measure anxiety about one's overall appearance instead of specific aspects of one's appearance (Hart et al., 2008). Examples of items included "I feel comfortable with the way I appear to others" and "I am concerned that I have missed out on opportunities because of my appearance". Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*), with higher scores indicating more social appearance anxiety. In a study looking at Canadian gay and bisexual men of color, the reported alpha was .96 (Hart et al., 2015). This same study (Hart et al., 2015) reported that the SAAS was strongly correlated with body image dissatisfaction for the Male Body Attitude Scale: Muscularity ($r = .49, p < .003$) and Low Body Fat subscales ($r = .51, p < .003$). The SAAS was also positively correlated with depression ($r = .31, p < .003$) and anxiety ($r = .42, p < .003$) symptoms through the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and negatively correlated with Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support ($r = -.31, p < .003$; Hart et al., 2008) for perceived availability of support from friends and family. The alpha for this study was .95.

Results

Data were cleaned and analyzed using SPSS. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among main study variables are shown in Table 2. Skewness and kurtosis were examined to assess significant violations of normality in the data and were found to be within accepted parameters (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). Data also were examined for any violations of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity and none were found that would influence the model being tested. There was no multicollinearity

between variables. Demographic variables such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, relationship status, and outness were tested for correlations with the outcome variable of Social Appearance Anxiety but none were significant. Therefore, no covariates were necessary (Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). For Social Appearance Anxiety, the mean score was moderate ($M = 44.24$, $SD = 13.80$), indicating that participants felt a moderate level of Social Appearance Anxiety. For Bisexual Microaffirmations, the mean score was low ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.22$), indicating that participants reported low experiences of bisexual microaffirmations. For Bisexual Microaggressions, the mean score was also low ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 1.11$), indicating low experiences of microaggressions for participants. The mean score for Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem was high ($M = 4.78$, $SD = .78$), indicating that participants had high levels of positive bisexual self-identity based on the value they placed on their sexual identity community.

Table 2 shows that Social Appearance Anxiety was negatively correlated with Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem and Bisexual Microaffirmation, respectively. Higher bisexual+ collective self-esteem and more experiences of bisexual microaffirmations were associated with less social appearance anxiety. Table 2 also shows Social Appearance Anxiety was positively correlated with Bisexual Microaggressions, meaning that as experiences of bisexual microaggressions increased experiences of social appearance anxiety for participants increased as well. Bisexual Microaffirmation was also found to be positively correlated with Bisexual Microaggressions and with Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem, respectively. As experiences of bisexual microaggression increased for participants, they also experienced an increase in bisexual

microaffirmations and an increase in bisexual+ collective self-esteem experiences.

Bisexual Microaggressions was also correlated negatively with Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem, meaning that the more bisexual microaggressions participants reported, the less their bisexual collective self-esteem.

To test Hypothesis 1, that the relationship between Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety would be moderated by Bisexual Microaffirmations, Hayes's PROCESS model for moderation analysis (Hayes, 2021) was used to test the model shown in Figure 1. As seen in Table 3, the interaction between Bisexual Microaggressions and Bisexual Microaffirmation was not significant ($\beta = .32, p = .68$), which indicated that Bisexual Microaffirmations did not moderate the relationship between Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hayes's PROCESS model for moderation (Hayes, 2021) also was used to test Hypothesis 2 (see Figure 2), that the relationship between Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety would be moderated by Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem. As shown in Table 3, the interaction between Bisexual Microaggressions and Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem was significant ($\beta = 3.62, p = .01$), which indicated that Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem had a significant impact on the relationship between Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety. As shown in Figure 4, for participants with low Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem, the more bisexual microaggressions they experienced, the more social appearance anxiety they reported. For participants with high Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem, their experiences with bisexual microaggressions did not appear to change their social appearance anxiety.

Thus, Hypothesis 2 - when bisexual+ collective self-esteem is low, the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety will be stronger than when bisexual+ collective self-esteem is high – was supported.

To test Hypothesis 3 (see Figure 3), that the relationship between Bisexual Microaffirmations and Social Appearance Anxiety would be significantly moderated by Bisexual+ Self-Esteem, Hayes's PROCESS model for moderation analysis (Hayes, 2021) was used. The interaction between Bisexual Microaffirmations and Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem was not significant ($\beta = .86, p = .40$; see Table 3), which indicated that Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem did not moderate the relationship between Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore the relationships between potential bisexual-specific protective factors, bisexual-specific discriminating factors, and society-based anxiety around a person's appearance in bisexual+ women of color. Findings from the current study suggest bisexual+ collective self-esteem is a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color. In addition, the current study provides insight and expands the limited knowledge around bisexual microaffirmation and bisexual+ women of color. This study also adds to the limited literature on bisexual+ cisgender women of racial/ethnically marginalized backgrounds.

Hypothesis 1, that the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by bisexual microaffirmation, was not supported. Similarly, Hypothesis 3, that the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and social appearance anxiety would be significantly moderated by

bisexual+ collective self-esteem, was also not supported. These findings confirm those in Salim et al. (2019) and suggest that experiencing bisexual microaffirmations is neither a sufficient protective buffer against participant experiences of binegativity and social appearance anxiety, nor a predictor of lower social appearance anxiety. In addition, the results also are similar to those of Sterzing and colleagues (2018), who found in a study with 1,117 predominantly White sexual and gender minority adolescents that microaffirmations in these adolescents' families did not protect against average or above average levels of microaggression, violence, and adversity. However, the current findings conflict with those from Pulice-Farrow and colleagues (2019) that suggested that microaffirmations have a relationship with mental well-being in a sample of predominantly White transgender adults in relationships. Since there were no significant differences between mean scores for bisexual microaffirmations by demographics, perhaps the participants' experiences of bisexual microaggressions - even though these scores were low - were still too high for bisexual microaffirmations to either be a protective buffer against binegativity or a predictor of low social appearance anxiety.

Another possibility for the difference in findings may be that microaffirmations may not be a completely positive construct for bisexual+ women of color. Though the mean score for Bisexual Microaffirmations had a significant negative correlation with scores for Social Appearance Anxiety and a positive correlation with Bisexual Collective Self-Esteem, it also had a positive correlation with Bisexual Microaggressions. This may mean that for participants in this study, experiences of bisexual microaffirmations and bisexual microaggressions are not opposite of each other; thus, they may not be completely separate constructs. Huber et al. (2021) suggested that microaffirmations do

not erase the harm done by microaggressions, therefore, the positive correlation between Bisexual Microaggression and Bisexual Microaffirmation may be the result of that. Level of outness may play a role, as well. Depending on the level of outness, bisexual+ women of color may report more experiences of both microaffirmations from those around them such as significant others (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019), family of origin (Sterzing et al., 2018; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020), and health professionals (DeLucia & Smith, 2021), but they may also be at risk of experiencing more bisexual microaggressions from those around as well as the society around them (Delston, 2021).

Delston (2021) proposed that microaffirmations should be explored on the systemic level. They initially defined microaffirmations as “signals that the recipient belongs to a high status or valued class and that often lead individuals to gain a sense of confidence, belonging, and merit” (p.2). Delston proposed that microaffirmations may be more harmful than helpful and how they are given should be looked at from a more structural, rather than interpersonal, lens. Essentially, microaffirmations may further emphasize societal discrimination against marginalized groups. Microaffirmations may also further create an inequitable hierarchy between marginalized and majority groups where the inequities experienced are acknowledged but never really addressed. In essence, bisexual+ women of color experiencing bisexual+ microaffirmations from those they interact with is not a sufficient substitute from needed societal change around the understanding and validity of bisexuality. If the participants of this study were experiencing bisexual microaggressions and other forms of binegativity from the larger societal culture, the affirming voices of a small minority of allies may not be enough. More research on affirming bisexual-specific constructs on a macrolevel is needed.

Hypothesis 2, that the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by bisexual+ collective self-esteem, was supported. The current study's finding was consistent with Mason et al. (2015), who found that high sexual identity collective self-esteem buffered the negative effects of external heterosexism on internalized heterosexism. Findings from DeBlaere et al. (2014) and Paul (2021) suggested that bisexual+ women of color may be at a higher risk of internalizing binegativity since they may be more likely to maintain a connection with their heteronormative racial/ethnic community than with the predominantly White LGBTQIA+ community. Therefore, high levels of bisexual+ collective self-esteem may protect bisexual+ women of marginalized racial and ethnic identities from being exposed to forms of cultural biphobia/heterosexism in their racial/ethnic community that lead to internalized binegativity and objectification of their bodies and appearances (DeBlaere, 2014; Paul, 2021).

Future Directions for Research

The current study initially hypothesized that bisexual microaffirmation would be a protective buffer between binegativity and social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color. However, findings from this current study suggest that microaffirmations may not act as protective factors as previous studies suggested. Therefore, future studies should explore the construct of microaffirmations and its different facets. Rolón-Dow and Davison (2020) proposed that microaffirmations need to be broken down into four types: microrecognitions, microvalidations, microtransformations, and microprotections. Future studies should explore these types of

microaffirmations to see if these delineations influence the relationship between bisexual discrimination and psychological well-being of bisexual+ women of color.

In the current study, even though the relationship between binegativity and social appearance anxiety was moderated by high experiences of bisexual+ collective self-esteem, participants who had low bisexual+ collective self-esteem still had less social appearance anxiety than those with high bisexual+ collective self-esteem. Future studies should explore the connection between outness, binegativity, and community related affirming factors. Future studies should also explore other affirming factors that occur on the societal level that considers the intersecting identities of sexual, gender, and racial/ethnic identities. Future studies should also be intentional about recruiting participants who are bisexual+ transgender and gender expansive individuals with racial/ethnic marginalized identities, as well as participants who identify as Asian and/or Latinx bisexual+ women.

Implications for Counselors and Counselor Educators

The current study has implications for counselors and other mental health professionals. With the field's initial understanding of the unique discrimination factors that bisexual+ women of color experience (Bostwick et al., 2021; Ghabrial, 2019; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018; Paul, 2021; Smith et al., 2022), the results of this study contribute to the scant body of research that focuses on affirming factors that may protect this population against binegativity (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Dyar & London, 2018; Flanders et al., 2017; Galupo et al., 2019; Salim et al., 2019). Understanding bisexual+ specific discriminations and protective buffers may help counselors provide more affirming care for their bisexual+ women of color who are out to them (DeLucia &

Smith, 2021). Also, even if unsure about a client's sexual identity, counselors and other mental health professionals can be aware that there are different types of attraction and not assume or label clients without their disclosure.

With this current study's finding that when bisexual+ collective self-esteem is low, the relationship between binegativity and social appearance anxiety will be stronger than when bisexual+ collective self-esteem is high, it is important for counselors and other mental health professionals to provide psychoeducation to communities around bisexuality and the psychological risks of binegativity to reduce stigma (Friedman et al., 2015). Findings from Paul (2021) support that binegativity on the societal level is internalized by individuals which has a negative influence on their mental well-being. Even if a person who identifies as bisexual hasn't experienced binegativity directly, the assumptions and stigmas that their friends and close family have around bisexuality may stop them from disclosing their sexual identity and reinforces heterosexism (Mason et al., 2015). This shows that not only should bisexual affirmation be considered from an individual perspective but a societal shift in how bisexuality and other plurisexual identities are understood needs to also happen. Friedman et al. (2015) recommend an approach where healthcare professionals create interventions targeted towards the heterosexual and gay/lesbian individuals and communities that focus on reducing stigma towards the bisexual community. Counselors can create workshops and other opportunities to meaningfully increase social and political support in local schools, universities, organizations, and government agencies that reduce perceived stigma towards bisexuality in the surrounding community (Friedman et al, 2015). Counselor educators should also focus on making sure that counselors-in-training are not only aware

of the unique stigma that bisexual individuals face but also aware of how to call binegativity out and educate (Sue et al., 2019), as well as appropriate resources and referral sources for bisexual clients. Counselors and other mental health professionals should also work with those in the bisexual community to create and/or support already established safe spaces, in-person and virtual, where bisexual and other plurisexual people of color can support and connect with each other (Barrie et al., 2016; Kim & Lee, 2011; Mason et al., 2015).

Limitations

One limitation, as with any online survey, is that the sample of participants may not be representative of the actual population of bisexual+ women of color. Though attempts were made to protect the survey against bot interference as recommended by Griffin and colleagues (2021), the continued evolution and sophistication of bots make it difficult even with all the added precautions to know if the final sample was made up fully of individual participants. Also, though the current study set out to explore within group racial/ethnic differences, there were not enough participants in the various racial/ethnic groups to explore within group differences. A lack of diverse sample of participants from various socioeconomic backgrounds may not have been represented as well. Participants also had to be living in the United States, Canada, or a U.S. territory, excluding participants from other places in the world and therefore not represented. The design of the study may also have contributed to its limitations since data was provided through self-report and two of the measures used, the Bisexual Microaggression Scale: For Women and the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women, are relatively new scales with very little psychometric information currently available.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study adds to the limited body of research that focuses specifically on bisexual+ women of color and affirming identity constructs. Findings from this current study expand upon the limited knowledge on microaffirmations for bisexual+ individuals and their relationship with bisexual specific discriminating and protective factors in predicting psychological well-being. This study also highlighted that bisexual+ collective self-esteem was a protective factor in the relationship between negative bisexual experiences and anxiety around one's appearance for bisexual+ women of color. The findings of this study may be helpful for counselors and other mental health professionals looking to advocate and provide affirming care for this population.

Study 2:**The Moderating Effects of Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem in Bi+ Women of Color**

Literature on bisexual, pansexual, queer, and fluid identified (plurisexual) people of color revealed that this population has unique experiences of discrimination that their White lesbian and gay counterparts do not experience due to external and internal societal discriminants based on their multiple marginalized identities (Ghabrial, 2019; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018; Lim & Hewitt, 2018; Logie & Rwigema, 2014). Previous research has found that those who identify as queer people of color experience tension between their ethnoracial and queer identities where they feel they have to pick one identity over the other (Lim & Hewitt, 2018). Additionally, Ghabrial (2017) found that some LGBTQ people of color feel that there is an incongruence between their ethnic cultures and queer culture which along with racism experienced from the White LGBTQ communities makes it difficult to engage. Despite findings that focus on the deficits, recent literature has focused on positive intersectionality as a protective factor for LGBTQ people of color. It has even been suggested that if someone has a positive relationship with one of their marginalized identities, then it can help that individual feel empowered and accepting of their other marginalized identities (Ghabrial, 2017). Therefore, this study looked at racial/ethnic collective self-esteem as a potential protective buffer for bisexual+ women of color and their mental well-being.

Ethno-racial Collective Self-esteem

As Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) defined, collective self-esteem is a person's positive self-identity based on the value they place on their social group (racial/ethnic group, sexual identity group, etc.). A person with high collective self-esteem has their individual identity associated positively with the group they are a member of (Barrie et al., 2016; Gray & Desmarais, 2014; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Mason et al., 2015). Barrie et al. (2016) found in their survey of 144 African American adolescent girls that high levels of collective self-esteem were associated with lower levels of being impacted by racial stereotypes. This study (Barrie et al., 2016) proposed that collective self-esteem may be a protective buffer for these African American adolescent girls against racial discrimination.

In a study of 304 first-, second-, and third-generation Asian American college students (Kim & Lee, 2011), findings suggested that collective self-esteem was also associated with age and immigration generation status. Essentially, these students felt more connected to their heritage culture as they got older and if they were second- or third-generation Asian Americans (Kim & Lee, 2011). This particular finding suggests that there may be intergroup factors for collective self-esteem in Asian/Asian American individuals and possibly other ethno-racially marginalized groups that should be taken into consideration when looking at collective self-esteem's potential as a protective buffer.

Findings from Dueñas and Gloria (2017) also suggested that collective self-esteem may be an important factor for Latin@ students. Dueñas and Gloria (2017) surveyed 141 Latin@ undergraduates where participants were predominantly Mexican American females and the first in their family to attend college. Findings revealed that

Latin@ collective self-esteem was connected to whether they felt like they mattered to peers, faculty, and/or administrators at their school (Dueñas & Gloria, 2017). This finding suggested that if Latin@ students felt that they belonged at their school, they may be more likely to feel like they mattered and potentially more likely to succeed in undergraduate.

When looking at the collective self-esteem of individuals with marginalized sexual identities, the findings from a study of 140 predominantly White cisgender sexual minority women (Mason et al., 2015) suggested that high collective self-esteem buffered against the internalization of discrimination they face in society. These findings suggested that for these women, collective self-esteem created a protective buffer against internalized homonegativity when it came to psychological well-being. Barrie et al.'s (2016), Dueñas and Gloria's (2017), Kim and Lee's (2011), and Mason and colleagues' (2015), respective findings demonstrated that collective-self-esteem may be an essential buffering factor for both racially, ethnically, and sexually marginalized individuals against adverse discrimination-related outcomes. These studies (Barrie et al., 2016; Dueñas & Gloria, 2017, Kim & Lee, 2011; Mason et al., 2015) proposed that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem may moderate the association between external discrimination and social appearance anxiety in bisexual+ women of color. This study specifically explored if racial/ethnic collective self-esteem would be a moderator for bisexual-specific microaffirmations and binegativity. Binegativity was determined using bisexual specific microaggressions and will be referred to as so throughout this study.

Bisexual Microaffirmation

Microaffirmations are defined as “small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed” and have the potential to have positive effects for the person receiving them when done consistently and appropriately (Rowe, 2008, p. 46). Microaffirmations as potential protective factors have recently been looked at in the last decade (Huber et al., 2021; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019; Rolón-Dow & Davison, 2020; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020), especially research on bisexual specific positive events and microaffirmations (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Flanders et al., 2017; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019; Salim et al., 2019) to understand more than just deficits on mental wellbeing for those with marginalized identities. For bisexual individuals specifically, Dyar and London (2018) and Flanders (2015) have suggested that positive bisexual specific experiences may provide a buffer against anxiety and depression. Studies that have focused on bisexual microaffirmations (DeLucia and Smith, 2021; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019; Salim et al., 2019) have been limited by not having sufficient representation of racially/ethnically marginalized participants and therefore this study looked at bisexual microaffirmation with ethnic/racially marginalized participants.

Social Appearance Anxiety

The anxiety over being negatively viewed by others due to appearance, especially anxiety over how others perceive one’s body shape, is called social appearance anxiety (Hart et al., 2008). Similar to constructs such as self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), social appearance anxiety has been associated with social anxiety and eating disorder symptoms (Hart et al., 2015; Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2012; Levinson et

al., 2013). In a study done by Hart and colleagues (2015) on 389 Canadian gay and bisexual men of color, it was proposed that high levels of social support may have a relationship with low social appearance anxiety for gay and bisexual men of color. However, Detrie and Lease's (2007) findings revealed after studying 218 predominantly White male LGB youth that social support was not a significant predictor of psychological well-being for those over the age of 18. It was proposed that social connectedness and collective self-esteem were related to psychological well-being of older LGB adults (Detrie & Lease, 2007). During the time of this study, there were not any studies on bisexual+ women of color and social appearance anxiety, this current study examined the potential relationships between social appearance anxiety and racial/ethnic collective self-esteem.

The Current Study

The present study examined the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and bisexual microaffirmation, respectively, and social appearance anxiety as moderated by ethno-racial collective self-esteem. This study attempted to answer the question: How do bisexual+ women/femmes of color's bisexual specific experiences (bisexual microaffirmations and bisexual microaggressions, respectively) and ethno-racial experiences (racial/ethnic collective self-esteem) predict social appearance anxiety? Hypothesis 1 was that the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be significantly moderated by ethno-racial collective self-esteem. More specifically, when ethno-racial collective self-esteem was low, the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety would be stronger than when ethno-racial collective self-esteem was high. Hypothesis 2 was that

the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by ethno-racial collective self-esteem. More specifically, when ethno-racial collective self-esteem was low, the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and social appearance anxiety would be weaker than when ethno-racial collective self-esteem was high.

Methods

Participants

The final sample size was 209 bisexual+ women with marginalized racial/ethnic identities. The average age was 29.73 ($SD = 6.96$, range 18 – 69). For sexual identity, approximately 53.6% self-identified as bisexual, 21.1% identified as pansexual, 19.6% identified as queer, 1.9% identified as fluid, 1.9% had sexual identities that were not listed, 1% identified as asexual, and 1% identified as two-spirit. For gender identity, approximately 80.9% identified as cisgender women, 8.1% identified as non-binary femme, 4.3% identified as genderqueer, 2.4% identified as transgender women, 1.9% as intersex women, 1% identified as two-spirit, 1% identified as a sexual identity not listed, and 0.5% identified as intersex femme. Regarding racial/ethnic identity, approximately 38.8% identified as Black/African American, 30.1% identified being Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin, 26.3% identified as being mixed racially/ethnically, 15.3% identified as Asian/Asian American, 9.1% identified as White Latinx, 7.7% identified as a racial/ethnic identity not listed, and 2.4% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. For highest level of education, approximately 37.8% reported having a master's degree, 22.5% had a bachelor's degree, 13.4% had a doctoral degree, 11% had some college or no degree, 7.7% had a high school degree or equivalent, 3.3% has an

associate degree, 2.4% had less than a high school diploma, and 1.9% had a professional degree. Regarding relationship status, 35.9% reported their status as dating, 30.1% reported being single, 25.8% identified as being married, in a domestic partnership, or civil union, 4.3% had a relationship status that wasn't listed, 3.3% were divorced/separated, and 0.5% identified as widowed. When asked about their level of outness, 37.3% said they were out to some friends only, 22.5% identified as being out to specific people and were allowed to write in who, 17.2% reported being out to everyone, 12.9% said they were out to both friends and family, 6.7% identified as not out, and 3.3% said they were out to some family only. Approximately 86.6% of participants during the time of the study lived in the United States, 7.7% were currently living in Canada, and 5.7% lived in a U.S. territory.

Procedures

Study approval was obtained from the researcher's institutional review board. Based on Buchanan and Smith's (1999) suggested procedures, data was collected using an anonymous online survey. Participant recruitment was done via snowball sampling through social media websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, and Reddit, and listservs associated with LGBTQIA+ groups. Recruitment posts stated that this was a study on bisexual+ women of color/ gender non-conforming people of color who identified as femme and identity affirmation. Potential participants were offered a chance to enter into a raffle to win one of fifty \$25 gift cards.

For this study, there was a final total of 209 participants, who met the study's qualifications of self-identifying as bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.) or have the potential to be attracted sexually, emotionally, and/or romantically to more than

one gender identity; being a cisgender or transgender woman of color or nonbinary/gender nonconforming femme of color; being 18 years old or older; and at the time of the study, currently living in the United States, Canada, or U.S. territories. Data were initially collected from 405 participants but participants were removed for being under 18 years old ($n = 19$), identifying with a sexual identity was that is not bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.; $n = 41$), not identifying as a woman/non-binary femme ($n = 12$), not a person of color ($n = 14$), not currently living in the United States or Canada during the time of the survey ($n = 1$), did not complete more than two measures of the survey ($n = 80$), did not meet at least three out of five validity checks ($n = 19$), were believed to be bots based on online survey recommendations ($n = 9$; Griffin et al., 2021), and for being an univariate outlier ($n = 1$; Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Parent, 2013; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The final sample size was 209 participants, ranging in age between 18 and 69 with a mean age of 29.73 ($SD = 7.0$). Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Measures

Demographic Measures

The demographic variables of interest included racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, age (years), geographic location, the highest level of education completed, household income, and whether participants considered themselves being out and to whom.

Experiences of Bisexual Microaggressions

Experiences of bisexual microaggressions were measured using a modified version of the Bisexual Microaggression Scale for Women which consists of 34 items

that measure bisexual dismissal, mistrust, sexualization, social exclusion, and denial of complexity (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). Examples of items include "Someone suggested my [bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid] identity is a phase" and "Someone asked me to prove that I'm [bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid] by discussing my sexual history." Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Every day*) with 7 being N/A based on the last six months. The score is averaged with "not applicable" scores either excluded or coded as "0" before averaging all items. The higher the score, the more bisexual specific microaggression the participant has experienced in the last six months. In a sample of primarily White cisgender bisexual women (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), the entire scale's reported alpha was .97. The Microaggression Scale has good concurrent validity and was strongly positively correlated with both versions of the Anti-Bisexual Experience Scale (ABES): Heterosexual version ($r = .65, p < .001$) and the ABES-Lesbian/Gay version ($r = .65, p < .001$). The alpha for this study was .98.

Bisexual-Specific Microaffirmations

Bisexual-specific microaffirmations were measured using the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), which consists of 16 items that measure bisexual acceptance, social support, recognition of bisexuality, and emotional support. Examples of items include "Someone accepted my being bi without any questions" and "Someone was happy for me regardless of the sex or gender of my partner(s)". Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Every day*), with 7 being N/A based on the last six months. The score is averaged with "not applicable" scores either excluded or coded as "0" before averaging

all items. The higher the score, the more bisexual-specific microaffirmation the participant has experienced in the last six months. Tell us about the subscales here. In a sample of primarily White cisgender bisexual women (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), the entire scale's reported alpha was .92. The BMSFW also had good concurrent validity ($r = .24, p < .001$) with the Bisexual Identity Inventory Identity Affirmation subscale (Paul et al., 2014). The subscales of the BMSFW, except for the Recognition of Bisexuality and Biphobia subscale, were also positively correlated with the Affirmation subscale: Acceptance ($r = .30, p < .001$), Social Support ($r = .18, p < .001$), and Emotional Support ($r = .29, p < .001$). The alpha for this study for the entire scale was .93.

Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem

Racial/ethnic collective self-esteem was measured using the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), consisting of 16 items that focus on participants' positive feelings about being part of their racial/ethnic community. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale was designed to be adapted for any social group. It will be used twice in this study to measure bisexual+ collective self-esteem. Examples of items include "I am a worthy member of the social groups that I belong to" and "I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do". Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Applicable item responses are reversed scored as necessary and averaged, with higher scores indicating more collective self-esteem. The Collective Self-Esteem Scale reported alpha was .85 in a sample of predominantly White cisgender sexual minority women participants when looking at sexual identity collective self-esteem (Mason et al., 2015). For adolescent African American girls, the reported alpha was .79 when looking at African Americans' racial

collective self-esteem (Barrie et al., 2016). In terms of convergent validity, the Collective Self-Esteem scale was moderately correlated ($r = .36, p < .001$; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a measure of personal, or individual, self-esteem. The alpha for this study was .82.

Social Appearance Anxiety

Social appearance anxiety was measured using the Social Appearance Anxiety Scale (SAAS; Hart et al., 2008), which consists of 16 items that measure anxiety about one's overall appearance instead of specific aspects of one's appearance (Hart et al., 2008). Examples of items include "I feel comfortable with the way I appear to others" and "I am concerned that I have missed out on opportunities because of my appearance". Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Extremely*), with higher scores indicating more social appearance anxiety. In a study looking at Canadian gay and bisexual men of color, the reported alpha was .96 (Hart et al., 2015). This same study (Hart et al., 2015) reported that the SAAS was strongly correlated with body image dissatisfaction for the Male Body Attitude Scale: Muscularity ($r = .49, p < .003$) and Low Body Fat subscales ($r = .51, p < .003$). The SAAS was also positively correlated with depression ($r = .31, p < .003$) and anxiety ($r = .42, p < .003$) symptoms through the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale and negatively correlated with Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support ($r = -.31, p < .003$; Hart et al., 2008) for perceived availability of support from friends and family. The alpha for this study was .95.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among main study variables are shown in Table 2. Skewness and kurtosis were examined to assess significant violations

of normality in the data and found to be within acceptable parameters (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). Data were also examined for any violations of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity and they were found to not significantly influence the models being tested. There was no multicollinearity between variables. Demographic variables such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, education, relationship status, and outness were correlated with the outcome variable social appearance anxiety and none were found that would influence the model being tested, so no covariates were necessary (Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). For Social Appearance Anxiety, the mean score was moderate ($M = 44.24$, $SD = 13.80$) indicating that participants experienced an average amount of social anxiety around their appearance. For Bisexual Microaffirmation, the mean score was low ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.22$), indicating that participants had fewer experiences of bisexual specific microaffirmations. For Bisexual Microaggressions, the mean score was also low ($M = 1.39$, $SD = 1.11$), indicating low experiences of bisexual microaggressions for participants. For Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem, the mean score was high ($M = 5.02$, $SD = .69$), indicating that participants had positive racial/ethnic self-identity based on the value they placed on their racial/ethnic community.

Table 2 shows that Social Appearance Anxiety was negatively correlated with Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem and Bisexual Microaffirmation, respectively. Higher racial/ethnic collective self-esteem and more experiences of bisexual microaffirmations were associated with less social appearance anxiety. Table 2 also shows Social Appearance Anxiety was positively correlated with Bisexual Microaggressions. As experiences of bisexual microaggressions increased, there was also

an increase in participants' anxiety around their appearance. Bisexual Microaffirmation was also found to be positively correlated with Bisexual Microaggressions. As participants experienced an increase in their experiences of bisexual microaffirmations, they also experienced an increase in their experiences of bisexual specific microaggressions. Bisexual Microaggressions were also negatively correlated with Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem, meaning when participants reported more experiences of microaggressions, they reported lower racial/ethnic collective self-esteem.

To test Hypothesis 1, that the relationship between Bisexual Microaggression and Social Appearance Anxiety would be moderated by Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem, Hayes's PROCESS model for moderation analysis (Hayes, 2021) was used to test the model shown in Figure 5 and Table 4. As seen in Table 4, the interaction between Bisexual Microaggression and Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem was not significant ($\beta = .40, p = .78$) which indicates that Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem did not moderate the relationship between Bisexual Microaggression and Social Appearance Anxiety. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported

To test Hypothesis 2, that the relationship between Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety would be significantly moderated by Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem, Hayes's PROCESS model for moderation analysis (Hayes, 2021) was used to test the model shown in Figure 6 and Table 4. As seen in Table 4, The interaction between Bisexual Microaffirmations and Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem was not significant ($\beta = -.32, p = .78$) which indicates that Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem did not moderate the relationship between Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Post-Hoc Analyses

A series of exploratory one-way ANOVAs was run to explore whether there were differences by demographic variables on the current study's main variables. These analyses were conducted to see if there were any differences in bisexual microaffirmations, bisexual microaggressions, and racial/ethnic collective self-esteem across groups based on these demographic variables: sexual identity, gender identity, racial/ethnic identity, education level, relationship status, outness, and current location. Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem was the only main variable that had significant within group differences for two of the demographic variables: regions of the United States that the participants were living in and education levels as seen in Table 5. No other analyses were significant.

For the Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem Scale, there were statistically significant differences in mean scores between participants from different regions of the United States at the $p < .05$ level in mean scores for the four regions: $F(3, 169) = 2.98, p = .03$. Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual difference in mean scores between the groups was quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was .05. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score from participants from the West region had higher scores of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem ($M = 5.38, SD = .52$) than participants from the Northeast region ($M = 4.96, SD = .75$). Participants from the West region also had higher scores on racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than participants from the Midwest region ($M = 4.95, SD = .67$).

When looking at within-group differences between education levels, there was a difference in mean scores at the $p < .05$ level for five of the levels: $F(7, 193) = 8.14, p$

$<.001$. The actual differences in mean scores, despite statistical significance, were small. Participants who completed high school ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .53$) had lower scores for racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than participants who had a bachelor's ($M = 4.94$, $SD = .63$), a master's ($M = 5.28$, $SD = .56$), or a doctoral degree ($M = 5.34$, $SD = .69$). Participants with a bachelor's degree reported more racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than participants who only completed high school ($M = 4.33$, $SD = .53$). For participants with a master's degree, they reported more racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than those who completed high school or those who had some college ($M = 4.76$, $SD = .77$). Participants who had a doctorate reported more racial/ethnic collective self-esteem compared to those who completed high school or some college.

Discussion

This study aimed to explore whether racial/ethnic collective self-esteem operated as a protective factor in the relationships between bisexual specific discrimination factors, microaffirmations, and society-based anxiety around a bisexual+ women of color's appearances. Findings from the current study suggest that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem is not a protective factor for bisexual+ women of color when considering the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. The current study also suggest that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem does not influence the relationship between bisexual microaffirmation and social appearance anxiety. In addition, the study provides insight into differences between participants' demographic groups and their degree of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem that they experience.

Hypothesis 1, that the relationship between bisexual microaggression and social appearance anxiety would be moderated by racial/ethnic collective self-esteem, was not

supported. The findings of this current study differed from findings by Barrie et al. (2016), Dueñas and Gloria (2017), and Kim and Lee (2011) that found racial/ethnic collective self-esteem was a protective factor in the relationship between discrimination and psychological well-being in racially and ethnically marginalized individuals. However, these previous studies focused on racial/ethnic collective self-esteem (Barrie et al., 2016; Dueñas & Gloria, 2017; Kim & Lee, 2011) and did not address sexual identity related discrimination or participants' other intersecting identities. As stated by Ghabrial and Ross (2018), bisexual+ women of color are at greater risk of experiencing compounded stressors related to their marginalized identities that make it difficult for them to disclose their sexual identity. Disclosure may potentially be harder in their racial/ethnic community if they anticipate binegativity and/or heterosexist responses (Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). It could be that, for the participants of this study, racial/ethnic collective self-esteem may protect them from racial/ethnic discrimination but may simultaneously worsen anticipation about binegativity from the community they rely on the most.

The current study did find correlational relationships between racial/ethnic collective self-esteem and bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. Participants that reported higher levels of racial/ethnic collective self were more likely to report fewer experiences of bisexual microaggressions. Participants that reported high levels of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem were also more likely to have less social anxiety about their appearance. These findings may be explained by Bostwick and colleagues (2021) who proposed that bisexual women may be primed to anticipate sexual identity rejection by negative social and cultural messages surrounding bisexuality. This

rejection sensitivity was found to mediate the relationship between harassment/discrimination and anxiety/depression symptoms (Bostwick et al., 2021; Dyar et al., 2019). Participants in the current study might have had high levels of bisexual rejection sensitivity that were not measured but might be negating any protective buffer that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem might have provides. Similar to what Lim and Hewitt (2018) found, the participants of this study, bisexual+ women of marginalized racial/ethnic backgrounds, may have experienced tension between their bisexual+ identity and their racial/ethnic identity where they may have experienced binegativity within both the LGBTQ+ community and their racial/ethnic community. In addition, Paul's (2021) findings suggest that bisexual+ women of color may have fewer protective buffers against internalizing bisexual discrimination than they do against racial discrimination. Lack of protective buffers, the tension between their marginalized identities, and bisexual-specific rejection sensitivity may be factors impacting the relationship between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety in a way that cannot be moderated by racial/ethnic collective self-esteem. More research on the intersection of identities of bisexual+ women of color and rejection sensitivity needs to be conducted.

Hypothesis 2, that the relationship between bisexual microaffirmation and social appearance anxiety would be significantly moderated by racial/ethnic collective self-esteem, was not supported. Salim and colleagues (2019) proposed that microaffirmations may not be sufficient factor to have as a positive impact on mental wellbeing when bisexual individuals are experiencing binegativity. Racial/ethnic collective self-esteem and bisexual microaffirmations were positively correlated in this study, meaning that as participants had more experiences of bisexual microaffirmations, they also had higher

racial/ethnic collective self-esteem. Despite this, the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and racial/ethnic collective self-esteem was weak (see Table 2). As Salim et al. (2019) suggested, some items on the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women such as “Someone acknowledged my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/etc. without making a big deal out of it,” may not truly be a measure of bisexual identity affirmation and may only measure for an absence of binegative experiences. This may explain weak the relationship between bisexual microaffirmations and racial/ethnic collective self-esteem and perhaps why the interaction between bisexual microaffirmation and racial/ethnic collective esteem was not significant in predicting social appearance anxiety.

Findings from the exploratory ANOVA showed that there was significant within group differences in racial/ethnic collective self-esteem by U.S. region and by highest level of education completed. More specifically, participants from the West region reported higher collective self-esteem than participants in the Northeast and the Midwest. Data for this study was collected in the latter half of 2021. Based on a 2020 Presidential Election Results map (Goddard, 2020), the region that this study defines as West (consisting of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, and Washington) had the Democratic party lead in electoral votes while the Midwest (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota) was led by the Republican party in electoral votes. However, the Northeast region (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island Vermont, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) also had the Democratic party lead in electoral

votes during the election. Though the mean scores for racial/ethnic collective self-esteem were significantly different when looked at by these different regions that the participants were living in, perhaps participants from the Midwest and Northeast regions have different experiences with finding racial/ethnic communities to build stronger racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than compared to participants in the West region. Differences in scores at the regional level may be due to legislation happening in those regions that may or may not have impacted racially/ethnically marginalized groups. More research on marginalized sexual identity populations should explore potential regional differences and political influences on sexual identity and racial/ethnic discriminations and affirmations for LGBTQ+ people of color.

There were also significant within-group differences for mean scores of Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem by participants' highest level of education. Participants with a high school degree or equivalent had lower scores of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than participants with a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. Participants who had some college experience had lower scores of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem than those with a master's or a doctoral degree. This may mean that participants may have experienced more racial/ethnic collective self-esteem in higher education either through their awareness of being perceived as other or because they were able to expand their racial/ethnic community as they furthered their education (Lige et al., 2017). Further understanding of differences in collective self-esteem based on the level of education completed for bisexual+ women of color should be looked into in the future.

Future Directions for Research

The current study initially hypothesized that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem would be a protective buffer between bisexual microaggressions and social appearance anxiety. This study also hypothesized that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem would have a relationship with bisexual microaffirmations to predict social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color. However, findings from the current study suggest that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem may not be an adequate protective factor between bisexual+ discrimination and participant's anxiety around being negatively evaluated due to their appearance by others. Therefore, future studies should explore the intersection of racial/ethnic identity and sexual identity for bisexual+ women of color. Just as bisexual+ individuals in general have their own unique experiences of discrimination that differs from their lesbian and gay counterparts (Nadal et al., 2016), bisexual+ women of color have their own unique experiences of bisexual discrimination that intersects with their racial/ethnic identity and gender identity.

Future research should also explore positive intersectionality and the ways that multiple intersecting marginalized identities may provide unexpected protective buffers. Recent studies that have looked at potential affirming factors for bisexual+ individuals have either focused on predominantly White bisexual cisgender individuals or predominantly White bisexual women (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Dyar & London, 2018; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Flanders et al., 2017; Salim et al., 2019; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020). At the time of this study, there has only been one study that sought to make a scale that was specifically created to look at identity affirmation with queer people of color (Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020). Also, more qualitative research should be done with bisexual+ women of color to understand the factors that need to be considered

before creating possible assessments for counselors and mental health professionals. This would make sure that the voices and experiences of participants are being highlighted. It would also aid in making sure that future assessments are closely aligned with the perspectives of this multiple marginalized population and not being viewed through Western lens or the lens of White individuals in the LGBTQ+ or heterosexual community.

Implications for Counselors

The findings of this current study have implications for counselors and other mental health professionals. As previous studies have suggested (Bostwick et al., 2019; Cyrus, 2017; Ghabrial, 2019; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018; Lim & Hewitt, 2018; Logie & Rwigema, 2014; Sarno et al., 2015; Sutter & Perrin, 2016), some LGBTQ+ individuals of color may experience tension between their racial/ethnic identity and their sexual identity. Counselors and other mental health professionals who work with LGBTQ+ clients need to consider how their racial/ethnic community may be a protective factor against discrimination such as internalized racism but may provide no protective buffers against or may even escalate the impact of bisexual+ specific discriminations for bisexual+ women of color (Paul, 2021). Even if a person may not have directly experienced bisexual specific discrimination, the stigma around bisexuality and assumption of heterosexism in communities of color, especially from friends and close family members, may have bisexual and other plurisexual women of color internalizing binegativity (Mason et al., 2015). Therefore, more resources and safe spaces free of binegativity and gendered racism should be created by and for bisexual+ women of color.

With this current study's finding that racial/ethnic collective self-esteem may not have moderated the relationship between bisexual microaffirmation or bisexual microaggressions, respectively, with social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color because of tension between their sexual identity and their racial/ethnic identity, it is important for counselors to understand intersectional microaggressions and their impact on psychological well-being (Bostwick et al., 2021). On an individual level, counselors and other mental health professionals should work with bisexual+ women of color to explore and cultivate relationships that support their intersecting identities (Flanders, Shuler, et al., 2019). On a systems level, mental health professionals should also work with racial/ethnic marginalized communities to provide education around sexual identities and the validity of bisexuality. By having more psychoeducation around sexual and gender identities, the chances of internalized binegativity experienced in their racial/ethnic community may decrease and reduce the level of internalized stigma for bisexual+ women of color. Counselors can also work with bisexual and other LGBTQ+ organizations and help these groups understand the negative health related outcomes that are associated with bisexual women of color experiencing intersectional microaggressions due to internalized discrimination (Bostwick et al., 2021; Paul, 2021).

Limitations

This study had several limitations. As an online survey, there are risks that the sample may not be made up fully of individual participants and instead, may have bots trying to imitate real participants (Griffin et al., 2021). There is also the limitation of the sample not being representative of bisexual+ women of color in the United States, Canada, and U.S. territories, especially since distribution of participants were mostly in

the United States and not well distributed throughout the regions. Also, the majority of participants had a bachelor's degree or higher, potentially indicating a lack of diversity regarding socioeconomic backgrounds of participants. Though this study strived to have participants who identified as transgender women or femmes, another limitation was that the majority of participants identified as cisgender women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study adds onto understanding of the intersecting identities of bisexual+ women of color and their unique positive and negative experiences related to their marginalized identities. This study found that positive feelings towards one's racial/ethnic community did not protect participants against binegative experiences when it came to their social anxiety about their appearance. These positive racial/ethnic feelings also did not affect the strength of the relationship between experiences of bisexual microaffirmation and social appearance anxiety for bisexual+ women of color. Though more research is still needed, the findings of this study help further highlight the need to explore protective factors that focus on the intersection of sexual, racial/ethnic, and gender identities for bisexual+ women of color.

Study 3:**Psychometric Properties of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women in a Sample of Bisexual and Other Plurisexual Women of Color**

Rowe (2008) defined microaffirmations as "small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed" (p. 46). Essentially, microaffirmations are subtle acts of acceptance and validation (Rowe, 2008).

Microaffirmations, and their frequency, are currently constructs that LGBTQ+ research has begun to explore (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019; Flanders et al., 2015; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019; Salim et al., 2019; Sterzing et al., 2018; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020).

Microaffirmations are a possible protective factor against minority stress and other discriminations LGBTQ+ individuals face (Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Flanders et al., 2015; Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019; Salim et al., 2019; Sterzing et al., 2018; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020). Flanders and colleagues (2016) further suggested that microaffirmations may decrease anxiety and depression for bisexual individuals. Prior research has proposed that for bisexual-specific microaffirmations, there may be a relationship between experiences of positive bisexual interactions and the reduction of anxiety and depression for bisexual individuals (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Flanders, Anderson, et al., 2019; Salim et al., 2019).

The Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) was a community-based scale. The researchers actively sought the involvement of bisexual women during each stage of the scale's development (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). The scale was initially developed with a sample of 323 bisexual+ women and individuals who

related to the label of “woman” from Canada and the United States (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). Of the 323 participants, 69.3% identified as bisexual, 79.9% as cisgender, and 84.8% as White. The Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women measures acceptance of bisexual identity, social support, recognition of bisexuality and biphobia, and emotional support. At the time of this study, only DeLucia and Smith (2021) and Salim and colleagues (2019) have assessed the measure outside of its initial development. More research is needed to understand the scale’s generalizability and further understand bisexual-specific microaffirmation. This study will examine the reliability and validity of the BMSFW in a sample of predominantly bisexual+ women of color.

Social Stressors, Bisexual Microaggressions, and Race

Flanders and colleagues proposed that societal endorsement of bisexual stigma creates stressors on the institutional, community, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels. According to Arriaga and Parent (2019), bisexual individuals are at a heightened risk of discrimination from both their heterosexual and gay and lesbian counterparts due to societal misconceptions about bisexuality and other plurisexual identities. Bostwick and Hequembourg (2014) and Nadal et al. (2016) suggested that bisexual individuals are generally not stereotyped or microaggressed in the same way that gay men and lesbians are stereotyped. Instead, bisexual-specific microaggressions invalidate bisexual people's sexual identity and credibility. A cognitive and emotional burden is placed on them, potentially putting them at risk for adverse mental health outcomes (Bostwick & Hequembourg, 2014).

The shared and compounded stressors that are perceived to be connected with adverse mental health outcomes experienced by individuals with both bisexual and ethnoracially marginalized identities are also essential to explore (Flanders et al., 2015; Ghabrial & Ross, 2018). One participant in a focus group of 35 young bisexual women reported that their ethno-racial identity and their bisexual identity intersected in ways where they felt that they could not express their whole selves (Flanders et al., 2015). The literature on queer women of color is limited and Flanders and colleagues (2015) proposed that this may be because queer spaces often promote white queer bodies. The burden on bisexual individuals noted by Bostwick and Hequembourg (2014) may be compounded by ethno-racial discrimination that ethnoracially marginalized individuals and communities experience. After a content analysis of 324 articles, Ghabrial and Ross (2018) reported that individuals who are both bisexual and part of racially marginalized groups experience shared and compounded stressors due to these marginalized identities. Ghabrial (2019) suggested that bisexual women of color may feel disconnected or have feelings of not belonging to either their racial or sexual identities. They (Ghabrial, 2019) suggested that this population may feel forced to choose either their racial or bisexual identity and present with one of the identities to avoid harm.

Bipositive Events, Bisexual Affirmation, and Protective Factors

Over the last decade, there has been a recent focus on positive identity and affirming experiences for bisexual and other plurisexual individuals (Craney et al., 2018; Dyar & London, 2018; Flanders, 2015; Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019; Flanders et al., 2017; Galupo et al., 2019; Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020; Paul et al., 2014; Salim et al., 2019). For example, after looking at the 28-day daily dairies of 91 predominantly

White, cisgender, bisexual individuals, Flanders and colleagues (2017) used grounded theory to understand young bisexual and non-monosexual individuals' experiences perceived as affirming to their sexual identity. Findings highlighted the importance of community or peer support in the affirmation and flourishing of an individual's bisexual identity. This finding builds upon Flanders's (2015) findings that suggest that positive identity events may decrease daily stress and anxiety for bisexual individuals.

Understanding how positive events can decrease anxiety and stress can further help us understand factors that promote positive mental health for bisexual individuals.

Dyar and London (2018) also added to the literature on bi-positive events. They suggested that these events may be important protective factors for better mental health and wellbeing in bisexual individuals (Dyar & London, 2018). In a sample of 180 White middle-class bisexual cisgender women between the ages of 20 and 25, findings suggested that frequently experiencing more bipositive events, both interpersonal and intrapersonal, predicted a cumulative decrease in proximal stressors. The study also suggested that multiple bipositive events were associated with increase in bisexual identification and affirmation as well as a decrease in anxiety and depression (Dyar & London, 2018). This finding proposed that bipositive events may positively influence the mental health of bisexual individuals and decrease the internalization of binegativity (Dyar and London, 2018).

Flanders, LeBreton, and Robinson (2019) expanded on the literature on bipositive events by developing a scale to measure bisexual specific microaffirmation, the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale for Women (BMSFW). The completed scale was tested with a sample of 323 predominantly White bisexual cisgender women (Flanders, LeBreton, &

Robinson, 2019). Initial assessment of the scale found that though the BMSFW does measure positive aspects of bisexual identity, it may measure a different construct of bisexual affirmation than the BII Identity Affirmation subscale (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). Salim and colleagues (2019) then used the BMSFW with 89 predominantly White bisexual cisgender women in a longitudinal study and found that overall scores for bisexual microaffirmations were not related to a decrease in symptoms of depression and suicidality (Salim et al., 2019). Findings also revealed that there was no significant relationship between microaffirmations and happiness in the participants. Although these findings may suggest that microaffirmations may not be helpful, it is also possible that the study was underpowered and needed a larger sample size to detect statistically significant relationships (Salim et al., 2019). Subsequently, DeLucia and Smith (2021) used the BMSFW and found that greater levels of being out to mental health providers predicted greater microaffirmation experiences with 274 predominantly White bisexual+ individuals who had seen a mental health provider in the last twelve months. This suggest that for these participants, their mental health providers may have been more intentional about providing bisexual microaffirmations when they were aware of the participants bisexual identity. Neither DeLucia and Smith (2021) nor Salim and colleagues (2019) had a large enough sample of participants of color when using the BMFSW, therefore it's still unclear on whether this scale is sufficient to use with bisexual+ women of color, a population with intersecting marginalized identities.

The Current Study

Currently, no research has been found that has assessed the BMSFW with bisexual participants who have racially and/or ethnically marginalized identities. The few

studies that have used the BMSFW have been with predominantly White, cisgender, bisexual women samples, limiting the findings' generalizability to similar populations. We need findings that can be generalized to racial, sexual, and gender marginalized populations (DeLucia & Smith, 2021; Flanders, LeBreton, Robinson, 2019; Salim et al., 2019).

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the reliability and validity of bisexual+ women of color's scores on the BMSFW. The primary research questions were: 1) What are the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal consistency reliabilities of the BMSFW when used with a sample of bisexual and other plurisexual identifying women and non-binary femmes of color? 2) Is the factor structure of the BMSFW consistent with that found by Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019) when used with a sample of bi+ women of color? Hypothesis one is that the BMSFW will have convergent validity with the BII Identity Affirmation subscale (Paul et al., 2014), the Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale (Brief ABES; Dyar et al., 2019), and the Queer People of Color Affirmation scale (QPIAS; Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020). Hypothesis two is that the BMSFW will demonstrate discriminant validity when assessed against the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form Impression Management subscale (BIDR-16; Hart et al., 2015). No hypothesis about the factor structure was made.

Methods

Participants

The final sample size was 209 bisexual+ women with marginalized racial/ethnic identities. The average age was 29.73 (SD = 6.96, range 18 – 69). For sexual identity,

approximately 53.6% self-identified as bisexual, 21.1% identified as pansexual, 19.6% identified as queer, 1.9% identified as fluid, 1.9% had sexual identities that were not listed, 1% identified as asexual, and 1% identified as two-spirit. For gender identity, approximately 80.9% identified as cisgender women, 8.1% identified as non-binary femme, 4.3% identified as genderqueer, 2.4% identified as transgender women, 1.9% as intersex women, 1% identified as two-spirit, 1% identified as a sexual identity not listed, and 0.5% identified as intersex femme. Regarding racial/ethnic identity, approximately 38.8% identified as Black/African American, 30.1% identified being Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin, 26.3% identified as being mixed racially/ethnically, 15.3% identified as Asian/Asian American, 9.1% identified as White Latinx, 7.7% identified as a racial/ethnic identity not listed, and 2.4% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. For highest level of education, approximately 37.8% reported having a master's degree, 22.5% had a bachelor's degree, 13.4% had a doctoral degree, 11% had some college or no degree, 7.7% had a high school degree or equivalent, 3.3% has an associate degree, 2.4% had less than a high school diploma, and 1.9% had a professional degree. Regarding relationship status, 35.9% reported their status as dating, 30.1% reported being single, 25.8% identified as being married, in a domestic partnership, or civil union, 4.3% had a relationship status that wasn't listed, 3.3% were divorced/separated, and 0.5% identified as widowed. When asked about their level of outness, 37.3% said they were out to some friends only, 22.5% identified as being out to specific people and were allowed to write in who, 17.2% reported being out to everyone, 12.9% said they were out to both friends and family, 6.7% identified as not out, and 3.3% said they were out to some family only. Approximately 86.6% of participants during the

time of the study lived in the United States, 7.7% were currently living in Canada, and 5.7% lived in a U.S. territory.

Procedure

This study was approved by UMSL's institutional review board. Based on suggested procedures from Buchanan and Smith (1999), data was collected using an anonymous online survey. Participants were recruited through social media websites (Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, etc.) and also through listservs associated with LGBTQIA+ groups and/or research. Snowball recruitment was used by asking those who participated to share with their personal and professional networks. Potential participants were offered a chance to enter into a raffle to win one of fifty \$25 gift cards.

This study initially collected data from 405 participants. The call for participants asked for individuals who identified as bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.) or have the potential to be attracted sexually, emotionally, and/or romantically to more than one gender identity, cisgender or transgender women of color or nonbinary/gender nonconforming femmes of color who were 18 years old or older, and currently living in the United States, Canada, or U.S. territories during the time they participated in this study. Participants were removed for being under 18 years old ($n = 19$), identifying with a sexual identity that is not bisexual+ (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.; $n = 41$), not identifying as a woman/non-binary femme ($n = 12$), not a person of color ($n = 14$), not currently living in the United States or Canada during the time of the survey ($n = 1$), did not complete more than two measures of the survey ($n = 80$), did not meet at least three out of five validity checks ($n = 19$), were believed to be bots based on online survey recommendations ($n = 9$; Griffin et al., 2021), and for being an univariate outlier ($n = 1$;

Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Parent, 2013; Tabachnik & Fidell, 2001). The final sample size was 209 participants, ranging in age between 18 and 69 with a mean age of 29.73 ($SD = 7.0$). Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Measures

Demographic Measures

The demographic variables of interest included ethno-racial identity, sexual orientation, age (years), geographic location, the highest level of education completed, household income, and outness. Participant outness were assessed, as greater outness has been associated with increased mental health for bisexual individuals (Brewster et al., 2013; DeLucia & Smith, 2021).

Bisexual Specific Microaffirmations

Bisexual-specific microaffirmations were measured using the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women, which consists of 16 items that measure via subscales bisexual acceptance, social support, recognition of bisexuality, and emotional support (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). Examples of items include “Someone accepted my being bi without any questions” and “Someone was happy for me regardless of the sex or gender of my partner(s).” Each item is rated on an 8-point Likert-type scale from 0 (*Never*) to 6 (*Every day*), with 7 being *N/A*. The score is averaged with “not applicable” scores either excluded or coded as 0 before averaging all items. The higher the score, the more bisexual-specific microaffirmations the participant has experienced in the last six months. In a sample of primarily White cisgender bisexual women (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019), the full scale's reported alpha was .92. The reported alphas for the subscales ranged from .78 to .91 (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). The

BMSFW also had good congruent validity ($r = .24, p < .001$) with the Bisexual Identity Inventory (BII) Identity Affirmation subscale (Paul et al., 2014). The subscales of the BMSFW, except for the Recognition of Bisexuality and Biphobia subscale, were also positively correlated with the BII Identity Affirmation subscale: Acceptance ($r = .30, p < .001$), Social Support ($r = .18, p < .001$), and Emotional Support ($r = .29, p < .001$). Two exploratory factor analyses were run, the first for factor extraction and the second with the reduced items, leading to four factors: the subscales acceptance, recognition of bisexuality and biphobia, social support, and emotional support (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019). The alpha for this study was .93 for the total scale. The alpha for the Acceptance subscale was .87, .86 for the Social Support subscale, .85 for the Recognition of Bisexuality and Biphobia subscale, and the Emotional Support subscale had an alpha of .82

Bisexual Identity Inventory (BII) Scale Identity Affirmation Subscale

Bisexual identity affirmation was assessed using the 6-item BII Identity Affirmation subscale (Paul et al., 2014). The BII Identity Affirmation subscale measures comfort and pride with one's bisexual identity (Paul et al., 2014). The BII Identity Affirmation subscale uses a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Examples of items include "I am proud to be bisexual" and "I feel freedom with people of different gender identities." The average is used to find the subscale score, with higher scores indicating greater levels of Identity Affirmation. BII Identity Affirmation subscale scores were associated positively with the likelihood of being out among predominantly White cisgender bisexual individuals and correlated negatively with anticipated binegativity, internalized binegativity, and

illegitimacy of bisexuality (Paul et al., 2014). In another study using predominantly White bisexual cisgender women, identity affirmation was associated negatively with internalized binegativity, sexual identity uncertainty, and rejection sensitivity (Dyar & London, 2018). The BII Identity Affirmation subscale was reported to show high internal consistency among predominantly White bisexual cisgender individuals ($\alpha = .93$; Paul et al., 2014). In a different study with predominantly White bisexual cisgender women, $\alpha = .69$ (Dyar & London, 2018). The alpha for this study was .88.

Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale (Brief ABES)

Experiences of perceived prejudice based on sexual orientation identity across the domains of sexual orientation instability, sexual irresponsibility, and interpersonal hostility was assessed using the 8-item Brief ABES (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Dyar et al., 2019). Examples of items include “People have not taken my sexual orientation seriously because I am bisexual” and “People have assumed that I will cheat in a relationship because I am bisexual.” The Brief ABES uses a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 6 (*Almost all of the time*). The Brief ABES is given twice to explore perceived prejudice from the heterosexual community and then again to measure perceived prejudice from the lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) community. However, the Brief ABES has been found to have similar scores when the scores for these two groups are compared (Brewster et al., 2013; Craney et al., 2018; Dyar et al., 2014) and can even be given just once if needed (Brewster et al., 2014). Brief ABES scores were positively associated with awareness of bisexual stigma and negatively associated with impression management with predominantly White bisexual cisgender women (Dyar et al., 2019) and predominantly White transgender-inclusive samples of plurisexual adults (Mitchell et

al., 2015). The Brief ABES had a high internal consistency of $\alpha = .85$ for general hostility from heterosexual individuals and $\alpha = .87$ for general hostility from LG individuals with a sample of predominantly White bisexual cisgender women (Dyar et al., 2019).

Subscales of the Brief ABES were closely correlated with subscale scores on the ABES ($r = .94-.98$; Dryar et al., 2019). The Brief ABES was found to be reliable and valid measure of binegative experiences with convergent validity similar to the full ABES (Dryar et al. 2019). The alpha for this study was .90.

Queer People of Color Identity Affirmation

Experiences of racial and sexual identity as sources of empowerment and resilience was assessed using the 12-item Queer People of Color Identity Affirmation Scale (QPIAS; Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020). The QPIAS has two subscales, Identity-Based Growth and Identity Cohesion, and uses a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Very strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Very strongly agree*). Examples of items include "I feel badly about being both LGBQA+ and an ethnic/racial minority" and "I derive power from my identity as an LGBQA+ ethnic/racial minority." Items are totaled by subscale with the range of scores for Identity-Based Growth being 7-49 and the range of scores for Identity Cohesion being 5-35. The QPIAS has had a good internal consistency of $\alpha = .87$ with a diverse group of 322 ethno-racial sexual minority individuals (Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020). The QPIAS was found to have good convergent validity, correlating with the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-Revised (Gucciardi et al., 2011), the Personal Progress Scale (Johnson et al., 2005), Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977), Conflicts of Allegiances subscale of the Culture and LGB Identity Scale (Sarno et al., 2015), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Identity Scale (Mohr &

Kendra, 2011), and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts et al., 1999). The QPIAS was found to have good convergent validity in a sample of 703 predominantly bisexual and queer people of color, correlating with the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale-Revised ($r = .344$), the Personal Progress Scale ($r = .453$), Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale ($r = -.181$), the Conflicts of Allegiance Scale ($r = -.436$), all the subscales of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Identity Scale ($r = .601$), and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure ($r = .405$). The alpha for the total score for this study was .88.

Impression Management

Impression management experiences was assessed using the 8-item Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding Short Form Impression Management subscale (BIDR-16; Hart et al., 2015). The Impression Management subscale of the BIDR-16 uses a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not true*) to 7 (*Very true*). Items are scored by summing the responses with higher scores indicating stronger impression management. Examples of items include “I have not always been honest with myself” and “I never cover up my mistakes”. The BIDR-16 Impression Management subscale (Hart et al., 2015) has been assessed with a sample of 708 predominantly women from the United States. Hart et al. (2015) reported an internal consistency of $\alpha = .73$. The BIDR-16 has comparable validity with the full version of the BIDR and the Impression Management subscale for the BIDR-16 strongly correlated with the IM subscale of the full BIDR ($r = .84$; $p < .001$; Hart et al., 2015). The BIDR-16 also had significant correlations with the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Short ($r = .53$; Strahan &

Gerbas, 1972) and the Brief How-I-See-Myself ($r = .10$; Campbell et al., 2002). The alpha for this study was .72.

Results

Skewness and kurtosis were assessed to ensure no significant violations in the data (Adams & Lawrence, 2015). Outliers were removed from the data, and multicollinearity between variables were tested to make sure the scales were not measuring the same construct (Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). There was no multicollinearity between variables. Demographic variables such as race, sexual identity, and education, were correlated with the outcome variable, bisexual microaffirmation, to make sure that these demographic variables did not impact the relationship of the variables being assessed (Adams & Lawrence, 2015; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Demographic variables were not found to be correlated with the outcome variable, bisexual microaffirmations.

Internal consistency reliability of the BMSFW, Cronbach's coefficient alpha and examined item-total correlations were computed. Cronbach's alpha was considered acceptable if it was at least .70. The BMSFW demonstrated good internal consistency in this sample with a Cronbach's alpha of .93. All subscale Cronbach's alpha scores and correlation coefficients are found in Table 6. The subscales all showed good internal consistency, with alphas at .82 or higher.

To test Hypothesis 1, that the BMSFW would have convergent validity with the BII Identity Affirmation subscale (BII-IA; Paul et al., 2014), the Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale (Brief ABES; Dyar et al., 2019), and the Queer People of Color Affirmation scale (QPIAS; Ghabrial & Andersen, 2020) correlations between

these scales and the BMSFW were computed. The BMSFW was positively correlated with the BII-IA ($r = .23, p < .001$) and the QPIAS ($r = .26, p < .001$), indicating convergent validity. When used with predominantly bisexual+ cisgender women of color, the BMSFW measured a similar construct as the BII-IA and the QPIAS, to which these scales were hypothesized to have relationship with each other. However, the correlations were not very high, suggesting that the BMSFW does not measure the same constructs as the other two measures (Streiner et al., 2015). The BMSFW did not have a significant correlation with the Brief ABES ($r = -.076, p > .05$) and therefore these two scales had constructs that had no relationship with each other. This finding indicates that these two measures do not have convergent validity and that they are not related to the same construct. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported for the BII-IA and the QPIAS having significant but low correlations with the BMSFW that suggest partial convergent validity. Hypothesis 1 was not supported for the Brief ABES since it did not have significant correlations with the BMSFW.

To test Hypothesis 2, that the BMSFW will demonstrate discriminant validity when assessed against the BIDR-16, Pearson correlation coefficients was used. The relationship between bisexual microaffirmations (as measured by the BMSFW) and impression management (as measured by the BIDR-16) was investigated using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality and linearity. There was a weak negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.17, n = 209, p < .01$, with higher levels of experienced bisexual microaffirmations associated with lower levels of impression

management. Hypothesis 2 was supported for the BIDR-16 since the correlation with the BMSFW was weak, suggesting discriminant validity.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The model structure of the BMSFW was tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with lavaan, version 0.6-9, in RStudio, version 4.1.2 (Rosseel, 2022). The four-factor model based on Flanders et al. (2019) was assessed with each subscale as a latent variable. The acceptance subscale had four indicators, the social support subscale had 3 indicators, the recognition of bisexuality and biphobia subscale had six indicators, and the emotional support subscale had three indicators. Cutoff standards for the fit statistics were based on Hu and Bentler's (1999) suggestions as follows: values less than .06 for the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA); values greater than .95 for the comparative fit index (CFI); and values less than or equal to .08 for the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The RMSEA estimate was .085 (90% CI .072-.099), indicating poor fit (Schreiber et al., 2006). The CFI was .923, and the SRMR was .069. Though the SRMR met the suggested standards, the RMSEA and the SRMR did not, suggesting weak factorial validity. These values were similar to initial findings by Flanders and colleagues (2019) who found both their CFI (.931) and their SRMR (.057) to be an adequate fit. However, according to Schreiber and colleagues (2006), the CFI and SRMR of the current study are not adequate fits. Therefore, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to better understand the factors and factor loadings of the BMSFW.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27.0.1.0. Since the confirmatory factor analysis indicated poor fit (Schreiber et al., 2006), Watkins (2018) best practices on conducting an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were followed. Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) was used to make sure that the correlation matrix was not random and the KMO statistic (Kaiser, 1974) was required to be above a minimum of .50. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 1,984.95, p < .001$) and the KMO statistic was above a minimum of .50 at .93, indicating that the correlation matrix was favorable to proceed with the EFA.

The number of factors were determined by factor eigenvalues above 1.0 and a noticeable change in the slopes of the scree plot (Watkins, 2018). The scree plot indicated that there were two or three factors that should be retained (Cattell, 1966). The total eigenvalues for all of the factors were above 1, ranging from 1.18 to 7.87 and suggested that there were three factors (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960). Best practice (Patil et al., 2017; Watkins, 2018) also suggested that a parallel analysis be run. Parallel analysis was run using Patil and colleague's (2008) web-based parallel analysis engine and suggested that there were two factors. Therefore, the three- and two-factor solutions were both examined. The subscales with each item and its factor loading are found in Table 8 and Table 9. The analysis was done using an oblique structure, so that the factors could be correlated with each other, with direct oblimin rotation. Factors that had a factor loading of .40 or above were viewed as significant and retained (Hair et al., 2010).

The three-factor solution on its own was inadequate: several items had multiple significant cross loadings across two or three factors, even after rotation (Watkins, 2018). According to Hair et al., (2010), items with factor loadings that are not significant or that

have cross-loadings can be deleted and the factor analysis run again. Item 11, “Someone respected my opinions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.,” and Item 13, “I commiserated with other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people about bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination,” were deleted, resulting in the factor loadings shown in Table 8. The three factors were correlated with the absolute values being .42 and .67, demonstrating a lack of redundancy across factors. The first factor had 6 items and was labeled Acceptance; it accounted for approximately 50% of the variance. The second factor had 3 items and was labeled Emotional Support which accounted for approximately 11% of the variance. The third factor had 5 items and was labeled Recognition of Bisexuality and Binegativity; it accounted for approximately 8% of the variance. Cronbach’s alphas for the new factors were Acceptance, .90; Emotional Support, .82; and Recognition of Bisexuality and Binegativity, .87.

The two-factor solution with all original items was examined next with the significant factor loadings shown in Table 9. The two factors were correlated with the absolute value being .45, demonstrating a lack of redundancy across factors. The first factor had 13 items and was labeled Social Recognition and Acceptance; it accounted for approximately 49% of the variance. The second factor had 3 items and explained about 10% of the variance. It was labeled Emotional Support. Cronbach’s alphas for the new factors were: Social Recognition and Acceptance, .93; and Emotional Support, .82. Based on the results of the two-factor solution and the three-factor solution, the two-factor solution may be the most adequate structural representation of the BMSFW for bisexual+ women of color based on the stronger factor loadings amongst items, the higher

Cronbach's alphas, and a stronger correlation between factors. The two-factor solution is also the most parsimonious and thus it is recommended.

Discussion

This study evaluated the reliability and validity of bisexual+ women of color's scores on the BMSFW. The current study also analyzed the factor structure of the BMSFW on a predominantly bisexual+ cisgender women of color sample, the first known study at this time to do so. Examining the BMSFW with a racially/ethnically diverse population of women is important because it provides insight into whether this scale is an adequate fit when used with participants who are not White cisgender women. This is the first study to examine the BMSFW's reliability, validity, and factor structure with bisexual+ predominantly cisgender women of color.

The BMSFW had good internal consistency and had moderate convergent validity with the BII Identity Affirmation subscale and the Queer People of Color Affirmation scale in this sample of racially/ethnically marginalized bisexual predominantly cisgender women. Though the BMSFW indicates positive convergent validity with affirming aspects of bisexual identity, it is likely that the BMSFW measures a similar but separate construct from the BII-IA and the QPIAS. However, the BMSFW did not demonstrate significant convergent validity with the Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experiences Scale. This indicates that the BMSFW is not significantly related positively or negatively with the Brief ABES and, at least with this sample, may not be a suitable scale to measure protective buffers against anti-bisexual experiences. Since the Brief ABES measures experiences of binegativity regarding sexual orientation instability, sexual irresponsibility, and interpersonal hostility and has previously been tested with

predominantly White samples (Brewster & Moradi, 2010; Dyar et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2015), the lack of correlation with the BMSFW in this study suggest that more research is needed on the construct validity of the BMSFW (and the Brief ABES) with bisexual+ women of color. Flanders and colleagues (2019) suggested that binegativity can lead to stressors on the institutional, community, interpersonal, and intrapersonal levels for bisexual individuals. Having those stressors along with the additional racial/ethnic marginalized identity compound these stressors further for bisexual+ individual of color (Hequembourg, 2014). For bisexual+ women of color, further exploration of microaffirmations may need to consider how these marginalized identities intersect.

This study also found that the four-factor structure proposed by Flanders and colleagues (2019) did not fit this sample. There are two possible reasons for that. The first is that the sample size in this study was not significant enough for the CFA and EFA. Though Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated that samples between the ranges of 100-200 are acceptable with well-determined factors, they suggest that a minimum of 300 participants, a small number of factors, and three or four indicators for each factor is recommended when doing a factor analysis. Since the current study had a sample size of 209 participants, the BMSFW may not be a tested enough measure to have such a less than recommended sample size.

The second reason for the original structure not fitting is that the subscales of acceptance, social support, recognition of bisexuality and biphobia, and emotional support that the original authors (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019) created for the BMSFW did not fit this sample of racially and ethnically marginalized bisexual+ women.

The EFA results for the two-factored BMSFW resulted in an overall social affirming and awareness factor instead of separate subscales of Acceptance, Social Support, and Recognition of Bisexuality and Biphobia that the original author's (Flanders, LeBreton, & Robinson, 2019) described. This may mean that for bisexual+ women of color, having the support of those around them who are not only aware of what bisexuality is but also able to recognize and acknowledge the impact that binegativity can have are important components of what it means to have their bisexual identity accepted. Previous studies have found that positive identity experiences tend to be more meaningful when they are from romantic partners (Pulice-Farrow et al., 2019) or members of a person's family of origin (Sterzing & Gartner, 2020). More research is still need on microaffirmations and positive bisexual+ identity experiences for women of color to understand potential other factors that should considered. Further research should also explore the differences between social support and emotional support for bisexual+ women of color since in this study, emotional support in both the two-factor structure as well as the three-factor structure was its own factor (as seen in Table 8 and Table 9).

Future Directions and Implications

Findings from the current study provide some convergent and discriminant validity support for the BMSFW. Additional research to bolster these findings is needed. Future research should further explore potential bisexual+ affirming factors that consider the unique intersecting experiences of bisexual+ women of color that consider ways that gendered racism and binegativity impact their mental wellbeing. The factor structures found in the current study also suggest that bisexual+ women of color may need different variables when creating scales that measure bisexual+ microaffirmations. When

conceptualizing racial microaffirmations, Huber et al. (2021), Rolón-Dow and Davison (2020), and Sue et al., (2019) proposed that there are subsets of microaffirmations called microinterventions (microrecognitions, microvalidations, microtransformations, and microprotections). Creating a measure of bisexual+ microaffirmations that use these subsets may address microaggressions on the individual, institutional, and societal level in a way that the BMSFW did not.

Future research should also explore possible relationships between bisexual microaffirmations and interpersonal relationships. In their study of microaffirmations with transgender individuals, Pulice-Farrow and colleagues (2019) proposed that the effect of microaffirmations may be dependent on the strength and closeness of interpersonal relationships. In this study, participants were not asked to think of a specific relationship when answering the questions of the BMSFW. Future studies using the BMSFW should ask participants to think of a specific relationship such as family of origins and/or romantic/life partners when answering the scale items to see if scores of bisexual microaffirmations are significantly different.

Further understanding of microaffirmations and factors associated with them as well as understanding of identity affirmation for bisexual+ women of color can be used to help train mental health providers in bisexual+ affirming care. DeLucia and Smith (2021) suggest that mental health providers who perpetuate bisexual+ microaggressions increase the chances of bisexual+ clients avoiding future treatment which can increase the risk of unique mental health issues that this population faces. Mental health providers and LGBTQIA+ spaces that serve bisexual+ individuals of color should also provide services

that not only affirm their bisexual+ clients but also address the binegativity that they face in their relationships but also systemically.

Limitations

The current study had several limitations. The results of this study are based on self-report measures from an anonymous online survey and there were instances of bots or individuals who may have contributed to invalid participation. Though the survey followed the recommendations of Griffin and colleagues (2021) in regard to ensuring research data integrity from internet bots, the growing sophistication and evolution of bots make it difficult to know for sure the validity of individual participants. Though the current study has tested the measure with a sample of bisexual+ women of color, Streiner et al. (2015) recommend that new measurements should be evaluated by an observer or during a performance task to make sure there were no test taker errors. Future studies could use mental health professionals trained in using the scale to make sure that the BMSFW is accurately taken. Also, though this study strived to look at within group differences within racial groups, between eligible gender identities (cisgender women, transgender women, and nonbinary/gender nonconforming femmes), and plurisexual identities (bisexual, pansexual, queer, fluid, etc.), there was a limited diversity amongst the groups that should be intentionally focused on in future studies. The study also looked solely at participants who were currently living in the United States, Canada, or U.S. territories, limiting understanding of how geographical location may play a role with microaffirmations and positive bisexual experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study tested the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale for Women on a sample of predominantly bisexual cisgender women of marginalized racial/ethnic backgrounds, a population that the scale had not been tested on previously. The psychometric properties of the scale when used with a sample of bisexual+ women of color showed moderate convergent and discriminant validity, but more research is needed. The current study also revealed that the original factor structure suggested by Flanders et al. (2019) was not a fit with the current study's participants and that a two-factor structure may be a better fit. The implications of this study suggest that there is still much we need to learn about measuring microaffirmations as well as the possibility that bisexual+ women of color may need different variables that capture their intersecting marginalized identities when it comes to microaffirmations and identity affirmation.

Section 3 – Conclusion

The three articles of this dissertation collectively expand upon the current research on bisexual+ women of color, as well as, on bisexual microaffirmations. In Article 1, it was found that experiences of bisexual microaggressions and high levels of bisexual collective self-esteem predicted the outcome of social appearance anxiety. However, it was found that bisexual microaffirmations experiences did not significantly interact with experiences of bisexual microaggressions nor levels of bisexual collective self-esteem, respectively, in predicting the outcome of social appearance anxiety. In Article 2, participants' levels of racial/ethnic collective self-esteem were found to not be a significant moderator for the relationship between their experiences with bisexual microaggressions and experiences of social appearance anxiety. Racial/ethnic collective self-esteem was also not a moderator for the relationship between experiences of bisexual microaffirmations and participants' social anxiety around their appearance. However, scores for racial/ethnic collective self-esteem measure were found to differ significantly within-group by region and level of education. In Article 3, the psychometric properties of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale for Women were tested on a sample of predominantly bisexual cisgender women of color for the first time. Findings from this article revealed that the factor structure of the scale may need to be reevaluated and perhaps modified to take into account racial/ethnic factors before being used with another sample of bisexual women of color. Overall, the findings from these studies are beneficial in not only expanding the literature but providing insight into identity affirming protective factors that researchers and clinicians can be aware when working with bisexual+ women of color.

Findings from Article 1 were consistent with previous research (Mason et al., 2015) in showing that experiences of bisexual+ collective self-esteem are potential protective buffers against the internalization of binegativity that bisexual+ women of color face. This highlights the importance of not merely having safe spaces to build community for LGBTQIA+ individuals of color but more specifically bisexual+/plurisexual safe spaces where people of color can build community and positive identity regard with others with similar sexual identities and who are from racially/ethnically marginalized communities. Findings from Article 1 and Article 2 also highlighted the need to explore constructs such as positive intersectionality and rejection sensitivity with bisexual+ women of color. As individuals with multiple marginalized identities, it is important for future research to explore the unique ways that internal and external discrimination and protective buffers predict this population's mental well-being. By understanding the ways that these factors may or may not interact and/or amplify each other clinicians working with bisexual+ women of color will be better able to support clients with these intersecting identities.

Findings from Article 3 revealed that more work needs to be done on understanding what variables measure microaffirmations for bisexual+ women of color. As seen in Articles 1 and 2, a deeper understanding of microaffirmations as a whole, and whether they are helpful or detrimental to the mental well-being of marginalized individuals, is necessary. Also, though microaffirmations have been explored from an individual perspective, more research needs to focus on microaffirmations from a structural perspective and the ways that binegativity needs to be addressed in Western society. By having a more defined knowledge of what contributes to microaffirmations,

researchers and clinicians could better understand the ways that external affirmation and bipoisitive experiences towards bisexual women of color may impact their mental well-being in a society that systemically marginalizes those identities.

Though the articles of this dissertation expanded upon the current limited literature focusing on bisexual and other plurisexual women of color, there is still many topics related to this population that are either underexplored or have not been explored at all. As I continue researching this population, there are several research pathways that I would like to explore. Expanding elements of this research, such as if bisexual+ collective self-esteem also impacts bisexual+ women of color in other areas of the world would be important to understand geographical differences of this protective factor and how politics and legislation may play a role. Also, exploring and creating a scale based on the constructs of microvalidations instead of the broader microaffirmations would be another important next step in this area of research. Looking at affirmative identity experiences in the clinical setting between mental health professionals and their clients who identify as bisexual+ woman of color should also be explored, possibly providing a framework for working with plurisexual clients. Overall, there are a plethora of research ideas that can be done that build upon the findings of this study.

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Tables**Table 1***Demographic Information of Participants*

Demographic	<i>N</i> (%)
Ages	
18 – 29	118 (56.6)
30 – 39	73 (34.9)
40 – 49	13 (6.2)
50 – 59	4 (1.9)
60 – 69	1 (0.5)
Sexual Identity	
Bisexual	112 (53.6)
Pansexual	44 (21.1)
Asexual	2 (1.0)
Queer	41 (19.6)
Fluid	4 (1.9)
Two-Spirit	2 (1.0)
Not listed	4 (1.9)
Gender Identity	
Cisgender woman	169 (80.9)
Non-binary femme	17 (8.1)
Genderqueer	9 (4.3)
Intersex woman	4 (1.9)
Two-spirit	2 (1.0)
Not listed (but identifies as femme)	2 (1.0)

Bisexual+ Women of Color and Microaffirmations	102
Transgender woman	5 (2.4)
Intersex femme	1 (0.5)
Race/Ethnicity	
All Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin	63 (30.1)
Asian	32 (15.3)
Black/African American	81 (38.8)
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1 (.5)
Mixed Race/Ethnicity	55 (26.3)
American Indian or Alaska Native	5 (2.4)
White Latinx	19 (9.1)
Not listed	16 (.08)
Education Level	
Less than a high school diploma	5 (2.4)
High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)	15 (7.7)
Some college, no degree	23 (11)
Associate degree	7 (3.3)
Bachelor's degree	47 (22.5)
Master's degree	79 (37.8)
Professional degree	4 (1.9)
Doctorate	23 (13.4)
Relationship Status	
Single	63 (30.1)
Dating	75 (35.9)
Married/Domestic Partnership/Civil Union	54 (25.8)
Divorced/Separated	7 (3.3)

Bisexual+ Women of Color and Microaffirmations	103
Widowed	1 (.50)
Not listed	9 (4.3)
Outness	
Yes, to everyone	36 (17.2)
Yes, to some friends only	78 (37.3)
Yes, to some family only	7 (3.3)
Yes, to both friends and family	27 (12.9)
Yes, but chose to explain	47 (22.5)
Not out	14 (6.7)
Current Location	
<i>Canada</i>	16 (7.7)
Atlantic region	2 (1)
Central Canada	10 (4.8)
West Coast	3 (1.4)
North	1 (.5)
<i>United States</i>	181 (86.6)
Northeast	49 (23.4)
Midwest	50 (23.9)
South	53 (25.4)
West	29 (13.9)
<i>U.S. Territory</i>	12 (5.7)

Note. N = 209

Table 2

Zero-Order Correlations Between SAAS, Bi+ CSE, RE CSE, Microaggressions, and BMSFW Measures

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
1. SAAS	(.95)	-.38*	-.26*	.17**	-.16**	44.24	13.80	16 - 80
2. Bi+ CSE	-.38	(.82)	.50*	-.28*	.22**	4.78	.78	1 - 7
3. RE CSE	-.26*	.50*	(.82)	-.44*	.07	5.02	.69	1 - 7
4. Microaggressions	.17**	-.28*	-.44*	(.98)	.19**	1.39	1.11	0 - 6
5. BMSFW	-.16**	.22*	.07	.19**	(.93)	2.73	1.22	0 - 6

Note. *N* = 209. SAAS = Social Appearance Anxiety Scale. Bi+ CSE = Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem. RE CSE = Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem. BMSFW = Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale for Women.

The Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses on the diagonal of the correlation matrix.

* $p < .001$. ** $p < .05$.

Table 3*Regression Coefficients for Moderated Models*

	β	SE	t	CI
Bi+ CSE Moderating Bisexual Microaggression and Social Appearance Anxiety				
Bisexual Microaggression	2.15	.95	2.26*	[.27, 4.03]
Bi+ CSE	-5.67	1.23	-4.62**	[-8.09, -3.25]
Bisexual Microaggression x Bi+ CSE	4.18	1.31	3.20*	[1.61, 6.76]
$R^2 = .20^{**}$ $F(3, 194) = 15.92^{**}$				
Bisexual Microaffirmation Moderating Bisexual Microaggression and Social Appearance Anxiety				
Bisexual Microaggression	2.44	.89	2.73*	[.68, 4.21]
Bisexual Microaffirmation	-2.05	.80	-2.56*	[-3.64, -.47]
Bisexual Microaggression x Bisexual Microaffirmation	.32	.78	.41	[-1.21, 1.86]
$R^2 = .06^*$ $F(3, 200) = 4.20^*$				
Bi+ CSE Moderating Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety				
Bisexual Microaffirmation	-.92	.78	-1.18	[-2.45, .62]
Bi+ CSE	-6.01	1.22	-4.94**	[-8.40, -3.61]
Bisexual Microaffirmation x Bi+ CSE	.86	1.02	.85	[-1.15, 2.87]
$R^2 = .13^{**}$ $F(3, 201) = 10.14^{**}$				

Note. $N = 209$. Bi+ CSE = Bisexual+ collective self-esteem.

* $p < .05$. ** $< .001$.

Table 4*Regression Coefficients for Moderated Models*

	β	SE	t
RE CSE Moderating Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety			
Bisexual Microaggressions	.72	1.10	.65
RE CSE	-4.92	1.52	-3.24*
Bisexual Microaggressions x RE CSE	.40	1.44	.28
$R^2 = .07^*$ $F(3, 197) = 5.25^*$			
RE CSE Moderating Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety			
Bisexual Microaffirmation	-1.42	.82	-1.74
RE CSE	-4.99	1.36	-3.66*
Bisexual Microaffirmation x RE CSE	-.32	1.17	-.27
$R^2 = .08^*$ $F(3, 200) = 5.91^*$			

Note. $N = 209$. RE CSE = Racial/Ethnic collective self-esteem.
* $p < .05$. ** $< .001$.

Table 5

MANOVA of Demographic Differences of Mean Scores for Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem

Variables	Northeast	Midwest	South	West	
RE CSE	4.96 ^a	4.95 ^b	5.10	5.38 ^{ab}	
Variables	High School	Some College	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
RE CSE	4.33 ^{cde}	4.76 ^{fg}	4.94 ^c	5.28 ^{df}	5.34 ^{eg}

Note. Superscripts show significantly different scores, where $p < .05$ between groups.

Table 6

Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women Subscales' Intercorrelations and Cronbach's alpha

Subscale	1	2	3	4	Cronbach's α
1. Acceptance		.70	.65	.45	.87
2. Social Support			.71	.50	.86
3. Recognition of bisexuality and biphobia				.51	.85
4. Emotional Support					.82

$N = 209$, all correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

Table 7
Correlations Between Psychometric Measures

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	M	SD
1. BIDRIM	(.72)	.05	.02	.09	-.17**	33.86	8.03
2. BII-IA	.05	(.88)	-.10	.72*	.23*	5.29	1.12
3. Brief ABES	.02	-.10	(.90)	-.17**	-.08	2.67	.98
4. QPIAS	.09	.72*	-.17**	(.88)	.26*	55.62	10.29
5. BMSFW	-.17**	.23*	-.08	.26*	(.93)	2.72	1.22

Note. $N=209$. BIDRIM = BIDR Impression Management Subscale. BII-IA = Bisexual Identity Inventory Identity Affirmation Subscale. Brief ABES = Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experience Scale. QPIAS = Queer People of Color Identity Affirmation. BMSFW = Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale for Women. The Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses on the diagonal of the correlation matrix.

* $p < .001$. ** $p < .05$

Table 8

Rotated Coefficients for EFA of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) Items

BMSFW item	Acceptance	Recognition	Emotional
Someone understood bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. easily	.87	.00	.00
Someone accepted my being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. without any questions	.93	.00	.00
Someone acknowledged my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. without making a big deal about it	.70	.00	.00
Someone let me figure out my sexuality for myself without making assumptions	.80	.00	.00
Someone supported the relationships of other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people	.59	.00	.00
Someone was attentive to discussions of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.49	.31	.00
Someone did something to show their support of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.38	.50	.00
Someone recognized bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. specific bias/discrimination as a serious issue	.00	.91	.00
Someone challenged bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination when they saw it	.00	.90	.00
Someone acknowledged that being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. is not always easy	.00	.84	.00
Someone asked sincere questions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.00	.52	.00
Someone was happy for me regardless of the	.00	.00	.69

sex or gender of my partner(s)

Someone provided emotional support	.00	.00	.85
Someone supported my relationships	.00	.00	.99

Note. $N = 209$. Exploratory factor analysis with an oblique (Oblimin with Kaiser normalization) rotation. Factor loadings that were .40 or above were retained and viewed as significant and are in bold. Two items from the original scale were removed for not being significant.

Table 9

Rotated Coefficients for EFA of the Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women (BMSFW) Items – Two Factors

BMSFW item	Acceptance	Emotional
Someone understood bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. easily	.75	.00
Someone accepted my being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. without any questions	.71	.00
Someone acknowledged my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. without making a big deal about it	.71	.00
Someone let me figure out my sexuality for myself without making assumptions	.67	.00
Someone supported the relationships of other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people	.72	.00
Someone was attentive to discussions of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.73	.00
Someone did something to show their support of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.80	.00
Someone recognized bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. specific bias/discrimination as a serious issue	.82	.00
Someone challenged bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination when they saw it	.78	.00
Someone acknowledged that being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. is not always easy	.82	.00
Someone respected my opinions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.58	.34
Someone asked sincere questions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.	.69	.00
I commiserated with other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people about bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination	.44	.00
Someone was happy for me regardless of the sex or gender of my	.00	.64

partner(s)		
Someone provided emotional support	.00	.82
Someone supported my relationships	.00	.94

Note. $N = 209$. Exploratory factor analysis with an oblique (Oblimin with Kaiser normalization) rotation. Factor loadings that were .40 or above were retained and viewed as significant and are in bold.

Figures

Figure 1

Model of Bisexual Microaffirmations Moderating Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety

$R^2 = .06, p < .05$
 $F(3,200) = 4.20, p < .05$

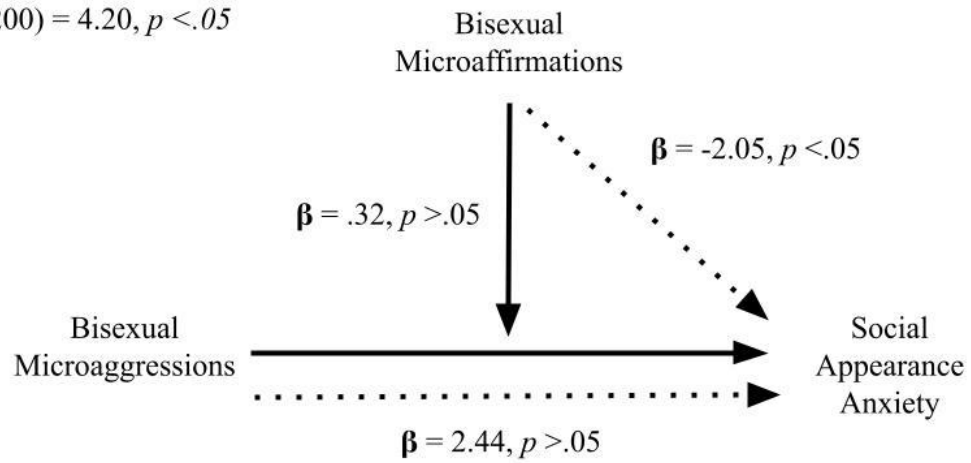


Figure 2

Model of Bisexual Collective Self-Esteem Moderating Bisexual Microaggressions and Social Appearance Anxiety

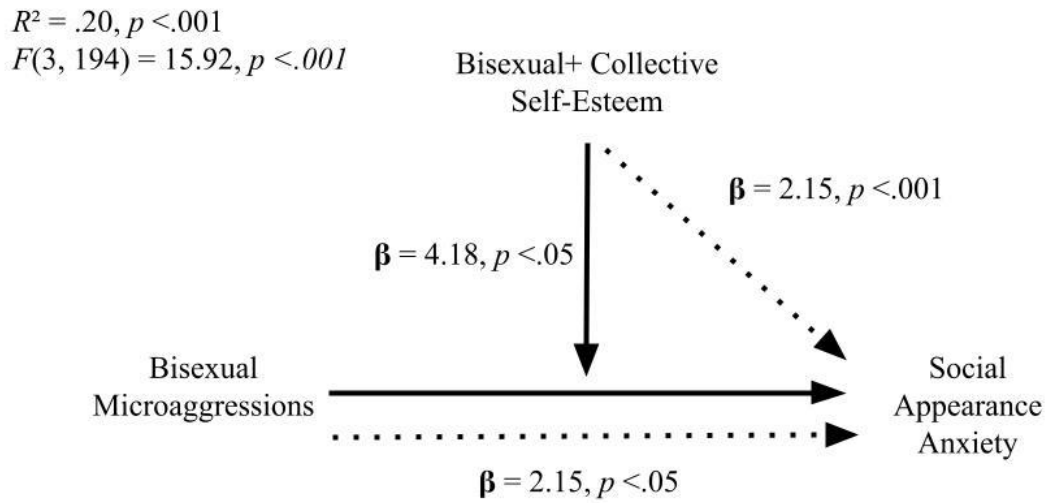


Figure 3

Model of Bisexual Collective Self-Esteem Moderating Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety

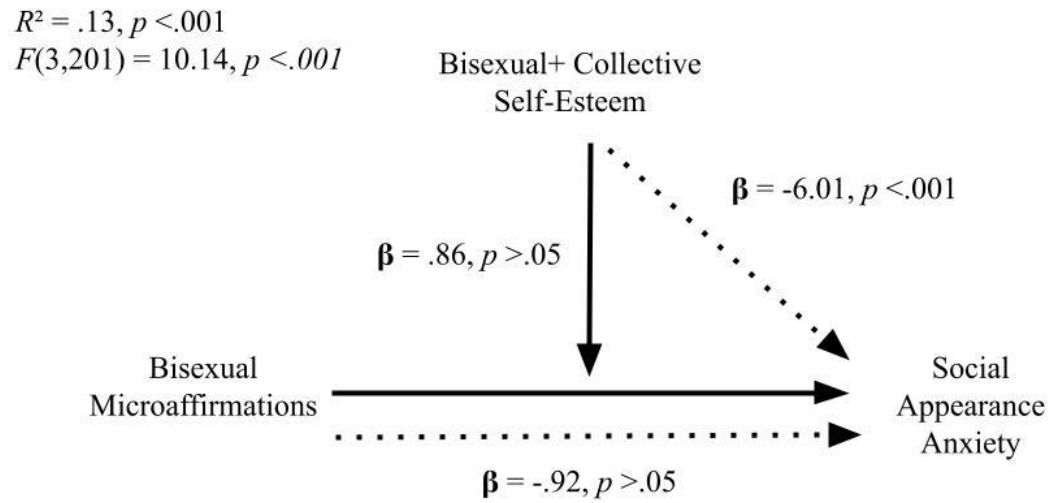
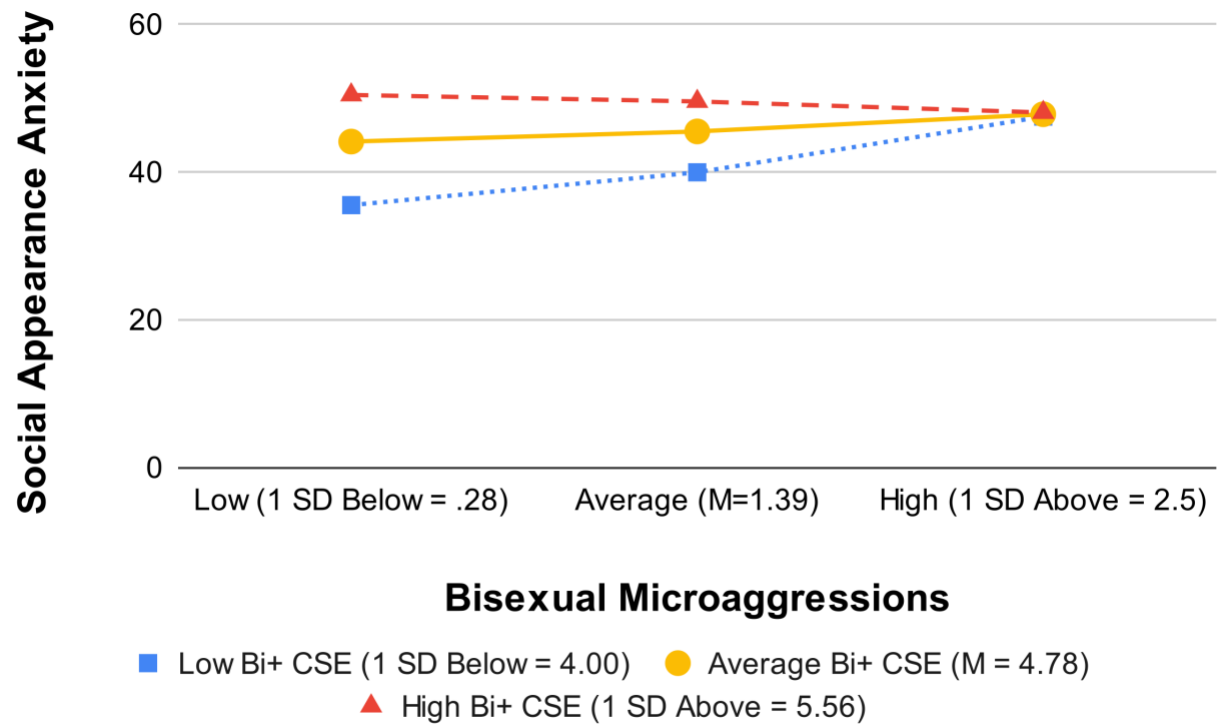


Figure 4

Graph of Moderating Effect of Bisexual Collective Self-Esteem



Note. Bi+ CSE = Bisexual+ Collective Self-Esteem.

Figure 5

Model of Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem Moderating Binegativity and Social Appearance Anxiety

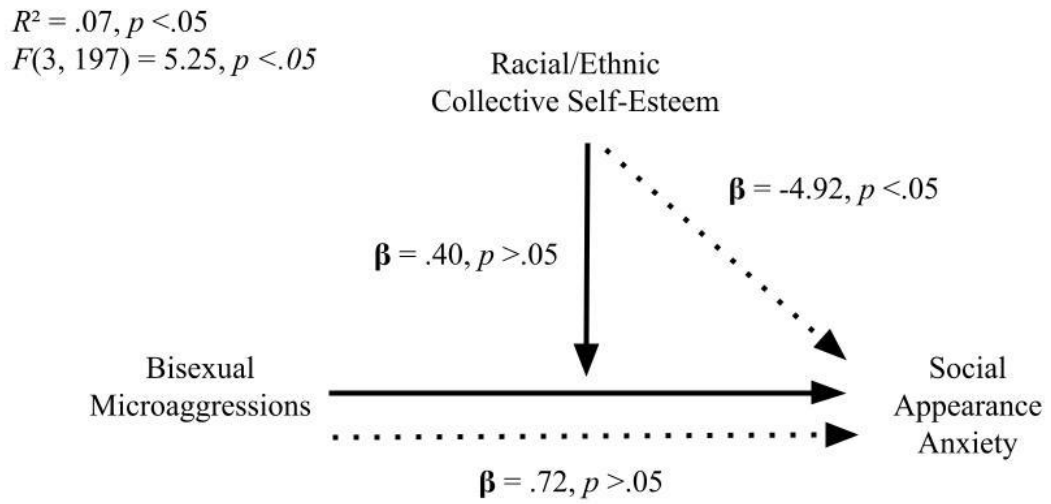
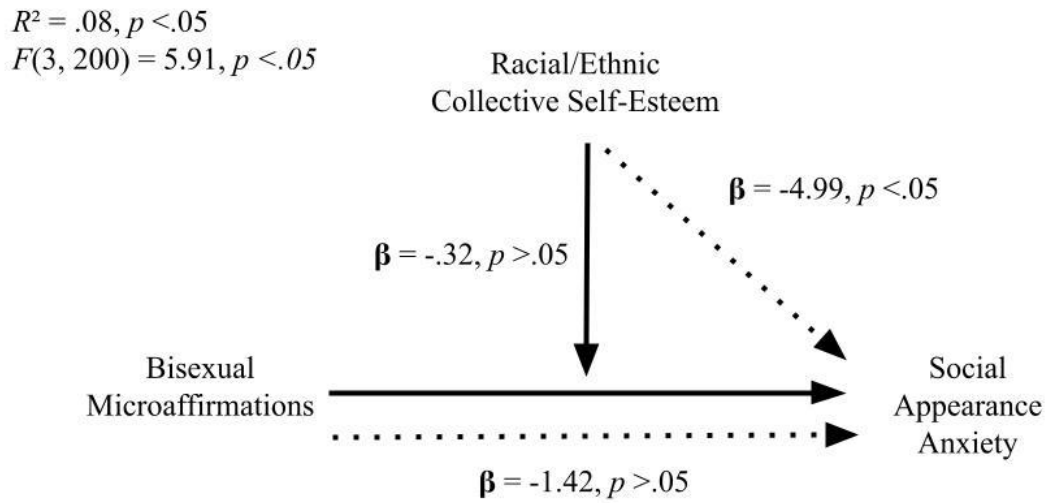


Figure 6

Model of Racial/Ethnic Collective Self-Esteem Moderating Bisexual Microaffirmation and Social Appearance Anxiety



Appendix: Measures**Demographics**

1. Your age:
2. What sexual orientation do you identify with?
 - a. Heterosexual/Straight
 - b. Gay
 - c. Lesbian
 - d. Bisexual
 - e. Pansexual
 - f. Asexual
 - g. Queer
 - h. Fluid
 - i. Two-Spirit
 - j. If none of the above fit for you, please describe your sexual orientation here ____
3. What gender identity do you identify with? (Select all that apply)
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary/third gender
 - d. Transgender
 - e. Cisgender
 - f. Agender
 - g. Genderqueer
 - h. Intersex
 - i. Two-Spirit
 - j. If none of the above fit for you, please describe your gender identity here ____
4. Do you consider yourself as “out” to friends, family, colleagues, etc.?
 - a. Yes, to everyone
 - b. Yes, to some friends only
 - c. Yes, to some family only,
 - d. Yes, to friends and family both
 - e. Yes (choose to explain)
 - f. Not out (choose to explain)
5. Are you Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin? (One or more categories may be selected)
 - a. No, not of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin
 - b. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano/a
 - c. Yes, Puerto Rican
 - d. Yes, Cuban
 - e. Yes, Another Hispanic, Latino/a/x or Spanish origin (Please specify)
6. What is your race? (One or more categories may be selected)
 - a. White
 - b. Black or African American

- c. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - d. Asian Indian
 - e. Chinese
 - f. Filipino
 - g. Japanese
 - h. Korean
 - i. Vietnamese
 - j. Other Asian (please specify)
 - k. Native Hawaiian
 - l. Guamanian or Chamorro
 - m. Samoan
 - n. Other Pacific Islander (please specify)
 - o. Prefer to fill in_____
7. Highest level of school you have completed?
- a. Less than a high school diploma
 - b. High school degree or equivalent (e.g. GED)
 - c. Some college, no degree
 - d. Associate degree (e.g. AA, AS)
 - e. Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
 - f. Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
 - g. Professional degree (e.g. MD, DDS, DVM)
 - h. Doctorate (e.g. PhD, EdD)
8. What is your current relationship status?
- a. Single (never married)
 - b. Dating
 - c. Married/Domestic Partnership/Civil Union
 - d. Divorced/Separated
 - e. Widowed
 - f. Not listed (fill in)
9. Do you currently live in Canada, the United States, or a U.S. territory?
- a. Canada
 - b. United States
 - c. U.S. territory (fill in)
 - d. Other country (fill in)
- If participants choose Canada or the United States another question appears
 - What region of the United States do you currently live in?
 - o Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania)
 - o Midwest (Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota)
 - o South (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas)
 - o West (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington)
 - What region of Canada do you currently live in?

- Atlantic region (Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick)
 - Central Canada (Quebec, Ontario)
 - Prairie Provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta)
 - West Coast (British Columbia)
 - North (Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory)
10. What is your country of origin? (Fill in)

Bisexual Microaggression Scale: For Women

Please think about the number of times you have experienced each situation in the last 6 months, related to your sexual identity. Select the response that best matches your experience.

0 - Never

1 - Once

2 - A few times

3 - About once a month

4 - About once a week

5 - Multiple times a week

6 - Every day

7 - This situation is not applicable to me

1. Someone suggested my bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. identity is a phase
2. Someone told me I don't belong in LGBT spaces
3. Someone said they don't understand bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. individuals
4. Someone dismissed my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. as a fad
5. Someone dismissed bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. as just a way to get attention
6. Someone suggested I am confused about my bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. identity
7. Someone indicated bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. individuals are untrustworthy
8. Someone implied bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. individuals are unreliable
9. Someone showed mistrust toward me because I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
10. Someone suggested I would leave them for someone of another gender
11. A romantic partner asked for details about my sexual behavior with people of other genders
12. Someone was offended when I turned down their sexual advances
13. Someone asked inappropriate questions about my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.
14. Someone asked me what genitals I like
15. Someone asked me about my past sexual experiences when I told them I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
16. Someone asked whether I have had sex with a woman
17. Someone asked whether I have had sex with a man
18. Someone asked how many men I have had sex with
19. Someone asked me to prove that I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. by discussing my sexual history
20. Someone asked how I knew that I was bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
21. Someone asked which gender I prefer the most
22. Someone heterosexual seemed to assume I would hit on their romantic partner(s)
23. Someone made sexual advances toward me when I told them I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.

24. Someone asked if I wanted to have a threesome when I told them I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
25. Someone assumed that coming out as bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. is a way of saying I'm open for anything sexually
26. Someone indicated that bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. individuals aren't part of the LGBT community
27. Someone made me feel ashamed to date men
28. A bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. character on a show was not labeled as bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
29. Someone discussed an LGBTQ issue that erased bisexuality
30. Someone defined bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. as reinforcing of gender binaries (i.e., the idea that there are only two genders)
31. Someone gave me less support than they gave people of other sexual identities
32. Someone who is gay or a lesbian was uncomfortable around me
33. Bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. was excluded from an LGBTQ space or discussion
34. Someone made me feel I had to be hyperaware of my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. at an LGBTQ event
35. Gay men or lesbians saw me as an ally more than as part of the community
36. Someone assumed I cannot be bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. because of my other identities
37. I was pressured to constantly validate my other identities because I am bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
38. Someone called my other identities into doubt because I'm bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.

Bisexual Microaffirmation Scale: For Women

Please think about the number of times you have experienced each situation in the last 6 months, related to your sexual identity. Select the response that best matches your experience.

0—Never

1—Once

2—A few times

3—About once a month

4—About once a week

5—Multiple times a week

6—Every day

7—This situation is not applicable to me.

1. Someone understood bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. easily
2. Someone accepted my being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. without any questions
3. Someone acknowledged my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. without making a big deal about it
4. Someone let me figure out my sexuality for myself without making assumptions
5. Someone supported the relationships of other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people
6. Someone was attentive to discussions of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.
7. Someone did something to show their support of bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.
8. Someone recognized bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. specific bias/discrimination as a serious issue
9. Someone challenged bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination when they saw it
10. Someone acknowledged that being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. is not always easy
11. Someone respected my opinions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.
12. Someone asked sincere questions about bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.
13. I commiserated with other bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. people about bisexual-/pansexual-/queer-/fluid-/etc. specific bias/discrimination
14. Someone was happy for me regardless of the sex or gender of my partner(s)
15. Someone provided emotional support
16. Someone supported my relationships

Collective Self-Esteem Scale: Race/Ethnicity

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Some of such social groups or categories pertain to gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. We would like you to consider your memberships in your **racial/ethnic community** and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about **your racial/ethnic community** and your memberships in them. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; we are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following scale from 1 to 7:

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Disagree Somewhat
- 4 - Neutral
- 5 - Agree Somewhat
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly Agree

1. I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.
2. I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do.
3. Overall, my social groups are considered good by others.
4. Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.
5. I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to.
6. In general, I'm glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to.
7. Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other social groups.
8. The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am.
9. I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to.
10. Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile.
11. In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of.
12. The social groups I belong to are unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.
13. I often feel I'm a useless member of my social groups.
14. I feel good about the social groups I belong to.
15. In general, others think that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy.
16. In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image.

Collective Self-Esteem Scale: Sexual Identity

We are all members of different social groups or social categories. Some of such social groups or categories pertain to gender, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. We would like you to consider your memberships in your **sexual identity community** and respond to the following statements on the basis of how you feel about **your sexual identity community** and your memberships in them. There are no right or wrong answers to any of these statements; we are interested in your honest reactions and opinions. Please read each statement carefully, and respond by using the following scale from 1 to 7:

- 1 - Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Disagree Somewhat
- 4 - Neutral
- 5 - Agree Somewhat
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly Agree

1. I am a worthy member of the social groups I belong to.
2. I often regret that I belong to some of the social groups I do.
3. Overall, my social groups are considered good by others.
4. Overall, my group memberships have very little to do with how I feel about myself.
5. I feel I don't have much to offer to the social groups I belong to.
6. In general, I'm glad to be a member of the social groups I belong to.
7. Most people consider my social groups, on the average, to be more ineffective than other social groups.
8. The social groups I belong to are an important reflection of who I am.
9. I am a cooperative participant in the social groups I belong to.
10. Overall, I often feel that the social groups of which I am a member are not worthwhile.
11. In general, others respect the social groups that I am a member of.
12. The social groups I belong to are unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am.
13. I often feel I'm a useless member of my social groups.
14. I feel good about the social groups I belong to.
15. In general, others think that the social groups I am a member of are unworthy.
16. In general, belonging to social groups is an important part of my self-image.

Social Appearance Anxiety Scale

- 1- Not at all
- 2 - Rarely
- 3 - Sometimes
- 4 - Often
- 5 - Extremely

1. I feel comfortable with the way I appear to others.
2. I feel nervous when having my picture taken.
3. I get tensed when it is obvious people are looking at me.
4. I am concerned people would not like me because of the way I look.
5. I worry that others talk about flaws in my appearance when I am not around.
6. I am concerned people will find unappealing because of my appearance.
7. I am afraid that people find me unattractive.
8. I worry that my appearance will make life more difficult for me.
9. I am concerned that I have missed out on opportunities because of my appearance.
10. I get nervous when talking to people because of the way I look.
11. I feel anxious when other people say something about my appearance.
12. I am frequently afraid I would not meet others' standards of how I should look.
13. I worry people will judge me the way I look negatively.
14. I am uncomfortable when I think others are noticing flaws in my appearance.
15. I worry that a romantic partner will/would leave me because of my appearance.
16. I am concerned that people think I am not good looking.

Bisexual Identity Inventory (BII) Identity Affirmation Subscale

The purpose of this scale is to measure the extent to which you identify with each of the following statements as it relates to identifying as a bisexual individual. Please select the corresponding number for each item as it relates to you personally.

- 1 - Strongly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 7 - Strongly agree

- 1. I am grateful for my bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc. identity.
- 2. I am comfortable being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
- 3. I am proud to be bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc.
- 4. I feel freedom with individuals of the same gender identity and of different gender identities as me.
- 5. Being bisexual/pansexual/queer/fluid/etc is rewarding to me.
- 6. I am okay with my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc.

Brief Version of the Anti-Bisexual Experience Scale (Brief ABES)

1 - Never

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

6 - Almost all the time

1. People have acted as if my bisexuality/pansexuality/queerness/fluidity/etc. is only a sexual curiosity, not a stable sexual orientation
2. People have not taken my sexual orientation seriously, because I am bisexual
3. People have addressed my bisexuality as if it means that I am simply confused about my sexual orientation
4. People have assumed that I will cheat in a relationship because I am bisexual
5. People have treated me as if I am obsessed with sex because I am bisexual
6. Others have acted uncomfortable around me because of my bisexuality
7. I have been alienated because I am bisexual
8. Others have treated me negatively because I am bisexual

Queer People of Color Identity Affirmation

Below is a list of statements related to your life as a person who is both an ethnic/racial minority and a sexual minority (other terms used below include LGBQA: lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual). All items are about your LGBQA ethnic/racial minority identity.

- 1 - Very strongly disagree
- 2 - Strongly disagree
- 3 - Disagree
- 4 - Neutral
- 5 - Agree
- 6 - Strongly agree
- 7 Very strongly agree

1. I feel badly about being both LGBQA and an ethnic/racial minority.
2. Being an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority has made me resilient.
3. Being an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority has given me the drive I need to accomplish great things.
4. I feel that my sexual identity and my ethnic/racial identity are at war with each other.
5. I think the difficulties I've faced as a person who is an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority make me better at handling hard situations.
6. Being an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority makes me equipped to make positive change in the world.
7. I feel fortunate to be an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority.
8. I derive power from my identity as an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority.
9. I wish I could erase at least one of these minority identities from myself.
10. As an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority, I have a unique voice.
11. I would never want to change being LGBQA or a ethnic/racial minority.
12. Being an LGBQA ethnic/racial minority gives me the confidence to claim identities that I might otherwise not feel good about. For example: having a disability, having an illness, having mental health issues.

BIDR Impression Management Subscale

Using the scale below as a guide, write a number beside each statement to indicate how true it is.

- 1 - not true
- 2 -
- 3 -
- 4 - somewhat
- 5 -
- 6 -
- 7 - very true

- ___ 21. I sometimes tell lies if I have to.
- ___ 22. I never cover up my mistakes.
- ___ 23. There have been occasions when I have taken advantage of someone.
- ___ 25. I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
- ___ 27. I have said something bad about a friend behind his/her back.
- ___ 28. When I hear people talking privately, I avoid listening.
- ___ 36. I never take things that don't belong to me.
- ___ 40. I don't gossip about other people's business.