# Social Networks and Fears of Stigma by Association with the LGBTQ+ Community

Lucas J. Guberman

Department of Psychology, University of Maryland

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**Abstract**

Members of the LGBTQ+ community face unjust stigma and discrimination. People may not want to associate with members of this community due to fear that their association will cause them to be similarly stigmatized, termed fears of stigma by association. The purpose of the current research is to examine whether fears of stigma by association mediate the relationship between indirect contact and microaggressions towards members of the LGBTQ+ community. The results of this study point to reduced fears of stigma-by-association as a novel mechanism through which intergroup contact improves intergroup relations. However, there was no significant relationship found between fears of stigma by association and microaggressions. These results suggest people with inclusive social networks may be more accepting of the LGBTQ+ community because they are less fearful of being stigmatized by their network members.

## Social Networks and Fears of Stigma by Association with the LGBTQ+ Community

Members of the LGBTQ+ community are faced with prejudice due to the nature of their queer identity (Herek, 2000). Microaggressions are expressions of prejudice that are often targeted toward members of the LGBTQ+ community (Woodford et al., 2013). Unlike ordinary prejudice, which is often explicit, microaggressions are typically subtle (Woodford et al., 2013). Within the LGBTQ+ community, being the target of microaggressions has been associated with negative physical and psychological effects (Woodford et al., 2013).

These challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community are burdening, but they are far from insurmountable. Broadly, the purpose of the current research is to test novel hypotheses regarding the factors that tend to promote the enactment of microaggressions, which could pave the way for future interventions aimed at reducing their frequency. More specifically, this research examines the impact of extended contact on microaggressions and the mediating mechanisms of ingroup norms and stigma-by-association that may account for this effect.

### Intergroup Contact Theory

In the current research, I examine the potential role of intergroup contact in reducing enactment of microaggressions. Intergroup contact (IC) theory suggests that contact between groups can reduce prejudice under certain conditions (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Allport (1954) originally proposed that these conditions include equal status between groups, common goals between groups, intergroup cooperation, and the support of contact by authority, law, or custom. Consistent with this theory, the majority of past research on IC has found that it is related to reduced feelings of prejudice toward outgroups, especially under the conditions proposed by Allport (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). While IC was first examined in the context of race relations, IC was discovered to be applicable to other minority groups, including sexual minorities

(Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Greater knowledge about the outgroup, reduced feelings of anxiety when interacting with outgroup members, and greater feelings of empathy toward the outgroup have all been identified as mediators of the relationship between IC and reduced prejudice (Pettigrew, 2008; Pettigrew et al., 2011), with empathy and anxiety being the strongest mediators (Pettigrew, 2008).

Subsequent research highlighted the distinction between direct and extended contact. Merely being aware of relationships between ingroup and outgroup members, known as extended contact, has been found to promote positive intergroup attitudes independently of direct contact (e.g., Cameron et al., 2011; Gómez et al., 2011; Pettigrew, 1998; Vezzali & Stathi, 2020; Wright et al.,1997; Zhou et al., 2019). Zhou and colleagues (2019) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature on extended contact and concluded that extended contact can be just as effective as a direct friendship with regards to improving intergroup attitudes.

Much of the research related to IC and prejudice towards the LGBTQ+ community has focused on direct contact interventions (e.g. Boccanfuso et al., 2021; Cramwinckel et al., 2021; Hatoum & White, 2022; Pelts & Galambos, 2017). However, recent research has demonstrated that extended contact may also prove to be effective at reducing prejudice, specifically in the form of microaggressions. A recent study found that participants who watched a video of an ingroup member interacting with a member of the LGBTQ+ community were more likely to view microaggressions negatively (McGuire et al., 2023).

**Ingroup Norms**

Previous research has identified ingroup norms as a partial mediator of the effects of extended contact on improved intergroup relations (Gómez et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2008). That is, when an individual experiences extended contact, they typically believe that ingroup members

have favorable attitudes toward interaction with the outgroup (Turner et al., 2008). Given that people typically strive to conform to the norms of important ingroups (White et al., 2009), these changed perceptions of ingroup norms may have important implications for people's willingness to interact and affiliate with outgroup members.

The link between ingroup norms and the quality of intergroup relations may be further mediated by other mechanisms that have not been identified in extant research. In the current research, I test the prediction that this link is mediated by reduced fears of stigma by association (SBA).

**Stigma by Association**

Stigma typically refers to a set of negative and often unfair beliefs or attitudes toward people due to characteristics they possess (Van der Sanden et al., 2013). Members of the LGBTQ+ community face stigma in public settings such as schools and restaurants (Gower et al., 2021). SBA describes the process in which people who associate with (i.e., interact with or befriend) stigmatized individuals become stigmatized as well (Van der Sanden et al., 2013). SBA appears to befall those who associate with members of the LGBTQ+ community. For instance, people tend to apply the same stereotypes associated with members of the LGBTQ+ community to allies of that community (Goldstein, 2017), and report discomfort interacting with people who are associated with that community (Neuberg et al., 1994). Stigma-by-association is especially likely to occur when perceivers believe that the target voluntarily associated with the stigmatized person (Sigelman et al., 1991). Perceivers who harbor prejudice toward the LGBTQ+ community are particularly likely to derogate those who associate with that community, including straight allies (Goldstein, 2017; Jefferson & Bramlett, 2010).

Awareness that one is stigmatized in this way elicits psychological distress (Van der Sanden et al., 2013). There are three social needs that may render stigma-by-association particularly threatening. First, people are driven by the desire to have high status, to obtain respect, admiration, and voluntary deference from others (Anderson et al., 2015). Status provides social, psychological, and material benefits, which makes status universally desirable and the prospect of status loss threatening (Anderson et al., 2015). Second, people have a need to belong – to have relationships characterized by frequent interaction and a bond of care, and this need is a fundamental part of human nature (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Similar to status, actions that threaten one's sense of belonging are often threatening and avoided (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Third, at the root of desires for status and belonging is a need for significance, a need to be important and to matter to others (Kruglanski et al., 2022). While the routes to achieving significance differ from culture to culture, the need for significance is universal (Kruglanski et al., 2022). As with status and belonging, events that jeopardize and cast doubt on one's significance are threatening (Kruglanski et al., 2022). Significance, belonging, and status are all related in that they influence an individual's perceived social worth (Kruglanski et al., 2022; Rothers & Cohrs, 2023). SBA may threaten social worth, which may result in fear of SBA and desires to avoid it. People may avoid it by refraining from associating themselves with members of stigmatized groups (Van der Sanden et al., 2013).

Beyond the avoidance of interaction and affiliation, fears of SBA may increase the enactment of microaggressions toward the LGBTQ+ community. The desire to avoid affiliation likely reduces consideration of the needs and values of members of the LGBTQ+ community, increasing the propensity to enact microaggressions. Moreover, microaggressions may function as subtle signals of distance to onlookers, potentially reducing the possibility that onlookers will

see an association that could engender SBA. Hence, microaggressions may be viewed as instrumental to avoiding SBA and so they may be enacted by those who fear it.

Fears of SBA due to association with the LGBTQ+ community may, in part, stem from the belief that others harbor negative attitudes toward members of that community and interactions with that community, and such negative attitudes are reflected in the ingroup norms that tend to be shaped by extended contact. Hence, extended contact may help ameliorate the problem of microaggressions. Those who see their ingroup affiliate with members of the LGBTQ+ community may believe that their ingroup tolerates or even favors interactions with that community, which should lessen the fears of SBA that may often motivate the enactment of microaggressions.

**The Current Research**

The current research examines the mediating roles of ingroup norms and fears of SBA in the relationship between extended contact and microaggressions toward the LGB (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual) community. The full conceptual model is provided below in Figure 1. I hypothesize that extended contact with members of the LGBT (i.e. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community will predict more positive perceived ingroup norms regarding interacting with the community (H1). In turn, I predict that ingroup norms are related to reduced fears of SBA against the LGBTQ+ community (H2) and that fears of SBA will predict four distinct types of microaggressions (H3 - H6).

H3: Fears of SBA will predict conversational microaggressions against members of the LGB community. Conversational microaggressions refer to the use of slurs in everyday conversation that tend to be harmful to the LGB community, such as “fag” and “that’s so gay” (Woodford et al., 2012). For this measure, I will use friend evaluations because participants may

be unwilling to honestly report their use of these slurs. Prior research suggests that friend informants provide valid information regarding personality and behavior (Vazire, 2006).

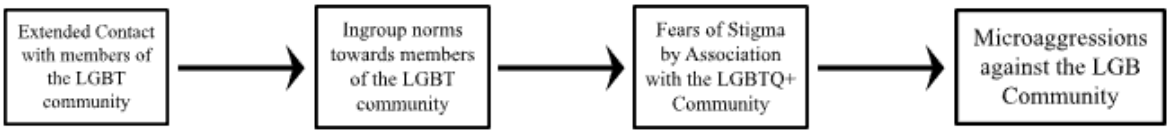
H4: Fears of SBA will predict decisions that make the LGB community less visible in films, a type of environmental microaggression against members of the LGB community. By environmental microaggressions, I specifically refer to systemic biases and inequities in the environment, which can include decisions to refrain from representing the LGB community in the local environment (Maji & Sarika, 2024).

H5: Fears of SBA will predict heteronormativity when recommending student activities. Heteronormativity is the assumption that the default or correct sexual orientation is heterosexual. LGB individuals find heteronormativity to be invalidating and distressing (Herz, 2015; Steck & Perry, 2018). Heteronormativity when recommending student activities is another example of environmental microaggressions.

H6: Fears of SBA will predict heteronormativity when providing dating advice to others in the community.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Model Guiding Current Research*




## Methods

### Participants

A sample of 682 undergraduate students from the University of Maryland (*M* age = 19.13 years) was recruited for two studies. A power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007; Faul et

al., 2009) indicated that this sample would provide about 80% power to detect a small effect size, $f^2 = .03$.

Given the similar methods, we combined the samples from the two studies. Of this combined sample, 30.2% of the participants identified as male, 67.5% identified as female, and 2.4% identified as neither male nor female. A majority of this sample identified as White/Caucasian (49.9%), followed by Asian/Asian American (31.4%), Black/African American (12.8%), Hispanic (10.4%), Middle Eastern (3.8%), Other (2.5%), and Native American (0.3%). Most participants identified as Straight (84.7%), followed by Bisexual (9.8%), Other (3.3%), Lesbian (1.4%), and Gay (.89%). Participants were recruited for study 1 (n = 269) or study 2 (n = 413). The only difference between the studies was that slightly different versions of the fear of SBA measure were administered in the two studies. Scores on these two versions had similar associations with most other variables.

**Procedure**

After providing informed consent through Qualtrics, participants were first asked to provide the name and contact information for three of their friends. Then they completed a series of disguised measures of microaggressions. The measures were designed to create opportunities to commit or correct microaggressions against the LGB community without being aware of what was being measured.

After completing these measures, participants were directed to complete a series of self-report measures, which assessed experiences, attitudes, and contact with minority groups and demographic variables. Participants then received credit for participation.

Friends nominated by participants received an email invitation to complete a brief survey, which assessed their perception of the primary participant's conversational utterances. Embedded

in this list were two items assessing negativity toward the LGB population (e.g. “no homo” and “that’s so gay”). Upon completion, friends of participants were entered into a raffle for a $25 gift card.

**Measures**

***Disguised Measures of Microaggressions (See Appendix A - D)***

Participants completed disguised measures of microaggressions. These measures were designed to assess the tendency for primary participants to commit or permit microaggressions against members of the LGB community. Four measures were used, and are explained in more detail below.

**First Year Dating Advice.** Participants were asked to provide a hypothetical first year college student with dating advice. They were asked to state what advice they would give to women and what advice they would give to men. The purpose of this question was to assess whether a participant assumed heterosexual orientation when providing advice, a type of microaggression. A team of three coders separately rated the advice in terms of whether participants assumed heterosexuality (0 = did not assume heterosexuality; 1 = assumed heterosexuality) , after which I examined the interrater reliability. Interrater reliability was acceptable (percent agreement = .96; average Kappa = .89). When coders disagreed, the modal rating was used.

**College Students’ Conversations.** The second task involved friends of the original participant completing a measure of the primary participant’s conversational utterances. Most of the phrases were decoy phrases such as “what’s up?” and “no sweat”. However, two of the phrases (i.e., “that’s so gay” and “no homo”) were included to assess how often a participant uses homophobic language that is hurtful or insensitive toward the LGB community. Friend

informants exhibited moderate agreement with each other on the two homophobic items (average informant-total correlation = .27; ICC = .53). Their ratings were averaged to index the primary participant's conversational microaggressions. Higher values indicate more frequent use of homophobic slurs against the LGB community.

**Activity Preferences.** The third task involved participants reviewing, assessing, and commenting on the importance of various hypothetical college student activities, all of which conveyed heteronormativity. An example of such an activity includes "a program to boost men's confidence in flirting with women". After participants rated the importance of each activity, they were asked if they had any suggestions regarding how each activity should be implemented. The purpose of this part was to assess whether participants corrected the heteronormative nature of the activity. Not correcting heteronormativity, and allowing it to prevail, is a type of microaggression. A team of three coders rated the activities in terms of whether participants corrected heteronormativity (0=did not correct heteronormativity; 1 = corrected heteronormativity), after which I examined the interrater reliability. When coders disagreed, the modal rating was used. Inter-rater reliability was acceptable (percent agreement = .99; average Kappa = .88).

**Film Preferences.** The final task to assess microaggressions required participants to make recommendations for films to be displayed to other students, which was designed to measure environmental microaggressions. Participants received 10 bogus film descriptions, two of which featured queer themes. Examples include "A film about a nerdy kid who falls in love with a popular girl dating a football player, after tutoring her in math." and "A film about two men who love each other but are trying to keep it a secret." Participants ranked the 10 films in

terms of their recommendations for showing the film to other students. Higher values indicate deprioritizing films featuring queer themes.

**Primary Self-Report Measures**

***Fear of Stigma by Association with LGBTQ+ (Fear of SBA; See Appendix E and F)***

Participants in Study 1 completed items assessing expected SBA with the LGBTQ+ community, adopted from prior research (Boyes et al., 2013). Participants completed ten items assessing the extent to which they expected to experience SBA (e.g., "If I became friends with someone who was a member of the LGBTQ+ community I would be teased"; "If I became friends with someone who was a member of the LGBTQ+ community, people would gossip behind my back") using a 7-point likert response scale (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*).

For participants in Study 2, the items were slightly reworded to more directly assess fear of SBA rather than expectations (e.g., "If I became friends with a member of the LGBTQ+ community I would be worried about being teased"; "If I became friends with a member of the LGBTQ+ community I would be worried about people gossiping behind my back") using a 7-point likert response scale (1: *strongly disagree*; 7: *strongly agree*). Responses to all questions were averaged for each participant to assess the extent to which participants feared stigma due to association with members of the LGBTQ+ community.

***Quantity of Extended Contact (See Appendix G)***

Participants completed an adopted measure assessing the quantity of extended contact they have with members of the LGBT community (Turner et al., 2008) (e.g., "How many of your close friends do you think have friends that are gay?."; "How many of your neighbors do you think have friends that are lesbian?") using a 5 point response scale (1: *None*; 5: *most*). Participants were asked separately about the LGBT friendships maintained by several types of

social network members, including their friends, family members, coworkers, classmates, and straight people who are part of their social network. Items separately assessed the network member's friendship with individuals who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. The structure for these items was: How many of your [social network member type: friends, family members, coworkers, classmates, or straight people] do you think have friends that are [LGBT member type: gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender]. Responses were averaged to create a general measure of the quantity of extended contact with members of the LGBT community.

***Ingroup Norms (See Appendix H)***

Participants completed a measure assessing their perceptions of their social network members' attitudes toward the LGBT community (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011) (e.g., "How would you describe the attitudes held by your family towards bisexual people?"). Responses were averaged to create a general measure of ingroup norms towards members of the LGBT community. Participants were asked separately about the same types of social network members described above (i.e., family members, coworkers, classmates, and straight people that are part of their social network) and they completed separate items for each type of member of the LGBT community described above (i.e., gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people). The structure for these items was: How would you describe the attitudes held by [social network member type: friends, family members, coworkers, classmates, or straight people] towards [LGBT member type: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender]?

**Data Analysis**

Ordinary least squares multiple regression models were used to test predictors of ingroup norms, fears of SBA, and the conversational and film microaggressions. Logistic regression models were used to test predictors of first year dating advice and activity corrections

microaggressions, given that these variables were binary. We used integrative data analysis (Curran & Hussong, 2009) to improve statistical precision and power. Data from both samples were pooled, and a dummy variable representing the sample (i.e., Study 1 versus Study 2) was controlled in all models to account for any systematic differences across samples. The confidence interval for the indirect effect of extended contact on lower fears of SBA via more positive ingroup norms was computed using 5,000 bootstrap samples.

## Results

### *Predicting Fears of SBA*

First, we tested the individual pathways of our model. Extended contact was a significant predictor of ingroup norms (Path A in Figure 1), $b = .22$, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = .28$, $t = 7.25$, $p < .001$. Thus, participants who had many social network members who maintained friendships with members of the LGBT community believed their social network had more positive attitudes toward that community relative to participants who had few social network members who maintained LGBT friendships.

Extended contact was also a significant predictor of fears of SBA, $b = -.276$, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = -.20$, $t = -5.19$, $p < .001$. Thus, participants who had many social network members who maintained friendships with members of the LGBT community were less fearful of SBA relative to participants who had few social network members who maintained LGBT friendships.

Next, we regressed fears of SBA on both ingroup norms and extended contact. Ingroup norms was a significant predictor of fears of SBA when controlling for extended contact (Path B in Figure 1), $b = -.55$, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = -.32$, $t = -8.29$, $p < .001$. Extended contact also remained a significant predictor of fears of SBA when controlling for ingroup norms, $b = -.16$, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = -.11$, $t = -2.94$, $p < .01$. Hence, participants who believed that their social network members had positive attitudes

toward the LGBT community were less fearful of SBA relative to participants who believed their social network members had negative attitudes toward this community. Independently of this effect, participants who had many social network members who maintained friendships with members of the LGBT community were less fearful of SBA relative to participants who had few social network members who maintained LGBT friendships.

The indirect effect of extended contact on fears of SBA was significant, 95% CI (-.17, -.08), indicating that greater extended contact indirectly predicted lower fears of SBA through more positive ingroup norms.[1]

***Predicting Microaggressions***

The next set of analyses examined the effects of fears of SBA on microaggressions (Path C in Figure 1) while controlling for the predictors of fears of SBA described above. In each analysis, we regressed a microaggressions variable on ingroup norms, extended contact, and fears of SBA. For the measures of microaggressions enacted in conversation, when making film recommendations, and when providing dating advice, higher values indicate enactment of microaggressions. For the measure of microaggressions when recommending student activities, lower values indicate enactment of microaggressions (i.e., allowing heteronormativity to prevail).

For informant-reported conversational microaggressions, only ingroup norms was a unique predictor, $b = -.10$, $\boldsymbol{\beta} = -.10$, $t = -1.98$, $p = .048$. Participants who believed their social network had positive attitudes toward the LGBT community were less likely to use slurs against this community in their conversations, as reported by their social network members. However, the unique effect of extended contact on informant-reported conversational microaggressions had

[1] None of the effects described above significantly varied across the two subsamples, interaction *p*s > .13.

a *p* value that was just above our alpha of .05, *b* = -.07, **β** = -.09, *t* = -1.87, *p* = .06. Fears of SBA were not a significant unique predictor of conversational microaggressions, *b* = .05, **β** = .08, *t* = 1.55, *p* = .12.

For film microaggressions, only ingroup norms was a unique and significant predictor, *b*= -.54, **β** = -.17, *t* = -3.44, *p* < .01. Participants who believed their social network had positive attitudes toward the LGBT community were less likely to commit environmental microaggressions (i.e., less likely to recommend against showing queer-themed films). Neither extended contact, *b* = -.17, **β** = -.07, *t* = -1.43, *p* = .15, nor SBA, *b* = -.12, **β** = -.06, *t* = -1.28, *p* = .20, was a unique significant predictor of film microaggressions.

For activity microaggressions, only extended contact was a significant predictor, *b* = .31, OR = 1.37, *p* = .01. Neither ingroup norms, *b* = .21, OR = 1.24, *p* = .25, nor fears of SBA, *b* = .06, OR = 1.06, *p* = .60, was a unique significant predictor of activity microaggressions. Participants who had many social network members who maintained friendships with the LGBT community were more likely to correct the heteronormativity in suggested student activities.

Finally, for dating advice microaggressions, none of the three variables were significant. Specifically, extended contact, *b* = -.01, OR = .99, *p* = .95, ingroup norms, *b* = -.09, OR = .91, *p* = .53, and fears of SBA, *b* = .08, OR = 1.08, *p* = .34, were not significant predictors of dating advice microaggressions.[2]

[2] The effects of the predictor variables on conversational, activity suggestions, and dating advice microaggressions did not significantly vary across the two subsamples, interaction *p*s > .13. However, the effect of ingroup norms and fear of SBA on film microaggressions varied across the subsamples. Ingroup norms and fears of SBA predicted lower film microaggressions in Study 1 but not in Study 2. Given that these effects were not consistent across studies, they are not interpreted further. There were no substantive differences in our results when we ran the same analyses only including participants who identified as heterosexual.

### *Ancillary Analysis*

We constructed a correlation matrix that analyzed the correlations between the four microaggression measures, sexual prejudice, and social desirability. All microaggression measures were significantly correlated with sexual prejudice in the expected direction except for the dating advice measure. This pattern suggests the validity of most microaggression measures, although it undermines the validity of the dating advice measure, suggesting that heteronormativity when giving dating advice may not be associated with feelings of prejudice.

We also conducted a sensitivity analysis by re-analyzing the results in which scores for ingroup norms and extended contact were computed while excluding individuals identifying as transgender from the analysis. Within this analysis, conversational microaggressions were now significantly predicted by extended contact, $b$ = -.06, $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ = -.09, $t$ = -2.00, $p$ = .046. However, ingroup norms were no longer a significant predictor of conversational microaggressions, $b$ = -.06, $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ = -.06, $t$ = -1.26, $p$ = .21.

## Discussion

These findings suggest that while fear of SBA with the LGBTQ+ community may not be related to microaggressions, fear of SBA is predicted by extended contact and ingroup norms. Specifically, extended contact mediated the relationship between ingroup norms and fears of SBA. Participants who had many social network members who maintained friendships with members of the LGBT community were less fearful of SBA, and this effect was partly explained by the fact that they believed their social network had more positive attitudes toward that community. Thus, H1 and H2 were supported.

Only ingroup norms predicted conversational microaggressions. Participants who perceived the attitudes of their social network to be positive toward the LGBT community were

less likely to commit microaggressions against this community. Extended contact and fears of SBA were not predictors of these types of microaggressions, contrary to H3.

Similarly, only ingroup norms predicted microaggressions with regard to film preferences across the whole sample. Participants who perceived their ingroup norms to be inclusive of the LGBT community were more supportive of showing films depicting queer characters and themes. On the other hand, extended contact and fears of SBA were not related to film preferences across the whole sample, contrary to H4.

Extended contact was the only significant predictor of the activity microaggressions measure. Participants who have a high amount of extended contact with the LGBT community were more likely to be cognizant of creating activities inclusive of the queer community, as suggested by their tendencies to correct heterosexist student activity proposals. Fear of SBA did not predict scores on the activity microaggressions measure, contrary to H5.

Contrary to H6, none of our predictors were significantly related to microaggressions when giving dating advice. This suggests that other factors are primarily influencing whether or not someone disregards the LGB community when giving general dating advice.

Hence, across four tests, this research finds no significant evidence that fears of SBA are predictive of microaggressions.

This research supports prior studies that have demonstrated that extended contact predicts ingroup norms (Gómez et al., 2011; Turner et al., 2008). Specifically, when people have social network members who maintain friendships with members of the LGBT community, they appear to be more likely to believe their social network is accepting of this community. To our knowledge, this study is the first of its kind to quantify a participant's extended contact with members of the LGBT community within their social network.

These findings also support recent research that has been conducted linking extended contact to microaggressions (McGuire et al., 2023). Specifically, ingroup norms were a significant predictor of conversational and activity microaggressions. This suggests that if someone perceives that their ingroup is intolerant of the LGBT community, they are more likely to use derogatory terms and assume heteronormativity towards members of the LGB community. This may be indicative of an individual's desire to conform to the norms of their social network, which has been associated with using hate speech in prior research (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020; Romeo et al., 2017).

Most importantly, this research provides evidence for a novel outcome of ingroup norms and extended contact. Specifically, the current study supports extended contact as a mediator between ingroup norms and fears of SBA against the LGBTQ+ community. The current study helps to explain the importance of ingroup norms and extended contact with the LGBT community as relevant predictors of fears of SBA. As previously mentioned, people may fear and want to avoid SBA with the LGBTQ+ community because the community is stigmatized (Gower et al., 2021) and SBA can lead to distress (Van der Sanden et al., 2013). The current research suggests that people may look to their ingroup members, and consider their relationships and attitudes, to discern whether or not they will face SBA with the LGBTQ+ community. Therefore, this research suggests that extended contact and positive ingroup norms towards the LGBT community can alleviate fears of SBA, thus increasing one's willingness to associate with the community. As fears of SBA may be rooted in desires for social worth, it reasons that concern about belonging, status, or significance may mediate the effect of extended contact and ingroup norms on fears of SBA. This possibility should be examined in future research.

This study has several limitations which can help lay the groundwork for future research in this area. Most notably, the measures used in this study did not encompass all of the LGBTQ+ community. Specifically, ingroup norms and extended contact only applied to members of the LGBT community, while the disguised microaggression measures were only applicable to the LGB community. As demonstrated by the ancillary analysis, conversational microaggressions were significantly predicted by a different variable depending on whether people identifying as transgender were included in the extended contact and ingroup norms measures. In a follow up study, it may be helpful to rework these measures so that they all encompass the entirety of the LGBTQ+ community.

Another limitation is that the study only took place at the University of Maryland, a relatively liberal place. Therefore, our participants are more likely to be tolerant of the LGBT community, likely at a disproportionate rate to most other areas. As a result, it is possible that participants were more likely to have favorable ingroup norms and extended contact with members of the LGBT community. Additionally, the study was conducted solely in a loose cultural context meaning that adherence to social norms is more flexible. Tight cultures tend to have strict social norms and are less tolerant of those who go against these norms (Gelfand et al., 2011). People who live within a tight culture may have stronger fears of SBA since they would perceive harsher punishments for choosing to diverge from social norms. This may lead to an increase in microaggressions against the LGB community since these individuals would be highly motivated to show commitment to their ingroup especially if they fear SBA.

A third limitation is that three of the four measures of microaggression behaviors (i.e., film preferences, activity suggestions, and dating advice) were not publicly observable behaviors. Goal pursuit theory suggests that attitudes might not always correspond with behavior

(Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019). Specifically, an individual must determine whether the behavior will have the desired effect they want it to have, as well as whether the behavior outweighs other options the individual may have (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019). For an individual to avoid SBA, the action must outweigh other goals the individual has, such as wanting to appear inclusive. This may explain the failure to find effects of fears of SBA. By better priming fears of SBA in a future study such as by having participants complete the disguised microaggression measures verbally in front of someone within their social network, an individual would be more motivated to avoid SBA.

Higgins (1998) also differentiates between promotion and prevention oriented behavior and that prevention oriented goals do not necessarily predict promotive behaviors. Therefore, fears of SBA (i.e. a prevention oriented goal) would not always predict engaging in microaggressions (i.e. a promotion oriented outcome behavior). This reiterates the lack of a definitive relationship between attitudes and behaviors that serves as an explanation for why fears of SBA may not predict microaggressions against the LGB community.

Related to these microaggression measures, previous research defines aggressive behavior as having the intent to hurt another person (Suris et al., 2004). Because participants may not have had intentions to hurt members of the LGB community in their responses, I cannot be certain these measures were indicative of aggressive behavior by that definition. However, sometimes the perpetrator and the victim of an aggressive act may disagree on whether the act constitutes aggression (Marcovitz, 1982). Our disguised measures of microaggressions may still be perceived as an act of aggression by a member of the queer community even if the perpetrator did not intend or believe so. This highlights the broader issue of defining aggressive behavior as aggression can be subjective in many cases such as in this study.

As mentioned above, there were no significant differences in the results when only heterosexual individuals were included as opposed to both heterosexuals and members of the LGBTQ+ community. This could be due to one of two reasons. The first is that members of the LGBTQ+ community go through similar processes of evaluating extended contact and ingroup norms to assess fears of SBA, even if it pertains to a community they associate with. The other explanation is that there was a significantly higher proportion of individuals who identified as straight relative to a part of the LGBTQ+ community, and the subsample of sexual minorities was too minimal to influence the results in any significant way.

It is also possible that the significance of our mediation model is dependent on the race of the individual. In the current study, we did not cross-analyze the data according to the race of the individual. Future studies may benefit from taking into account whether or not the race of the individual affects how extended contact and ingroup norms impact fears of SBA.

A novel aspect of this study was measuring participants' enactment of microaggressions. While there are a significant number of microaggression measures, they almost exclusively assess perception of being the victim of microaggressions (e.g. Balsam et al., 2011; Sterzing & Gartner, 2020; Woodford et al., 2015). Future research should work to create validated measures of microaggressions from the perspective of those who commit them, as this would facilitate additional research on the predictors of perpetrating microaggressions. Additionally, longitudinal research is needed to assess change in study variables over time. For instance, increases in extended contact with the LGBT community may predict changes over time in fears of SBA, which may predict changes over time in willingness to establish one's own affiliations.

Overall, the results from this study suggest fears of SBA are predicted by extended contact and ingroup norms, though they do not predict perpetration of microaggressions. These

findings underscore the importance of fostering inclusive social networks to increase comfort with intergroup contact.

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# Appendix A

First-year dating advice.

We are collecting advice from research participants regarding dating in college, and will be posting this advice in a column on relationships in college. Please provide us with some advice that we could consider anonymously reposting for the column. If you could give an incoming first-year college student advice about dating, what would it be? What specific advice would you give to men? What specific advice would you give to women? Note that we will not use your name if we repost your comments.

# Appendix B

**Measure Completed by Friends:**

Conversational Behavior

We are interested in the frequency of common phrases and words in conversations. Below is a list of common phrases and words. Please rate how often **the person who nominated you to participate in this study** used each phrase using the response scale below.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | All the time |

1. In conversation, how often does this person say: What's up?
2. In conversation, how often does this person say: I feel you.
3. In conversation, how often does this person say: I get it.
4. In conversation, how often does this person say: Same here.
5. In conversation, how often does this person say: My bad
6. In conversation, how often does this person say: Oh my god!
7. In conversation, how often does this person say: You bet
8. In conversation, how often does this person say: No worries
9. In conversation, how often does this person say: No biggie
10. In conversation, how often does this person say: No big deal
11. In conversation, how often does this person say: No sweat
12. In conversation, how often does this person say: No homo
13. In conversation, how often does this person say: Cool
14. In conversation, how often does this person say: Bummer
15. In conversation, how often does this person say: Shady
16. In conversation, how often does this person say: Hot
17. In conversation, how often does this person say: It sucked
18. In conversation, how often does this person say: That's so gay
19. In conversation, how often does this person say: That's fire
20. In conversation, how often does this person say: Not my cup of tea
21. In conversation, how often does this person say: I can't stand…
22. In conversation, how often does this person say: I'm a huge fan of…
23. In conversation, how often does this person say: On fleek
24. In conversation, how often does this person say: Buggin'
25. In conversation, how often does this person say: Trippin'
26. In conversation, how often does this person say: Poppin'
27. In conversation, how often does this person say: Bet
28. In conversation, how often does this person say: Boujee
29. In conversation, how often does this person say: That's fire
30. In conversation, how often does this person say: No problem

# Appendix C

We have partnered with the Office of Student Activities at UMD to obtain data on UMD students' activity preferences. Please rate each of the programs below in terms of how much each program / activity should be prioritized by the Office of Student Activities.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Not a priority | Low priority | Medium priority | High priority | Essential |

1. A speed dating social event at UMD in which men have 5-minute conversations with women, and after the event, those who are interested in each other will receive their mutual contact information.
2. A program to reduce dating violence on campus by training men to take women's perspective on issues surrounding dating.
3. Assigning first-year students to same-sex study halls to reduce their distraction and increase their focus on their academic work.
4. A program to help improve romantic relationships by teaching women to better assert themselves around men.
5. A program to reduce the incidence of sexual assault by training men to control their sexual impulses around women.
6. A program to help improve romantic relationships by teaching women to better appreciate men's needs and communication styles.
7. A program to boost men's confidence in flirting with women.
8. A program on how men can dress better to look attractive to women.

If the Office of Student Activities decides to implement each of these programs, what issues should they keep in mind? For each of the programs listed below, please write in the below program any suggestions that the Office of Student Activities regarding how the program should be implemented. If you do not have a suggestion, type "N/A."

1. A speed dating social event at UMD in which men have 5-minute conversations with women, and after the event, those who are interested in each other will receive their mutual contact information.
2. A program to reduce dating violence on campus by training men to take women's perspective on issues surrounding dating.
3. Assigning first-year students to same-sex study halls to reduce their distraction and increase their focus on their academic work.
4. A program to help improve romantic relationships by teaching women to better assert themselves around men.
5. A program to reduce the incidence of sexual assault by training men to control their sexual impulses around women.
6. A program to help improve romantic relationships by teaching women to better appreciate men's needs and communication styles.
7. A program to boost men's confidence in flirting with women.
8. A program on how men can dress better to look attractive to women.

# Appendix D

We have also partnered with the Maryland Filmmakers Club to receive recommendations from students regarding what films should be shown. Please rank the following film descriptions based on your recommendations for which movie should be shown.

1. A film about an AI that is trying to take over the world through social media.
2. A film about a woman cheating on her boyfriend with another woman.
3. A film about a demon that possesses people to kill the next person they encounter.
4. A film about a nerdy kid who falls in love with a popular girl dating a football player, after tutoring her in math.
5. A film about a superhero who can see into the future up until the day he is going to die.
6. A film about two men who love each other but have to keep their love secret from the rest of the world.
7. A film about finding a cure to cancer, only to find out the cure turns people into zombies when they die.
8. A film about a person of color being raised in a predominantly upper class white neighborhood.
9. A film about a prince who falls in love with a poor woman unbeknownst to the rest of his family.
10. A film about an alternate reality where people are born old and age backwards

# Appendix E

**Study 1. Fears of Stigma by association questionnaire LGBTQ-specific (Adapted from Boyes et al., 2013)**

Instructions. Please indicate your agreement with each of the statements below using the accompanying response scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

If I became friends with a member of the LGBTQ community:

1) I would be teased
2) I would be treated badly
3) People would gossip behind my back
4) I would be rejected
5) Parents would not want me around their kids
6) I would have difficulty making new friends
7) I would feel different and alone
8) People would avoid touching me
9) People would be afraid of me
10) People would think I am a bad person

# Appendix F

**Study 2. Fears of Stigma by association questionnaire LGBTQ-specific (Adapted from Boyes et al., 2013)**

Instructions. Please indicate your agreement with each of the statements below using the accompanying response scale.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Slightly disagree | Neither agree or disagree | Slightly agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |

If I became friends with a member of the LGBTQ community I would be worried about:

1) Being teased
2) Being treated badly
3) People gossiping behind my back
4) Being rejected
5) Parents not wanting me around their kids
6) Having difficulty making new friends
7) Feeling different and alone
8) People not wanting to touch me
9) People being afraid of me
10) People thinking that I am a bad person

# Appendix G

**Extended Contact**

Adapted from Hewstone et al. (2008)

Targets: your close friends, your family, your coworkers, your classmates, straight people

Group names: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender

How many of [target] do you think have friends who are [group name]?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| None | A few | About half | More than half | Most |

# Appendix H

**Ingroup norms (adopted from Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2011)**

Targets: your close friends, your family, your coworkers, your classmates

Group names: gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender

How would you describe the attitudes held by [target] toward [group name] people?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Very negative | Negative | Neither positive nor negative | Positive | Very positive |