The Role of Microaggressions and Mentorship on College Student Identity Integration

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All materials and data associated with this study are available here: https://osf.io/cb5n9/
Abstract

Over the last few decades, colleges and universities have become more diverse as students from historically underrepresented groups are enrolling at unprecedented rates. Research has suggested that college serves a unique life stage in which students further develop their identity where contextual factors (e.g., social interactions) influence their development. To date, however, very little work has explored the relationship between microaggressions, mentorship, and identity integration, and no research has examined the interconnected nature of social, academic, and leadership identity domains in college students. The present study uses a correlational, non-experimental design to examine the aforementioned variables in a cross-sectional sample of 331 undergraduate students. Gender minority, compared to gender majority, students reported greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains. Moreover, microaggressions were positively associated with social identity but negatively associated with academic identity and well-being. Also, social identity and leadership identity were positively associated with identity integration. Furthermore, identity integration and mentorship were both positively associated with well-being. These findings demonstrate the relationship between social, academic, and leadership identity domains, and highlight the critical role that microaggressions and mentorship may play in the development of college student identity. Implications for an increased focus on mentorship programs, campus climates, and clinical interventions to promote the identity development of minority status students are discussed.

Keywords: college student; identity development; mentorship; microaggressions
The Role of Microaggressions and Mentorship in College Student Identity Integration

In the United States, the demand for higher education has boomed as jobs are favoring college-educated applicants to meet their organizations’ desired levels of social and analytical skills (Pew Research Center, 2016). As a result, each year more high school students are enrolling in postsecondary education with reports displaying that 66.7% of 2017 high school graduates pursued college or university tracks (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) predicts this trend will continue, with United States undergraduate enrollment reaching 17.4 million students by 2027; an increase of over 31% from 2000 (McFarland et al., 2018). With increasing enrollment, it is crucial that the United States higher education system consider the demographics of its student population.

Today’s student population, millennials, are the most diverse generational group in the United States’ history with over 44% identifying as a racial or ethnic minority (Frey, 2018). This trend is expected to continue as the United States shifts to a majority-minority society, with 56% of the future student-aged population (post-millennials) predicted to be a racial or ethnic minority in 2035 (Frey, 2018). While postsecondary enrollment rates have risen for millennials of all racial and ethnic groups, only 23% of Black and 17% Latinx students earn bachelor’s degrees compared to 43% of White students (Frey, 2018). Race and ethnicity, however, are not the only social identity that experience educational inequality. For example, although women comprise more than half of the undergraduate enrollment (McFarland et al., 2018), gender disparities are seen across academic disciplines such as computer sciences (17.9%), engineering (19.3%), physical sciences (39%) and mathematics (43.1%) (National Science Foundation, 2016). Sexual minorities as well report inequality, with 25% experiencing harassment on campus
and 30% considering leaving their institution (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). These examples of educational inequality, among many more, stem from centuries of institutional bias dating back to the colonial era when higher education was created by and for White Christian men. As a result, students who do not fit any of these identities are in for a rough transition.

As students from marginalized backgrounds transition to college, they may experience a clash between the values of their academic and home cultures. Typically, these students are the first in their family to attend pursue postsecondary education and, in turn, do not know the norms of college culture (Bryant, 2017). As a result, students from marginalized backgrounds experience a culture shock similar to that of students entering colleges and universities in a new country. Cultural shock stems from factors such as academic readiness, campus diversity, discrimination, social support and student involvement (Bryant, 2017). Furthermore, culture shock can hinder institutions’ goal to promote the growth and development of critical thinkers and leaders. Subsequently, as more students from marginalized backgrounds enroll in higher education, colleges and universities are recognizing the need for creating inclusive communities.

In the present study, we argue that systems of power within the college environment distinctly influence the identity development process of minority and majority status students. Developmental and poststructural approaches were adopted to understand how college students integrate their social, academic, and leadership identity domains. Moreover, we investigate how college students’ social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexuality) influence their experience with oppression and privilege. In particular, this study sought to replicate and extend existing identity and power literature by examining how exposure to microaggressions play a role in college
students’ identity integration and well-being, as well as how access to mentorship may influence
the relationship between identity integration and well-being (see Figure 1).

Identity Development Theories

Identity is a socially constructed, dynamic concept within the social sciences. For
psychologists, identity refers to an individual’s self-concept (Sharma & Sharma, 2010), or
individual beliefs about oneself. Generally, identity epitomizes the answer to “Who am I?”
(Sharma & Sharma, 2010, p. 118). There are two types of identity: personal identity and social
identity. Personal identity (similar to self-concept) refers to the conscious recognition of one’s
unique characteristics; and, social identity refers to one’s sense of who they are, based on their
group membership(s) (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). The formation of these identities occurs
through the experiences, emotions, and relationships an individual encounters throughout their
life. As a means to conceptualize the process of forming one’s identity, numerous theories have
emerged to describe the structure and dynamics of individual and social concepts of identity.

Developmental theories. Much of the research on identity originated in developmental
psychology (Kroger, 2017); which conceptualizes identity in a developmental and linear process.
In particular, an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) has historically been adopted to
identify the systemic environmental factors (e.g., gender, family, school, media, and attitudes)
involved in the identity development of an individual’s personal and social identities. A few of
the significant identity development theories include Erikson’s (1959) stages of psychosocial
development, Chickering’s (1993) theory of identity development, and Arnett’s (2000) emerging
adulthood theory.
Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development. Erikson’s (1959) stages of psychosocial development was the first theory to illustrate personality as predetermined by genetic factors as well as influenced by environmental factors—an epigenetic approach. Human development is described in eight stages: (a) infancy, (b) early childhood, (c) childhood, (d) puberty, (e) adolescence, (f) early adulthood, (g) middle adulthood, and (h) late adulthood. During each life stage an individual is faced with psychosocial crises that influence their lifelong development; and, when a person completes each stage, a healthy personality forms with the development of fundamental virtues (Erikson, 1968). A common theme throughout the eight developmental stages, especially the adolescence stage, is the formation of one’s sense of self. In particular, Erikson conceptualized sense of self as ego identity (similar to personal identity; Erikson, 1959). From Erikson’s (1968) perspective, adolescence is a fundamental stage where identity crisis first emerges. Here, adolescents begin to question their personality, beliefs, reputation, and aspirations and explore different roles, activities, and behaviors to gain a sense of themselves. Consequently, individuals who successfully explore themselves emerge with a coherent ego identity, whereas those who do not remain with identity confusion (Erikson, 1968). Overall, Erikson’s work established the first developmental theory for identity development (Kroger, 2017), which would allow for further research of the adolescence stage.

Chickering’s theory of identity development. Extending on Erikson’s (1959) theory, Chickering’s (1969) theory of identity development proposed a systematic framework for the factors involved with identity formation among college students—late adolescence. Chickering (1969) identified student development as seven vectors: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) developing autonomy, (d) establishing identity, (e) freeing interpersonal
relationships, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity. During their first-year students move between the first three vectors to establish a sense of self, then begin to form their identity during their sophomore and junior year, and, finally, encounter the last three vectors their senior year. However, unlike Erikson’s (1959, 1968) stages of psychosocial development, the seven vectors are non-hierarchical as students may move between higher level vectors before fully completing the necessary developmental tasks for a lower vector. Accordingly, as students encounter new distinct emotional, interpersonal, ethical, and intellectual experiences, they undergo a process of identification and differentiation which prompts their journey through the seven vectors. As a means to address the idiosyncratic experience of individual students (e.g., race, gender, and sexuality), Chickering and Reisser (1993) revised and rearranged the original seven vectors as: (a) developing competence, (b) managing emotions, (c) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, (d) developing mature interpersonal relationships, (e) establishing identity, (f) developing purpose, and (g) developing integrity. In sum, Chickering’s (1969) theory of identity development provides implications for unique identity development among college-aged individuals—emerging adults.

*Arnett’s emerging adulthood theory.* Arnett’s (2000) theory of development introduces the concept of a lifespan stage—emerging adulthood—which encompasses the late teens through the twenties (ages 18 through 25), and is distinct from adolescence and young adulthood (Erikson, 1959). During this development stage, emerging adults explore the multitude of pathways they may choose in life and beginning their transition from teenagers to full-fledged adults. This new life stage arose because of how industrialization has changed traditional adult identity markers. For example, in the United States., the millennials have expressed more liberal
gender roles, sexual behavior, and marriage standards (Arnett, 2004) that previously marked the beginning of adulthood. As a result, while 18 years marks the legal age for adulthood, young people are barely beginning to question their sense of self and relationship with adulthood. Moreover, the pressure to establish life goals and find the right career have caused emerging adults to enter another identity crisis (Arnett, 2000). As a means to describe this phenomenon, these five characteristics identify emerging adulthood: (a) the age of identity explorations, (b) the age of instability, (c) the self-focused age, (d) the age of feeling in-between, and (e) the age of possibilities. Altogether, based on developmental theories, identity development is an integral component of college-aged individuals, that requires various approaches to address the underlying complexity.

**Poststructural theories.** While developmental theories (Arnett, 2000; Chickering, 1969; Erikson, 1959) have provided a foundation for assessing the process and dynamics of identity formation, as well as influence of social contexts, they fail to acknowledge the fluid nature of identity. However, a poststructural approach (Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1980), which describes how societal structures and dynamics (e.g., power and privilege) shape identity, especially among marginalized populations (e.g., race, gender, and sexuality), can mitigate the problem. Popular poststructural identity theories include critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), postmodern feminism (Wicke & Ferguson, 1992), and queer theory (Sullivan, 2003).

**Critical race theory.** Critical race theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) is a theoretical framework that describes the relationship between race, law, and power. The goal of critical race theory is to expose hidden systemic and customary ways in which racism manifests. Six underlying tenets characterize critical race theory: (a) ordinariness, (b) interest convergence, (c)
the social construction of race, (d) differential racialization, (e) intersectionality, and (f) a unique voice of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001); these tenets illustrates how social situations, inequality, and oppression socially construct racial identity. Furthermore, the policies and practices institutions (e.g., higher education) employ are identified as methods for reinforcing and perpetuating societal racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Overall, through critical race theory, identity can be described as malleable and dependent on societal power structures.

**Postmodern feminism.** Postmodern feminism (Wicke & Ferguson, 1992) is a theoretical framework that addresses the gaps between previous waves of feminism. In particular, the theory critiques the feminist movement for defining femininity against the social norms of masculinity. Most specifically, postmodern feminism questions the social construction of femininity according to materialistic beliefs (e.g., body parts and clothing; Wicke & Ferguson, 1992). Gendered pronouns and categories, as a result, were rejected for the power structures they create in the feminist movement itself. Moreover, postmodern feminism rejected the notion of gender (e.g., social construct) and sex (e.g., biological construct) for their classification and simplification of people (Wicke & Ferguson, 1992). In summary, postmodern feminism emphasizes individualism and rejects the concept of identity as singular.

**Queer theory.** Queer theory (Sullivan, 2003) is a theoretical framework that questions the relationships between biology, culture, gender, and sexuality. Here, the word queer serves to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires (e.g., non-specific, non-binary, and uncategorizable; Sullivan, 2003). As a result, the goal of queer theory centers on understanding the historical and cultural context of sexual orientation and gender identity. In particular, the theory draws attention to the dominant privileges and norms of heterosexism and cissexism that
perpetuate power structures. Through this lens, queer theory assesses the relationship between social status and social identity; along with the importance of deconstructing identity categories (Sullivan, 2003). Through this understanding, queer theory describes identity as a fluid social construct. Collectively, poststructural theories characterize identity development as a dynamic process of construction and reconstruction according to societal structures.

**Student development theory.** Student development is the intersection between developmental and poststructural theories as it describes how students’ developmental capabilities emerge, progress, and mature in higher education institutions to form their identity (Rodgers, 1990). As a means to properly illustrate the complexity of student development, various fields (e.g., psychology, education, law, anthropology, and gender studies) have proposed theoretical frameworks for understanding the individual, their social context, societal influences, and various dimensions of identity (Arnett, 2000; Chickering, 1969; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Erikson, 1959; Sullivan, 2003; Wicke & Ferguson, 1992). This diverse composition of literature composes student development theory—an umbrella term for the various theoretical approaches centered on understanding how students gain knowledge and contextualize their experiences in higher education settings (Long, 2012). A few commonalities throughout the literature involve the nature of development (Erikson, 1959), the social construction of identity (Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1980), and the influence of environmental factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). More specifically, student development theory has centralized its focus on assessing three prominent identity domains: (a) social identity, (b) academic identity, and (c) leadership identity (Long, 2012).

**Identity Domains in College**
In the United States, colleges and universities are optional postsecondary tracks, characterized as the hub for identity exploration for young adults (Arnett, 2015). During college, students face a multitude of environmental factors (e.g., social and academic) which prompt a process of identification and differentiation (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). A few of the common areas of exploration for college students include cosmopolitanism, intelligence and knowledgeability, and occupation (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). In other words, as students progress through their college journey, their social, academic, and leadership identity domains take formation according to their institution’s environment. However, while higher education is an option available to everyone, systemic barriers prevent marginalized populations (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual minorities) from enrolling and graduating from these institutions (Frey, 2018; Roderick, Nagaoka, & Coca, 2009). Consequently, marginalized populations are incongruently represented within higher education resulting in their status as minorities; which, in turn, distinctly influences their identity development.

Social identity. As emerging adults transition and navigate their college experiences, their social identity develops (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity commonly refers to one’s racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual backgrounds, and one of the most powerful ways to develop social identity is by identifying against other people. This phenomenon of identification and differentiation is explained by social identity theory, as it concerns the links between identities and social contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory proposes that individuals categorize themselves as belonging to various groups, and, through self-categorization, individuals develop a sense of affiliation to the groups they feel a sense of belonging to (e.g., in-group); along with a sense of disconnection to the groups they do not
consider themselves a member of (e.g., out-group). The three central principles to social identity theory are: (a) social categorization, (b) social identification, and (c) social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through these principles, the theory illustrates how individuals constantly categorize themselves, evaluate in-groups and out-groups, and compare their values to determine the in-groups’ and out-groups’ worth. Moreover, based on this theory, society is characterized as a hierarchy, in which an individual holds a relative level of value based upon their social group—respectively social status—with minority status groups holding low social status and majority status groups holding high social status. Thus, individuals continuously strive to improve their self-esteem through personal success or to associate themselves with successful groups. Furthermore, a positive social identity is rewarded with positive social self-esteem, whereas a negative social identity is followed by actions (e.g., in-group favoritism and prejudice) to create a more positive image for the in-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Overall, Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory provides a foundation for understanding how minority and majority status college students contextualize their social identity with relation to their peers.

Race and ethnicity. The concepts of race and ethnicity are important in the United States, given the country’s history and demographic makeup. Often, race and ethnicity are used interchangeably, when they are in fact distinct concepts; with race referring to physical differences (e.g., bone structure and skin, hair, or eye color) that society deems as significant, and ethnicity referring to shared culture factors (e.g., language, ancestry, practices, and beliefs). Furthermore, the social importance given to these constructs means they play a crucial role in not only forming social groups but one’s own identity. As such, literature has explored the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity to one’s self-concept—racial and ethnic identity.
For example, Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, and Smith (1997) explored the relationship between racial identity and self-esteem among African American high school and college students. The findings revealed that while African American students view race as a central aspect of their self-concept, it is not directly related to their level of self-esteem (Rowley et al., 1998). Additionally, there was a positive association between private regard—the extent to which individuals feel positively (or negatively) towards other African Americans and their affiliation with the racial identity—and self-esteem. In a similar study, Phinney, Cantu, and Kurtz (1997) examined the relationship between ethnic identity, American identity, and self-esteem among Latinx, African American, and White high school students. The findings revealed ethnic identity as a significant predictor for self-esteem across all ethnic groups. Moreover, ethnic identity and American identity were strongly correlated, but only among White students; as they perceived American identity as their ethnicity (Phinney et al., 1997). Furthermore, ethnically diverse settings were found to promote ethnic identity development among all ethnic groups. Altogether, these studies highlight the role of racial and ethnic identity as predictors for self-esteem.

Overall, the literature provides implications for how racial and ethnic identity develop distinctly across racial and ethnic groups, along with its importance during adolescence and emerging adulthood. In particular, racial and ethnic identity have a crucial role in the identity development of minorities. More specifically, in the United States, a racial and ethnic minority (REM) refers to a person of African, Latin American, Asian, or Indigenous descent or origin. Additionally, these REM groups commonly fall under the list of underrepresented students in colleges and universities. Finally, the previous literature, also provides implications for the
importance of other social identities, such as gender and sexual orientation, in developing one’s sense of self.

**Gender and sexual orientation.** In the last few years, the concepts of gender and sexual orientation have gained increasing importance globally. Gender and sexual orientation are fluid constructs used to describe one’s presentation and relationships. Often, gender refers to cultural or attitudinal characteristics that define a person as masculine or feminine (i.e., man, women, and gender-expansive), and sexual orientation refers to a person’s emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender (i.e., heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, and asexual). As a result, literature has explored the significance of one’s gender and sexual identities to their overall self-concept.

For instance, Cramer (2000) investigated gender differences between college men and women in identity development and personality. The results revealed that gender moderates the relationship between identity statuses and personality, such that there is higher gender similarity between men and women for personality characteristics associated with committed identity statuses but not with uncommitted statuses (Cramer, 2000). Although, the results displayed a positive association between ego resiliency, self-monitoring, and openness among women only. These gender differences were due to the additional major life tasks women encounter such as navigating both masculine (e.g., work) and feminine (e.g., family) life pathways. In another study, Stevens (2004) assessed how gay male college students explored their identity and whether, and how, their environment contributed to their gay identity development. The findings showed that discrimination and oppression (e.g., heterosexism and homophobia) helped gay men accept their sexual minority status, along with gaining confidence to disclose their sexual identity
to peers. Moreover, visible campus diversity and openness promoted a gay man’s identity exploration and desire to self-disclose (Stevens, 2004). In summary, these studies reveal how life experiences that are specific to one’s gender and sexual identity influence their self-concept.

Overall, the literature provides implications for how gender and sexual identity during emerging adulthood. Although not commonly referred to as an underrepresented minority by colleges and universities, students identifying as women, gender-expansive, and queer are overlooked in higher education. In particular, gender and sexual minority (GSM) refers to women, as well as non-cisgender non-heterosexual people. While previous literature on gender and sexual identity, as well as racial and ethnic identity, is centered around understanding the importance of social identity development college students encounter another identity domain during their pursuit of higher education—academic identity.

**Academic identity.** College provides students with a space to explore and broaden their field of knowledge. Typically, for the first two years, students are required to fulfill general education requirements by taking courses in a variety of academic disciplines before focusing on their academic major (Bennett, 2017). Through this process, students can better understand their academic interest, as well as a described sense of self within their academics. This form of self-concept, in particular, is explained as a student’s sense of belonging in academic settings—or academic identity. More specifically, academic identity is described as a student’s commitment, regardless of hardships, to excel in their learning process (Welch & Hodges, 1997). As a means to assess the development of academic identity, Welch and Hodges (1997) launched an enrichment program for college-bound African American and White inner-city youth. Similar to social identity, social contexts were found to play a crucial role in the development of one’s
academic identity. For example, the presence of expectations for success (e.g., family and educators) and intrinsic values for education (e.g., beliefs and personal choice) predicted their self-concept as scholars (Welch & Hodges, 1997). Furthermore, classroom climate was identified as holding a crucial role in a student’s academic excellence, such that welcoming and supportive environments were ideal for improving academic excellence. Through these findings, Welch and Hodges (1997) described academic identity as a domain within a students’ overall self-concept that is a central component in their academic performance and achievement motivation. Thus, positive academic identity is rewarded with positive academic excellence, whereas a negative academic identity is followed by disengagement with academics and fail to reach one’s potential (Welch & Hodges, 1997). In summary, Welch and Hodges (1997), provided a foundation for understanding how college students contextualize their social identity with relation to their academic identity.

**Race and ethnicity.** Entering college can be a shock for REMs as they enter institutions that are predominately White and must learn to navigate these spaces on their own. Low student attrition rates for REMs (Frey, 2018) provide insight into the relationship between social and academic identity for minority status students. As such, literature has explored the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity when developing one’s academic identity during college.

For example, Cokley and Chapman (2008) assessed the relationships between ethnic identity, anti-White attitudes, and academic self-concept among African American students at a historically Black university. While the findings revealed academic self-concept as a positive predictor for grade point average (GPA), no direct relationship was found between ethnic identity and GPA (Cokley & Chapman, 2008). Although, an indirect effect of ethnic identity on
GPA through both academic self-concept and devaluing academics was significant. In another study, Syed (2010) investigated how a college student’s ethnic background is associated with their academic major. The results displayed that students generally pursue their intended major; except for REM students, who are the most likely to switch out of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors. Moreover, REM students majoring in humanities or social sciences reported the most awareness for their ethnic background, whereas White students in STEM majors reported the least awareness (Syed, 2010). As a follow-up, Walker and Syed (2013) examined how REM students integrate their ethnic identity within their academic major. The findings revealed that ethnic identity was positively associated with identity integration, regardless of race and ethnicity. REM students, specifically, experienced the highest levels of integration between their ethnic background and academic major (Walker & Syed, 2013). The stronger ethnic identities of REM students, compared to White students, explained this association. In summary, these studies highlight how college students integrate their racial and ethnic identities with their academic identity.

Overall, previous literature suggests that social and academic identity develop simultaneously during college. In particular, for REM students, a positive association is commonly reported between ethnic identity and academic identity. Additionally, implications for a greater sense of belonging were found among students who integrated their ethnic identity and academic identity. Although the results appear consistent, there lacks an understanding of how other social identities such as gender and sexual orientation are related to academic identity.

**Gender and sexual orientation.** For GSMs going to college can be nerve-racking given that sexism, cissexism, and heterosexism are ingrained into higher education, similar to society
in general. While women are not seen as a minority in higher education overall, a closer look at statistics reveals that gender gaps exist across academic disciplines (National Science Foundation, 2016). As for non-cisgender and non-heterosexual individuals, they face ostracization for their nonconforming behaviors and identity disclosure (Rankin et al., 2010). For these reasons, research has investigated the relationship between one’s status as a GSM and their academic identity.

In one study, Pronin, Steele, and Ross (2002) explored how college women negotiate their feminine identity in man-dominated academic settings such as mathematics courses. The findings displayed that women who strongly identified with mathematics disassociated their feminine and academic identities. Specifically, women who had taken more mathematics courses reported a low association with stereotypes negatively affiliated with their intellectual ability such as gossipy, flirtatious, and emotional (Pronin et al., 2004). Expanding on this, Eddy, Brownell, and Wenderoth (2014) assessed the presence of a gender gap in student achievement and participation in a woman-dominated academic setting such as biology courses. The results revealed that regardless of similar GPAs, women consistently underperformed in exams compared to men. Additionally, while females composed the majority of students in the classroom, they participated the least when the professors posed student engagement (Eddy et al., 2014). In another study, Birkett, Russell, Corliss (2014) investigated sexual-orientation identity disparities in truancy and academic achievement. The findings revealed that sexual minorities reported higher truancy rates and lower grades than their heterosexual counterparts. Additionally, one’s uncertainty with their sexual orientation increased their odds of truancy and low grades.
(Birkett et al., 2014). In summary, these results reveal how college students integrate their gender and sexual identities with their academic identity.

Overall, the literature provides implications for further assessing how one’s gender and sexual identity influences their experience in higher education. In particular, achievement gaps are visible across man-dominated and heterosexual-centric environments. Furthermore, GSMs may encounter difficulties in integrating their social and academic identities as a result of discrimination. Along with academic identity, another identity domain that often emerges during college relates to students’ campus engagement—leadership identity.

**Leadership identity.** During college, a student’s learning is not limited to their academic experiences, but their campus engagement as well because of how it develops a greater sense of belonging (Ribera, Miller, & Dumford, 2017). Extracurriculars, leadership roles, in particular, provide students with the opportunity to develop self-awareness, self-confidence, and interpersonal efficacy (Komives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005). Through these skills, individuals expand their leadership identity, which can be described as one’s cumulative confidence in their ability to purposefully engage with others to accomplish group objectives (Komives et al., 2005). Komives and colleagues (2005) developed a grounded theory to illustrate the process of moving from a leader-centric to a group-centered approach, as a result of developmental influences (e.g., reflective learning), developing self (e.g., self-awareness), group influences (e.g., engaging with groups), students’ changing view of self with others (e.g., self-perception), and students’ broadening view of leadership (e.g. relational leadership). Furthermore, leadership identity is depicted as a longitudinal and hierarchical six-stage development process: (a) awareness, (b) engagement/exploration, (c) leader identified, (d)
leadership differentiated, (e) generativity, and (f) integration/synthesis (Komives et al., 2005). In other words, as students contextualize group processes, they facilitate their understanding of interdependence, which shapes their view of leadership, and changes their perception of what leadership truly meant. As a result, a positive leadership identity is rewarded with positive leadership self-efficacy, whereas a negative leadership identity is followed by a lack of association with leadership roles (Komives et al., 2005). Furthermore, this grounded theory provided a foundation for understanding how social identity influences one’s leadership identity development.

**Race and ethnicity.** Across the nation, a majority of REM students enter college significantly underprepared which can result in low-self confidence (Bryant, 2017). However, one way in which REM students learn to gain a voice and student agency is through extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, organizations, committees, and community engagement programs. As such, literature has grown to assess how a college students’ race and ethnicity influence their formation of a leadership identity.

For example, Harper and Quaye (2007) examined the leadership experiences of African American college students who held multiple leadership positions in various types of student organizations. The findings revealed that individuals were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities and pursue leadership roles following firsthand experiences with discrimination and oppression. Additionally, students reported that extracurricular activities provided a platform for advocating the needs and voices of fellow minority status students on campus (Harper & Quaye, 2007). In a similar study, Baughman and Bruce (2011) explored what motivates minority status students, primarily REMs, to engage in leadership experiences, as well
as whether and how their leadership skills changed during college. The findings revealed that minority status students in leadership positions represented a small handful of students who were invested in making a change to their campus. Furthermore, once in a leadership position, minority status student leaders reported greater self-confidence, communication skills, and self-efficacy than before their roles (Baughman & Bruce, 2011). Adding to previous literature, Kodama and Dugan (2013) assessed the role of social identity, specifically race, in the development of college student leadership by assessing predictors for leadership self-efficacy. The results displayed that sociocultural conversations with peers (e.g., topics of multiculturalism, social issues, and politics) and leadership roles were positive predictors of leadership efficacy across all racial groups. Moreover, the data revealed unique predictors for racial groups such as off-campus work serving as a negative predictor for leadership self-efficacy among Latinx and multiracial students, along with community service as a positive predictor for leadership self-efficacy among African American, Asian American, and multiracial students (Kodama & Dugan, 2013). In sum, the literature reveals that exposure to campus engagement and leadership roles may play a role in the racial and ethnic identity development of college students.

Overall, the research suggests that as college students develop their leadership identity, they simultaneously develop their racial and ethnic identity. In particular, extracurricular activities and leadership roles provide students with spaces for understanding how their social identity relates to their non-academic experiences on campus. Additionally, REM students indicate a stronger sense of belonging and purpose by engaging in leadership activities. Along with understanding how race and ethnicity relate to one’s leadership identity development, it is essential to examine gender and sexual identity as well.
**Gender and sexuality.** In general, leadership is perceived as a masculine trait; a trait which GSMs are not commonly thought to hold. As a result, GSM students may encounter identity conflict when they engage in leadership activities. In order to better understand this, literature examined how GSM students develop their leadership identity.

For instance, Boatwright and Egidio (2003) investigated how gender roles, need for connection, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation influence college women’s aspiration for leadership positions in their future careers. The findings revealed that many college women decide not to pursue autocratic leadership roles. Specifically, a negative relationship was identified between self-attributed feminine personality traits and leadership role aspirations (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). Expanding on this, McKenzie (2018) examined how college women defined leadership and their self-perceptions as leaders. The findings revealed four phases of leadership for college women: (a) awareness and exploration, (b) leader identified, (c) leadership differentiated, and (d) generativity (McKenzie, 2018). Students in the first two phases defined leadership through traits and characteristics which they often felt they lacked, along with the belief that their feminine characteristics prevented them from becoming leaders. Students in the last two phases, however, reported seeing leadership as part of their identity and actively sought new roles and experiences. In another study, Renn (2007) explored how sexual and gender minority college students become actively involved on campus and its influence on their identity. The findings revealed that a student’s involvement and engagement on campus was positively correlated with their identity disclosure. Specifically, students reported a greater association with their LGBT identity through becoming involved with extracurricular activities.
Collectively, the research reveals that college students generally integrate their gender and sexual identity with their leadership identity.

Overall, the literature provides implications for further investigating how leadership may help GSM students’ well-being. In particular, students with more leadership experience reported being able to see themselves as leaders and understanding how it relates to their status as GSM students. Also, GSM students, similar to REM students, report a stronger sense of belonging and purpose by engaging in leadership activities. Finally, a common theme that has appeared throughout identity development literature, for both REM and GSM students, is how individuals negotiate their multiple identities within a college environment.

**Negotiating Multiple Identities**

Given the complexity and multifaceted nature of identity, the question of how one assesses their identity is significant. In addition to the formation of social, academic, and leadership identities, which develop over time and often change quite slowly, the expression of these identities can fluctuate considerably. Given that people have multiple identities, each of which may be characterized by distinct attributes and behaviors, it is essential to consider how people may shift from one identity to another. As a result, a variety of factors (e.g., the importance of an identity domain, lived experiences, and social contexts) influence identity negotiation. Perhaps, not surprisingly, given the dynamic nature of identity, various approaches have been suggested for the process of negotiating multiple identities—*identity salience* and *identity integration*.

**Identity salience.** Identity salience refers to how prominent, significant, and important an identity domain is to oneself or in one’s perception of others. Stryker and Serpe (1994), in
particular, refers to identity salience as a personality variable that shifts according to environmental cues. Additionally, the concept of identity salience focuses on the idea that people hierarchically categorize their multiple identities based on their social contexts (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Moreover, identity salience does not require self-conscious awareness as they are naturally invoked across situations (Stryker & Serpe, 1994). Through this understanding, individuals shift between identity domains according to their intrinsic values and environmental cues.

For example, Ethier and Deaux (1994) examined the role of social contexts in the identity negotiation of Latinx students at predominantly White institutions. They described three scenarios where the likelihood of identity salience varied accordingly: (a) people who highly identified with their social group, (b) people who are a minority in a social context, and (c) people who experience a contrast between their social identity and social context. The findings revealed that Latinx students with initially high ethnic identity reported greater involvement in cultural activities and increased ethnic identity over time, whereas students with initially weaker identification perceived more threat in the environment, lower self-esteem with their group membership, and decreased identification with their ethnic group (Ethier & Deaux, 1994). In sum, these findings provide implication for understanding identity negotiation according to environmental cues and how identity domains are organized as a result; however, another approach for examining identity refers to the coexistence of distinct identity domains—identity integration.

**Identity integration.** Biculturalism, also known as bicultural identity, refers to the coexistence of two distinct cultures in the same setting (e.g., country, region, or person).
Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) refer to this degree of coexistence as the construct of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII). BII, in particular, is constructed by two distinct psychometric variables—blendedness and harmony—which capture the nature of how individuals manage two cultural identities. Blendedness (versus compartmentalization) explains the degree of overlap (versus dissociation) perceived between the two cultural orientations and harmony (versus conflict) explains the degree of compatibility (versus tension) perceived between the two cultures (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005).

Expanding on BII literature, Yampolsky and colleagues (2013) explored how individuals with more than two distinct cultural groups configured their multiple identities— or multiculturalism. Three styles of identity configurations, similar to BII, were identified: categorization, compartmentalization, and integration (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2013). Categorization refers to perceiving one cultural group as dominant and identifying with it over all other cultural groups. Compartmentalization refers to perceiving distinct cultural groups as dissimilar and identifying with them separately based on context. Integration refers to perceiving distinct cultural groups as complementary and identifying with them simultaneously.

As a follow-up, Yampolsky and colleagues (2016) conducted a study among a diverse, multicultural sample (e.g., birthplace, language, heritage, and religious affiliation) to understand the relationship between identity configuration and well-being. The results revealed that integration positively predicted well-being, whereas compartmentalization negatively predicted (Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2016). Additionally, there was no consistent relationship between categorization and well-being. Collectively, these studies provide a
foundation for better understanding of the complexity behind negotiating multiple identity domains.

**Multiple dimensions of identity.** In order to understand how college students, in particular, manage their multifaceted identities, Jones and McEwen (2000) developed the model of multiple dimensions of identity (MMDI). The MMDI framework provides a conceptualization of how an individual’s social identities, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, class, interact with the development of their personal identity, such as characteristics and attitudes. The model emphasizes that identity domains could not be understood singularly, but must instead be seen as relating to one another (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Additionally, even if two people hold the same identity domains, their identities can still differ since at the core is their valued personal attributes and characteristics (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Building from the previous model, Abes and colleagues (2007) developed a new framework that included an additional component to capture the importance of lived experience. The Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI; Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007) includes a meaning-making filter which serves to select which contextual influences affect the development of an individual’s multiple identity domains. Individuals with a complex meaning-making capacity can filter contextual influences, such as family background, peer culture, social norms, and stereotypes, and determine how context influences their identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Through the RMMDI, Abes and colleagues (2007) established a more holistic understanding of the relationship between identity, context, and salience, providing implications for studying the complexity regarding college students’ identity development.

**Power and Identity**
As literature has grown to examine the fluid and interconnected nature of identity, attention has been drawn toward assessing the role of power in identity development. Contrary to identity, which is primarily a psychological construct, power is primarily a political construct, broadly defined as the ability to influence the human world (Sindic, Barreto, & Costa-Lopes, 2015); or rather the ability to decide who will have access to resources. The constructs of power and identity are interdependent; whereby power structures create systems of inequality that influence individuals’ (personal) identities, and (group) identities inherently maintain these systems of inequality that further perpetuate power (Sindic et al., 2015). Although, this cyclical relationship is malleable as individuals may redefine the identities that power structures impose on them as a means to regain power within society (Sindic et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As a result, in order to understand the relationship between power and identity, the constructs of oppression and privilege must be examined.

**Oppression and privilege.** Oppression refers to a system of disadvantage where a social group (e.g., a targeted group) is discriminated, mistreated, and marginalized (Goodman, 2015); examples include People of Color, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Typically, target groups are aware of their minority status as a result of the oppressive behaviors they face. Oppression operates on ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and individual levels (Bell, 2007; Goodman, 2015), with varying degrees of severity and harm on target groups. As a result, oppressive behaviors can take a variety of forms such as (un)intentional biases, institutional barriers, and dominant cultural norms. On the other side, privilege refers to a system of advantage where a social group (e.g., an advantaged group) receives unfair and unearned benefits and treatment at the expense of targeted groups (Goodman,
examples include White people, men, heterosexuals, and cisgender individuals. In this case, unlike targeted groups, advantaged groups are unaware of their privilege. Additionally, in general, members of advantaged groups lack oppressive experiences, deny the existence of oppression, and hold a sense of entitlement (Goodman, 2015). Overall, while oppression and privilege describe the large-scale phenomenon of social categorization, these complex constructs may be understood on a smaller scale—microaggressions and mentorship.

Microaggressions. Microaggressions, broadly speaking, refer to a form of discriminatory behavior against members of structurally oppressed groups. Initially, the term was coined to describe the subtle, (un)intentional discrimination and insults Black Americans experienced (Pierce, Carew, Pierce-Gonzalez, & Willis, 1977). Expanding on the root cause of microaggressions, Davis (1989) described them as discriminatory behaviors against Black people, that manifests due to the implicit attitudes and biases systems of inequality ingrain into society. While microaggressions had been defined, it took decades before literature surrounding the topic would emerge. Today, microaggressions are popularly defined as an everyday verbal, nonverbal, or environmental indignity, regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group (Sue et al., 2007). Furthermore, Sue and colleagues (2007) identified three types of microaggressive acts: (a) microassaults, (b) microinsults, and (c) microinvalidations. Although microaggressions are subtle and unintentional, the harm of microaggressions is not insignificant; in fact, research has begun to assess the clinical implications of microaggressions.

Health and well-being. As microaggressions have been better defined and understood, literature has grown to examine the psychological, behavioral, social, and physiological harm
associated with microaggressive experiences. For example, Ong, Burrow, Fuller-Rowell, Ja, and Sue (2013) the association between racial microaggressions and Asian Americans’ daily well-being. The findings showed that over three-quarters of participants reported experiencing a microaggression in a two-week study period. Additionally, individuals who experienced a microaggression reported increased negative affect and somatic symptoms (Ong et al., 2013). In a recent study, Forrest-Bank and Cuellar (2018) investigated how microaggressions, among Black, Latinx, and Asian college students, are associated with ethnic identity, psychological distress, self-esteem, academic self-efficacy, and substance abuse. The findings revealed a positive association between microaggressions and psychological distress, along with a positive indirect effect of microaggressions on psychological distress through ethnic identity. Furthermore, microaggressions had a positive indirect effect on self-esteem and academic self-efficacy through participants’ reported degree of ethnic identity (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018). In another study, Woodford and colleagues (2012) assessed how the health of LGB college students correlated with hearing the phrase “that’s so gay.” The results displayed that hearing this microaggressive phrase served as a negative predictor for individuals’ physical and social well-being. More specifically, LGB students reported increased feelings of isolation, loss of appetite, and headaches (Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012). Altogether, these studies provide a broad overview of the harm microaggressions can have on health and well-being. Furthermore, the studies also provide implications for how greater social identity can mediate the relationship between microaggressions and well-being. Overall, this literature provides an understanding of how oppressive behaviors like microaggressions influence the lived
experiences of college students—specifically minority status students—another perspective is to examine the role privilege plays in one’s college experience.

*Mentorship.* Mentorship refers to a supportive relationship in which a more experienced, or more knowledgeable, person helps to guide a less experienced, or less knowledgeable, person. Having a mentor, however, is a privilege as not everyone has the opportunity to receive guided support. Typically, in the past, mentorship was primarily used in work settings to describe the relationship between a senior (mentor) and junior (mentee) organizational members (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). Although, today, mentorship is not limited to work environments but rather can occur in any settings—such as higher education. For example, college students who indicated having a mentor reported greater academic success than those without one (Jacobi, 1991). In particular, Jacobi (1991) identified four universal principles of college mentorship as; (a) social support, (b) academic and social integration, (c) involvement in learning, and (d) social and cognitive development. While college mentorship primarily focuses on academics, as a increasingly diverse population of students begins to enter higher education mentorship has evolved to suit the new student population better. Expanding on Jacobi’s work, Crisp and Cruz (2009) revealed how students’ social identities such as gender race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation influenced their experience with mentorship and academic success. More specifically, four major domains were identified: (a) psychological and emotional support, (b) support for setting goals and choosing a career path, (c) academic subject knowledge support aimed at advancing a student’s knowledge relevant to their chosen field, and (d) specification of a role model (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). While college mentorship has been shown to improve
students’ academic success, recent research has shown the significant role it can play in the overall development of students.

*Health and well-being.* Given the supportive nature of mentorship, literature has grown to examine the benefits it can provide college students as they transition and develop throughout college. For example, Lenz (2014) assessed the relationship between student adjustment and relationships with peers, mentors, and the community. The findings revealed that students with a mentor reported the highest academic and overall adjustment to college (Lenz, 2014). Moreover, who acted as a mentor (e.g., faculty, family member, or peer) did not matter as much as the quality of the mentorship. In another study, Baier, Markman, and Pernice-Duca (2016) examined how demographic characteristics, standardized test scores, self-efficacy, mentorship, and GPA influenced first-year students’ intent to persist. The results revealed that only self-efficacy and positive perceptions of mentorship played a significant role in students’ persistence and resilience (Baier et al., 2016). Moreover, few students were likely to reach out to faculty members for mentorship, but those who did reported greater self-efficacy. Extending on this research, Fruith and Chan (2018) investigated how mentor relationships differed between first-generation and continuing-generation college students. The findings revealed that having a mentor was more beneficial to first-generation college students than continuing college students (Fruith & Chan, 2018). However, first-generation college students also reported receiving less identity development support from their mentors than their continuing-generation counterparts. Collectively, these studies provide a general understanding of the benefits mentor relationships can provide college students, such as higher academic identity and well-being (e.g., resilience). However, the studies also provide further implications for how mentor relationships are a
privilege that not all students have access to, especially minority status students. In summary, this literature provides an understanding of how a privilege such as mentor relationships influence the lived experiences of college students—specifically minority status students.

**Current Study and Hypotheses**

Previous literature has been able to identify how students develop throughout their time in higher education. However, although research has investigated the formation of college students’ identity, to the best our knowledge, there is no study assessing the interconnected nature of these social, academic, and leadership identity domains nor how college students may integrate these three identity domains. Moreover, while the literature of power has begun to assess the nature of microaggressive experiences and access to mentorship on college campuses, the research fails to assess how both factors play a role in a college students social integration, academic success, and campus engagement. As such, the current study utilizes literature of identity and literature of power to explore how a college student’s experience with oppression and privilege influences their identity development. In particular, we seek to investigate how microaggressive experiences play a role in the integration of college students’ social, academic, and leadership identity domains, as well as how access to mentorship influences the relationship between identity integration and well-being. Based on the mentioned above literature, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1A:** Minority status students will report higher identity integration compared to majority status students, given that microaggressions are thought to promote identity development for individuals of marginalized backgrounds.

**H2A:** Microaggressions will be negatively associated with well-being.
H2B: Identity integration will mediate the relationship between microaggressions and well-being, such that microaggressions will be positively associated with identity integration, which, in turn, will be positively associated with well-being.

H3A: Microaggressions will be positively associated with identity integration.

H3B: Social identity will mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that microaggressions will be positively associated with social identity, which, in turn, will be positively associated with identity integration.

H3C: Academic identity will mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that microaggressions will be negatively associated with academic identity, which, in turn, will be negatively associated with identity integration.

H3D: Leadership identity will mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that microaggressions will be positively associated with leadership identity, which, in turn, will be positively associated with identity integration.

H4A: Identity integration will be positively associated with well-being.

H4B: Mentorship will moderate the relationship between identity integration and well-being, such that this relationship will be stronger and more beneficial for those who have a mentor.

**Method**

The present study utilized a non-experimental, cross-sectional survey design to assess the relationships between microaggression, identity, and mentorship; from these predictor variables, the study assessed participants’ well-being.

**Procedure**
Following approval from the Institutional Review Board at the researcher’s home institution, participants were recruited across multiple forums, including colleges nationwide (e.g., email distribution to student groups), listservs, and social media outlets (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Reddit). Moreover, snowball sampling was used to solicit additional responses, such that participants were encouraged to advertise the study to their peers and community. To participate in this study, participants had to be a current undergraduate student (e.g., vocational school, community college, liberal arts college, university) between the ages of 18 and 25; there were no other exclusion criteria. The survey was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey software system, and took participants an average of 15 minutes to complete. Consent was obtained prior to participation via an online description of the study, and participants had the option to participate or discontinue the study. The survey began with a demographic questionnaire followed by the microaggressions measure, next the identity measures, then the mentorship measure, and, lastly, the well-being measure. Following the measures, participants received a debriefing statement that stated the purpose of the investigation. At survey completion, participants were given the opportunity to enter a lottery for three (3) $50 and two (2) $25 Amazon gift cards.

**Participants**

An a priori power analysis, guided by existing literature, was conducted to determine an appropriate sample size. Using an effect size of $r = .15$ and 80% power, the sample size was set at 346 participants. A total of 543 responses were received; however, we excluded all responses from participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria for the study, responses that indicated that the participant spent an unreasonably short time (<4 minutes) on the survey, responses in
which the participant completed less than 67% on a section of the survey materials, responses where the participant failed to correctly answer the attention checks, and responses from participants who wanted to be excluded from the data analysis. Of those who completed the study, 212 (39%) failed to pass one or more of the exclusion criteria. Thus, the analytic sample consisted of 331 participants ($M_{age} = 20.19$ years, $SD = 1.32$).

The gender composition of the sample was 27.2% male, 67.1% female, and 5.7% gender-expansive (e.g., gender nonconforming, nonbinary, and transgender). With regard to ethnicity, the sample was relatively diverse as the majority of participants identified as a person of color (57.4%; 42.6% White), reporting Latinx/Hispanic (16.9%), Black/African American (6.3%), Asian/Pacific Islander (17.2%), Middle Eastern (1.5%), or Multiracial (15.4%) identity. Moreover, the majority of participants identified as heterosexual ($n = 210$), and 120 participants indicated a sexual minority (18.3% homosexual, 57.5% bisexual, 11.7% pansexual, 9.2% asexual, and 3.3% other).

As a whole, the participants primarily attended small (<3,000 students; $n = 257$) private ($n = 203$) undergraduate institutions, with the most popular type being liberal arts colleges ($n = 250$). Nearly all participants were in their first four years of postsecondary education ($n = 225$), with approximately 24.0% first-year, 21.2% second-year, 26.2% third-year, and 28.6% fourth-year students. Additionally, the most popular fields of study for intended and declared majors ($n = 309$) were social sciences (37.9%) and natural sciences (32.7%), followed by humanities (17.2%) and other (12.3%). Across the sample, student engagement and leadership was common as most participants were involved in at least one extracurricular activity (96.7%;
\( M = 3.25, SD = 1.88 \) and had held a leadership role for at least one semester \( (71.9\%; M = 2.20, \ SD = 2.07) \) during their undergraduate experience.

**Measures**

A series of validated self-report questionnaires were used to measure eight distinct constructs: (a) demographics, (b) microaggressions, (c) social identity, (d) academic identity, (e) leadership identity, (f) identity integration, (g) mentorship, and (h) well-being. All of these measures are open and accessible to the public on the Open Science Framework (OSF).

**Demographic questionnaire.** Participants completed a demographic questionnaire to identify key background characteristics such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, undergraduate institution, class standing, academic major, and campus engagement.

**Microaggressions.** The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Discrimination (MSPD; Molero, Recio, García-Ael, Fuster, & Sanjuán, 2013), a 20-item questionnaire \( (\alpha = .94) \), operationalized microaggressions. Participants were prompted to consider the social identity—limited to those within the confines of ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation—for which they have experienced the most perceived discrimination. Sample items included “People of my [Social Group] do not suffer from discrimination in the legal sphere” and “American society treats people of my [Social Group] unfairly.” A 5-point Likert-scale was used to measure the participants’ level of agreement with the items, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The 20 items were averaged to create a composite variable, with higher scores indicative of more microaggression experienced.

**Social identity.** The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R; Phinney & Ong, 2007), a six-item survey \( (\alpha = .76) \), operationalized social identity. Participants were asked
to fill out this measure with the social identity they had indicated on the MSPD scale. The MEIM-R assessed the identity salience of one’s social identity. Sample items included, “I have often talked to other people in order to learn more about my [Social Group]” and “I do not feel a strong attachment towards my own [Social Group].” Participants’ indicated their degree of agreement using a 5-point Likert Respondents, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The six items were averaged to create a composite variable, with higher scores indicating greater social identity.

**Academic identity.** The Academic Self-Concept Questionnaire (ASCQ; Liu & Wang, 2005), a 20-item form (α = .83), operationalized academic identity. The ASCQ assesses two factors of academic self-concept: confidence and effort. Initially, the scale utilized a 4-point Likert scale, but for this study, it was expanded to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Participants responded to questions such as: “I study hard for my quizzes/exams” and “My professors think I perform poorly in my courses.” The 20 items were averaged to create a composite variable, with higher scores indicative of positive self-perception regarding one’s academic abilities.

**Leadership identity.** The Self-Efficacy for Leadership Scale (SEL; Murphy, 1992), an eight-item questionnaire (α = .86), operationalized leadership identity. Initially, the scale utilized a 7-point Likert scale, but for this study, it was condensed to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Participants were asked to assess self-perceptions regarding their general leadership abilities. Example statements include “I know what it takes to make a group accomplish its task” and “I have no idea what it takes to keep a group running.
smoothly.” The eight items were averaged to create a composite variable, with higher scores indicating greater leadership self-efficacy.

**Identity integration.** The Multicultural Identity Integration Scale (MULTIIS; Yampolsky et al., 2016), specifically the eight-item integration subscale ($\alpha = .74$), operationalized identity integration. The MULTIIS integration subscale assesses participants’ integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains. Initially, the scale utilized a 7-point Likert scale, but for this study, it was condensed to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Items of the MULTIIS include: “My identities are connected” and “I draw similarities between my identities.” The eight items were averaged to create a composite score, with higher scores indicative of greater integration between one’s social, academic, and leadership identity domains.

**Mentorship.** The College Student Mentoring Scale (CSMS; Crisp, 2009), a 25-item questionnaire ($\alpha = .93$), operationalized access to mentorship. The CSMS assesses students’ accessibility and experience with mentorship. Items were preceded by the statement “…answering the following questions concerning your experience with mentorship in college” to allow participants to think of anyone that has served as a mentor to them (e.g., friend, classmate, professor, dean). Sample items included “I have had someone who helps me work toward achieving my academic aspirations” and “I have had someone who recognizes my academic accomplishments.” These items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The 25 items were averaged to create a composite score, with higher scores indicating greater accessibility and more experience with mentorship.
Well-being. The Mental Health Continuum-Short Form (MHC-SF; Keyes et al., 2008), a 14-item survey ($\alpha = .86$), operationalized overall well-being. Initially, the scale utilized a 6-point Likert scale, but for this study, it was condensed to a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The form aims to understand the emotional, social, and psychological well-being of individuals. Items were preceded by the statement “…answering the following questions concerning how you have been feeling during the past month” to consider how they recent well-being. Sample items included “I have felt interested in life” and “I have felt that I had warm and trusting relationships with others.” The 14 items were averaged to create a composite score, with a higher score indicative of better well-being.

Results

Prior to analysis, our hypotheses and data analysis plan were preregistered on the OSF. Moreover, after data collection, our datasets, SPSS syntax, and codebook were made available on OSF as well. All analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics, v. 24.0.0.0; an alpha level of 0.05 was used for significance testing.

Descriptive Statistics

To being our analysis, we calculated descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations or frequency distributions, to summarize the social (see Table 1) and educational (see Table 2) demographic characteristics of the sample. Next, we calculated descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to summarize the study variables; reliability, consisting of Cronbach’s alpha, to assess the internal consistency of study variables; and bivariate analysis, consisting of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, to evaluate the relationships between the study variables (see Table 3).
Power Status and Identity Integration

**Data analytic strategy.** Hypothesis 1A anticipated that minority status students would predict greater identity integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains when compared to majority status students. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a series of independent-samples t-test comparing identity integration scores between minority and majority status students based upon participants’ most salient social identity (e.g., gender, race, and sexual orientation; see Table 4).

**Testing hypothesis 1A.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that there was a significant difference between gender majority status (male; $M = 3.50$, $SD = .67$) and minority status (non-male; $M = 3.67$, $SD = .46$) students on identity integration; $t(329) = -2.61$, $p = .009$. Moreover, a marginally significant difference was found between ethnic majority status (white; $M = 3.57$, $SD = .51$) and minority status (non-white; $M = 3.67$, $SD = .53$) students on identity integration; $t(329) = -1.74$, $p = .082$. However, no significant difference was found between sexual majority status (heterosexual; $M = 3.64$, $SD = .50$) and minority status (non-heterosexual; $M = 3.59$, $SD = .57$) students on identity integration; $t(328) = 1.05$, n.s. Thus, Hypothesis 1A was partially supported, as we only found a significant difference in identity integration between minority and majority status students, based on gender identity, but not for ethnic identity nor sexual identity.

Microaggressions, Identity Integration and Well-Being

**Data analytic strategy.** For Hypothesis 2A, we posited that a higher report of microaggressions would negatively predict well-being. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a simple linear regression between microaggressions and well-being (see Table 5).
For Hypothesis 2B, we predicted that identity integration would mediate the relationship between microaggression and well-being, such that a higher report of microaggressions would positively predict identity integration, which, in turn, would positively predict well-being. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a series of simple linear regression between microaggressions, well-being, and identity integration. Additionally, we followed the requirements for mediation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test our hypotheses; such that mediation occurs when (a) variable A (i.e., microaggressions) is associated with variable C (i.e., well-being), (b) the hypothesized mediator, variable B (i.e., identity integration), is significantly associated with C controlling for A, and (c) the associate between A and C is reduced when B is added to the model (see Table 5).

**Testing hypothesis 2A.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that microaggressions explained a significant portion of variance in well-being scores ($R^2 = .119$, $F(1,329) = 44.29, p < .001$), as well as that microaggressions significantly predicted well-being ($\beta = -.270$, $t(329) = -6.66, p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis 2A was supported as microaggressions has a significant negative relationship with well-being.

**Testing hypothesis 2B.** Contrary to our prediction, microaggressions did not explain a significant portion of variance in identity integration scores ($R^2 = .001$, $F(1,329) = .43, n.s.$), nor were microaggressions found to have a significant relationship with identity integration ($\beta = .036$, $t(329) = .66, n.s.$). Given that Hypothesis 2B was not supported, as there was not a significant relationship between microaggression and identity integration, mediation analysis could not be conducted.

**Microaggressions, Identity Domains, and Identity Integration**
**Data analytic strategy.** For Hypothesis 3A, we expected that a higher report of microaggressions would positively predict identity integration. To test this hypothesis, we conducted simple linear regression between microaggressions and identity integration (see Table 5).

For Hypothesis 3B, we anticipated that social identity would mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that a higher report of microaggressions would positively predict social identity, which, in turn, would positively predict identity integration. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a series of simple linear regression between microaggressions, social identity, and identity integration (see Table 5 and Table 6). Additionally, we followed the requirements for mediation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test our hypotheses; such that mediation occurs when (a) variable A (i.e., microaggressions) is associated with variable C (i.e., identity integration), (b) the hypothesized mediator, variable B (i.e., social identity), is significantly associated with C controlling for A, and (c) the associate between A and C is reduced when B is added to the model.

Hypothesis 3C posited that academic identity would mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that a greater report of microaggressions would negatively predict social identity, which, in turn, would negatively predict identity integration. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a series of simple linear regression between microaggressions, academic identity, and identity integration (see Table 5 and Table 6). Additionally, we followed the requirements for mediation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test our hypotheses; such that mediation occurs when (a) variable A (i.e., microaggressions) is associated with variable C (i.e., identity integration), (b) the hypothesized mediator, variable B
(i.e., academic identity), is significantly associated with C controlling for A, and (c) the associate between A and C is reduced when B is added to the model.

Hypothesis 3D predicted that leadership identity would mediate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration, such that a higher report of microaggressions would positively predict leadership identity, which, in turn, would positively predict identity integration. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a series of simple linear regression between microaggressions, social identity, and identity integration (see Table 5 and Table 6). Additionally, we followed the requirements for mediation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test our hypotheses; such that mediation occurs when (a) variable A (i.e., microaggressions) is associated with variable C (i.e., identity integration), (b) the hypothesized mediator, variable B (i.e., leadership identity), is significantly associated with C controlling for A, and (c) the associate between A and C is reduced when B is added to the model.

**Testing hypothesis 3A.** Contrary to our hypothesis, analyses revealed that microaggressions did not explain a significant portion of variance in identity integration scores ($R^2 = .001, F(1,329) = .43, n.s.$), nor were microaggressions found to have a significantly relationship with identity integration ($\beta = .021, t(329) = .66, n.s.$). Given that the analyses did not support Hypothesis 3A, mediation analysis could not be conducted for the following hypotheses.

**Testing hypothesis 3B.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that microaggressions explained a significant portion of variance in social identity scores ($R^2 = .217, F(1,329) = 91.00, p < .001$), as well as that microaggressions significantly predicted social identity ($\beta = .465, t(329) = 9.54, p < .001$). Moreover, analyses revealed that social identity explained a significant portion of variance in identity integration scores ($R^2 = .067, F(1,329) = .
23.57, $p < .001$), as well as that social identity significantly predicted identity integration ($\beta = .259, t(329) = 4.86, p < .001$). Although analyses revealed a significant positive relationship between microaggressions and social identity, as well as a significant positive relationship between social identity and identity integration, mediation analysis could not be conducted as Hypothesis 3A was not supported.

**Testing hypothesis 3C.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that microaggressions explained a significant portion of variance in academic identity scores ($R^2 = .075, F(1,329) = 26.84, p < .001$), as well as that microaggressions significantly predicted academic identity ($\beta = -.275, t(329) = -5.18, p < .001$). Moreover, analyses revealed that academic identity did explain a marginally significant portion of variance in identity integration scores ($R^2 = .011, F(1,329) = 3.78, p = .053$), as well as that academic identity marginally predicted identity integration ($\beta = .107, t(329) = 1.95, p = .053$). Although analyses revealed a significant negative relationship between microaggressions and academic identity, mediation analysis could not be conducted as Hypothesis 3A was not supported nor did academic identity significantly predict identity integration.

**Testing hypothesis 3D.** Contrary to our hypothesis, analyses revealed that microaggressions did not explain a significant portion of variance in leadership identity scores ($R^2 = .006, F(1,329) = 1.98, n.s.$), nor were microaggressions found to have a significantly relationship with identity integration ($\beta = -.077, t(329) = -1.41, ns$). However, in partial support of the hypothesis, analyses revealed that leadership identity did explain a significant portion of variance in identity integration scores ($R^2 = .041, F(1,329) = 14.12, p < .001$), as well as that leadership identity significantly predicted identity integration ($\beta = .203, t(329) = 3.76, p < .001$).
Although analyses revealed a significant positive relationship between microaggressions and academic identity, mediation analysis could not be conducted as Hypothesis 3A was not supported nor did microaggressions significantly predict leadership identity.

**Identity Integration, Mentorship, and Well-Being**

**Data analytic strategy.** For Hypothesis 4A we anticipated that identity integration would positively predict well-being. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a simple linear regression between identity integration and well-being.

Hypothesis 4B posited that mentorship would moderate the relationship between identity integration and well-being, such that this relationship will be stronger and more beneficial for those who have a mentor. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a multiple regression analysis between identity integration, mentorship, and the interaction effect of identity integration and mentorship to predict well-being (see Table 7). Additionally, for Hypothesis 4B, we followed the requirements for moderation outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) to test our hypotheses; such that moderation occurs when (a) variable X (i.e., identity integration) is associated with variable Y (i.e., well-being), (b) the hypothesized moderator, variable M (i.e., mentorship), is not associated with both Y controlling for X, and (c) the strength of the association between X and Y is altered when M is added to the model. Furthermore, to avoid potentially problematic high multicollinearity with the interaction term, the variables were centered and an interaction term between identity integration and mentorship was created (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991).

**Testing hypothesis 4A.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that identity integration explained a significant portion of variance in well-being scores ($R^2 = .074$, $F(1,329) = 26.46, p < .001$), as well as that identity integration significantly predicted well-being...
Thus, Hypothesis 4A was supported as identity integration has a significant positive relationship with well-being.

**Testing hypothesis 4B.** In partial support of our hypothesis, analyses revealed that the model (i.e., identity integration, mentorship, and the interaction term) accounted for a significant amount of variance in well-being ($R^2 = .237, F(3, 327) = 33.83, p < .001$). More specifically, both identity integration ($\beta = .168, t(327) = 3.36, p = .001$) and mentorship ($\beta = .413, t(327) = 8.25, p < .001$) significantly predicted well-being. Although, the interaction term between identity integration and mentorship ($\beta = .116, t(327) = 1.47, p = .142$) did not significantly predict well-being. Therefore, while the identity integration and mentorship both had a significant positive relationship with well-being, moderation analysis revealed that the interaction term did not significantly predict well-being.

**Discussion**

In the present study, we synthesized developmental theory (Arnett, 2000; Chickering, 1993; Erickson, 1959), poststructural approaches (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Sullivan, 2003; Wicke & Ferguson, 1992), identity research (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Stryker & Serpe, 1994; Yampolsky, Amiot, & de la Sablonnière, 2016), and power literature (Bell, 2007; Goodman, 2015; Sindic et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to explore how power structures influence identity integration in emerging adults pursuing postsecondary education. More specifically, the purpose of this study was threefold: (a) to investigate how minority and majority status students experience identity integration distinctly, (b) to explore how microaggressions play a role in the integration of social, academic, and leadership identity domains, and (c) to assess how mentorship influences the relationship between identity integration and well-being.
Overall, our results were productive: a mixture of supported and unsupported hypotheses—all contributing to a greater understanding of how power structures influence identity integration among college students.

**Power Status and Identity Integration**

We posited that minority status students would experience greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains than majority students, because of how students with marginalized identities are more likely to consider their identity and the value of their identity as a result of experiencing microaggressions (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Stryker & Serpe, 1994; Sue et al., 2007)—our findings partially supported this hypothesis. In particular, a significant difference was found in identity integration scores for non-male and male students, such that women and gender-expansive students scored higher on identity integration than men. In other words, individuals of a gender minority status experienced greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains than individuals of gender majority status. This finding is consistent with previous research that displayed college women develop high levels of self-monitoring, self-awareness, and self-determination (Cramer, 2000; McKenzie, 2018; Pronin et al., 2014), following their exposure to gendered microaggressions, which, in turn, promotes their ability to contextualize their gender identity with relation to their academic and leadership identity domains (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Forrest-Bank and Cuellar, 2018; Yampolsky et al., 2016). Moreover, Asgari, Dasgupta, and Stout (2012) found that women reported higher self-concept and mental representation of role models when presented with women leaders in high-profile professions (e.g., science, medicine, business, law, politics, and journalism). Given that women compose 49% of faculty in higher education (Finkelstein,
Conley, & Schuster, 2016), it is reasonable to infer that with a significant presence of women in academic positions at postsecondary institutions female college students are able to perceive their social, academic, and leadership identity domains as complementary—however, such explanation cannot be translated to ethnic nor sexual identity.

Contrary to our hypothesis, no significant difference was found in identity integration scores between non-white and white students nor between non-heterosexual and heterosexual students. In other words, individuals of a racial or sexual minority status experienced similar integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains compared to individuals of racial or sexual majority status. These finding are not consistent with previous studies that revealed high ethnic minorities (Kodama & Dugan, 2013; Walker & Syed, 2013) and sexual minorities (Birkett et al., 2014; Renn, 2007) integrate their social identities with academic and leadership domains. However, a study by Imai (2017) found that international students who believe domestic students negatively judged their country reported lower self-disclosure and higher sense of loneliness for. Moreover, Potoczniak, Aldea, and DeBlaere (2007) reported a positive correlation between self-disclosure and ego identity among LGB students. Given these studies, ethnic and sexual minorities are displayed as avoiding self-disclosure—revealing information about one’s self—which, in turn, serves as a protective factor against prejudice and discrimination. This implies that the lack of identity integration for ethnic and sexual minorities may be associated with their avoidance of self-disclosure with their peers, as it limits their ability to social integrate to the college and may lead to internal conflict for how they perceive their social, academic, and leadership identity domains.

**Microaggressions, Identity Integration and Well-Being**
We anticipated a negative association between microaggressions and well-being, because of how discriminatory experiences hinder one’s psychological, social, and emotional health (Pierce et al., 1997; Davis, 1989; Sue et al., 2007); as well as that this relationship would be mediated by identity integration given how bicultural individuals with high identity integration reported positive well-being (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005; Yampolsky et al., 2016)—our findings partially supported these hypothesis.

A moderate, negative correlation between microaggressions and well-being was found, such that increases in microaggression scores were correlated with decreases in well-being scores. In other words, as an individual experienced more microaggressions it suggested that their overall well-being diminished. The finding is consistent with past research that revealed although microaggressions are subtle and unintentional, victims of microaggressions report more significant severe psychological, behavioral, social, and physiological harm than individuals who rarely encounter microaggressions (Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Ong et al., 2013; Woodford et al., 2012). Therefore, this also implies that minority status students are likely to experience poorer well-being, compared to majority status students, since their minority status predisposes them to oppression and discrimination from the majority status.

Contrary to our hypothesis, the predicted mediation could not be tested because the prerequisite of a significant direct association between microaggressions (i.e., the independent variable) and identity integration (i.e., the mediator variable) was not found. In other words, individuals with more exposure to microaggression experiences do not have significantly more or less integrated social, academic, and leadership identity domains. This finding is not consistent with previous literature that demonstrated more frequent experiences with
microaggressions was associated with higher identity integration because of an individual’s greater self-awareness for their social identity and its relation to other identity domains (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Pronin et al., 2004; Walker & Syed, 2013). Further investigation of existing literature, however, revealed mixed findings for identity integration. For example, Estes (2011) reported the negative stereotypes that student-parents experience was positively associated with the integration of their identity as a student and as a parent. On the other hand, Stone, Harrison, and Mottley (2012) found that scholar-athletes encountered difficulties when it came to integrating their identities because of the stereotypes. A possible explanation for the mixed finding may be that distinct social identities may result in different reactions toward microaggressions which can lead to varying levels of identity integration or conflict. It seems as though there is a need to investigate further how microaggressions may play a role in the integration of social and non-social identity domains, in order to identify direct associations as well as potential underlying factors.

Lastly, a small, positive correlation between integration and well-being was found, such that increases in integration scores were correlated with increases in well-being scores. In other words, as an individual reported greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains it suggested that their overall well-being improved. The finding is consistent with previous literature on ethnic identity which revealed that the integration of two (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) or more cultures (Yampolsky et al., 2016) positively predicted participants’ well-being. This signifies that individuals who are able to integrate their social, academic, and leadership identity domains experience a better sense of self and navigate
through their multiple identities with ease, in turn, allowing them to experience positive well-being.

**Microaggressions, Identity Domains, and Identity Integration**

We predicted a positive association between microaggressions and identity integration, as higher exposure to microaggressions promotes identity development (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018); as well as that this relationship would be mediated by social, academic, leadership identities because of how an individual’s value in their identity predicts identity development (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Yampolsky et al., 2016)—our findings partially supported these hypotheses.

Contrary to our hypothesis, a significant positive association between microaggressions and identity integration was not supported. Consequently, our mediation hypotheses that social identity, academic identity, and leadership identity would mediate the association between increased experiences with microaggressions and enhanced identity integration were not supported. The predicted mediations could not be tested because the prerequisite of a direct association between microaggressions (i.e., the independent variable) and identity integration (i.e., the dependent variable) was not found. In other words, individuals with more exposure to microaggression experiences do not have significantly more or less integrated social, academic, and leadership identity domains. We speculate that the nonsignificant correlation resulted from a greater need to investigate the relationship between microaggressions and identity integration further, as underlying factors may contribute to the mixed findings in the extant literature (Estes, 2011; Stone, Harrison, & Mottley, 2012). While the mediation hypotheses were not supported, direct associations were found between the hypotheses variables.
For example, a moderate, positive correlation between microaggressions and social identity was found, such that increases in microaggressions scores were correlated with increases in social identity scores. In other words, as an individual reported higher encounters with microaggressions it suggested that their social identity strengthened. Moreover, a small, positive correlation between social identity and identity integration was found, such that increases in social identity scores were correlated with increases in identity integration scores. In other words, as an individual experienced higher association with their social identity it suggested that the integration of their social, academic, and leadership strengthened as well. These findings are consistent with past research that revealed positive associations between experiences with microaggressions and social identity (Ethier & Deaux, 1994; Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018), as well as that how possessing a greater sense of one’s social identity promotes the integration of other identity domains (Abes et al., 2007). Therefore, this implies that while microaggressions may be harmful they allow students to gain a sense of understanding for their social identity; along with this as a student learns to better associate with their social identity integration, their academic and leadership domains will likely follow.

Next, a small, negative correlation between microaggressions and academic identity was found, such that increases in microaggressions scores were correlated with decreases in academic identity scores. In other words, as an individual experienced more microaggressions it suggested that their academic identity diminished. This finding is consistent with previous literature that revealed when minority status students experiences microaggressions it often attacks their intelligence and academic capabilities and will often be associated with poor academic performance and low academic self-concept (Birkett et al., 2014; Eddy et al., 2014; Cokley &
This signifies that individuals who experience microaggressions are more likely to report poor academic self-concept, such that their confidence and effort is diminished. Contrary to our hypothesis, no significant correlation between academic identity and identity integration was found. In other words, individuals with lower academic identity do not have significantly more or less integrated social, academic, and leadership identities. This finding is not consistent with past research that demonstrated individuals with poor academic performance experienced low identity integration because of a lack of self-awareness for one’s academic identity and its relation to other identity domains (Abes et al., 2007). Given that Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) displayed how Asian American women performed better academically when primed for their ethnic identity but not for their gender identity, a reasonable explanation for this finding is that one’s social identity may either promote or diminish an individual’s academic identity. Moreover, it is possible that the lack of finding is due to both integration and conflict between academic and social identity domains as some social identities are associated with positive stereotypes.

Lastly, contrary to our hypothesis, no significant correlation between microaggressions and leadership identity was found. In other words, as an individual experienced greater microaggressive attacks it did not enhance or diminish their leadership identity. This finding is not consistent with past literature that demonstrated individuals in leadership positions reported greater encounters with microaggressions associated with their increased visibility to the campus (Cokley & Chapman, 2008; Harper & Quaye; 2007). For instance, Nguyen (2016) revealed that international students were less likely, compared to domestic students, to partake in leadership positions. A possible explanation for the lack of finding is that minority status students are less
likely to engage in leadership as a result of culture shock, burnout, or instances of discrimination. This signifies that while previous studies reported increased leadership experience among minority students it is possible that the oppression they experience prevents them from choosing to engage in leadership. Along with this, a small, positive correlation between leadership identity and identity integration was found, such that increases in leadership identity scores were correlated with increases in identity integration scores. In other words, as an individual experienced greater leadership identity it suggested that their identity integration increased. This finding is consistent with past research which found that students often gravitate to leadership positions which relate to their social identity (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Kodama & Dugan, 2013) and must learn to balance both academics and extracurriculars (Komives et al., 2005; Ribera, Miller, & Dumford, 2017) allowing for their overall identity integration. Thus, the finding implies that students who report a high leadership identity are more likely to integrate their social, academic, and leadership identities.

Identity Integration, Mentorship, and Well-Being

We speculated that the strength of the association between the degree of integration and well-being is moderated by mentorship because of how individuals with access to mentoring relationships report positive well-being (Baier et al., 2016; Fruhlt & Chan, 2018; Lenz, 2014)—our findings partially supported these hypotheses.

A small, positive correlation between integration and well-being was found, such that increases in integration scores were correlated with increases in well-being scores. In other words, as an individual reported greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains it suggested that their overall well-being improved. The findings is consistent
with existing literature that has shown the integration of two (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2005) or more cultures (Yampolsky et al., 2016) positively predicts well-being as individual’s learn to better navigate identity conflict and understand their self. Therefore, the results of the current study adds to past research concerning the relationship between identity integration and well-being as it examined identity domains beyond ethnicity and culture (i.e., academic and leadership).

Contrary to our hypotheses, the predicted moderation effect of mentorship on the relationship identity integration and well-being was not support as the interaction term of identity integration and mentorship did not significantly predict well-being. In other words, the relationship between identity integration and well-being does not depend on mentorship. This is not consistent with past research that demonstrated mentorship helped minority status student adjust to postsecondary education, improved academic performance, and promote positive well-being (Baier et al., 2016; Crisp & Cruz, 2009; Fruhi & Chan, 2018; Lenz, 2014). A possible explanation is that the mere existence of mentorship may not be enough, but rather the type of mentor and quality of mentorship is key to improving the relationship between identity integration and well-being. For example, Luedke (2017) identified that students of color themselves prefere mentors of the same race as they provide the academic support, professional guidance, and cultural capital, unlike their white counterparts. Collectively, past research suggest that matching students with mentors of similar social identities may be the best means for improving their identity integration and well-being given that there is a mutual understanding for what it is like to be an minority via personal experience.
Although the aforementioned hypothesis (Hypothesis 4B) were not supported, both identity integration and mentorship predicted well-being. A small, positive correlation between integration and well-being was found, such that increases in integration scores were correlated with increases in well-being scores. Moreover, a moderate, positive correlation between mentorship and well-being was found, such that increases in mentorship scores were correlated with increases in well-being scores. In other words, as an individual experienced greater identity integration or mentorship it suggested that their well-being improved. These findings are consistent with previous literature on identity integration and mentorship revealed that as an individual gains a better understanding of themself their well-being improves (Yampolsky et al., 2016), as well as that having the presence of a mentor improves their well-being overall (Lenz, 2014). Therefore, the results of the current study replicate and adds to past research concerning the relationship between identity integration, mentorship, and well-being.

**Strengths and Limitations**

There are several strengths to report on in this present study. Through using snowball sampling to distribute the Qualtrics survey, we were able to recruit a large number of participants beyond the host institution. In particular, our sample was exceptionally diverse, compared to past research, as there were individuals of different genders, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and collegiate backgrounds. In addition, we were well grounded theoretically as there is a great deal of extant literature exploring identity development, microaggressions, and mentorship among college students. Consequently, we were able to create solid connections between research regarding social identity, academic identity, and leadership identity to explore how these three identity domains are influenced by microaggressions and mentorship—novel research
in the field of college student identity development. Moreover, we preregistered all of our study materials on an open source project management repository—OSF. More specifically, our literature review sources, study hypotheses, exclusion criteria, and data analytic plan were preregistered and time stamped prior to data analysis. Furthermore, both the raw and processed data are open and accessible to the public on the OSF should anyone be interested in reproducing our work. Given the ongoing replication crisis in the social and life sciences (Maxwell, Lau, & Howard, 2015), allows for transparency of our study procedures and findings.

Even though the strengths are enhance our study, this study is not without limitations. Given that the correlational, cross-sectional non-experimental design of the study, we were have a limited understanding of the true nature between identity development, microaggressions, and mentorship. Employing a longitudinal study for this research would allow for one to better understand how contextual factors such as microaggressions and mentorship influence the complex and fluid nature of identity in the long run. In addition, an experimental design which primes microaggressions and mentorship would validate the identified associations within this study. Moreover, while we had an exceptionally diverse sample, our sample was primarily female and heterosexual which may have created discrepancies when comparing minority and majority status students. Furthermore, we did not include socioeconomic measures in the demographic questionnaire which limits our understanding for sample’s class diversity. The selected measure for the identity integration scale provides a limitation as well given that it has only been used to examine the interconnected nature of ethnic and cultural identities rather than other life domains. Moreover, the study may have benefitted from an additional exclusion criterion of having at least held one leadership position given that leadership identity may
manifest different between involved and uninvolved students. Altogether, the strengths and limitations of this study provide a foundation for future research directions.

**Future Directions**

The present study sought to highlight how microaggressions and mentorship play a role in the integration of social, academic, and leadership identity domains among college students. The results were partially consistent with previous research, although inconsistencies remain. For example, while minority students experienced greater integration of their social, academic, and leadership identity domains than majority students it was limited to gender. As such, research should continue to explore why gender minorities experience identity integration, whereas ethnic and sexual minorities do not. Moreover, the lack of a significant relationship between microaggressions and identity integration raises the question whether underlying factors are influencing college students’ identity development. Consequently, in the future, it would be beneficial to investigate how acculturation, self-disclosure, and resilience—factors associated with the college transition process—relate to the identity integration of students’ social, academic, and leadership identity domains. In addition, it may be helpful to limit future investigations to minority student as microaggressions are experiences unique to this population and the inclusion of majority students may conflate findings. Overall, the present study provided a foundation for investigating the interconnected nature of three primary identity domains with college and how contextual factors such as microaggression and mentorship influence the identity formation processes of college students.

**Implications and Applications**
The findings from this study reveal several practical applications worthy of future study. First, it would be valuable to examine further how the type of mentor a student has influences their well-being. This study revealed that mentorship is positively associated with well-being, yet the measure utilized focused on assessing the mere presence of mentorship. As such, future research should work toward investigating the quality of mentorship students receive as well as whether the student and mentor share a social identity. The reason for this proposal is to understand how sharing a collective identity with a mentor can promote not just a student’s academic identity but also their overall identity. More specifically, by sharing a collective identity with a mentor, college students can better relate with and establish a meaningful relationship with their mentors. For minority status students, a mentorship program designed to pair based on social identity would help mitigate the cultural shock students experience during their transition and well as a willingness to persist in fields where they are underrepresented.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to assess how the campus climate of a college influences the presence of microaggressions. The study revealed that microaggressions are negatively associated with well-being, but nothing is known about how microaggressions vary across campus around the nation. Consequently, a future investigation should conduct a study that investigates the varying types of diversity and inclusion programs colleges have implemented and which are useful for promoting positive campus climates. The rationale behind this proposal is that numerous colleges in the country promote buzzwords such as diversity and inclusion to attract minority status students, yet, in reality, the college may not have the resources to aid all students. More specifically, the study would show minority status students perceive microaggressions as well as how majority status students perceive their microaggressive
behavior. By investigating what types of diversity and inclusion programs are working on college campuses, the most successful intervention may be implemented to campuses with adverse campus climate.

Thirdly, it would be useful to explore how experiences with microaggressions influence an individual’s mental health. The study revealed that microaggressions are negatively associated with well-being, but the measure utilized does not assess psychopathology. Consequently, a future investigation should conduct a study that investigates how their experience with influences the mental health of minority status students as a minority in higher education. The rationale behind this proposal is that in recent years mental health has become a growing concern on college campuses given the high levels of stress associated with pursuing postsecondary education. More specifically, the study should examine how anxiety disorders may present differently according to an individual’s background. Following this study, it would be possible to devise an understanding of how to develop adequate clinical interventions for addressing mental health issues in minority status college students.

Conclusion

As the college student population becomes increasingly diverse over the coming years, it is important to consider how college environments impact the lives of minority status students. Through synthesizing research from developmental and poststructural approaches, as well as identity and power literature, the present study was able to investigate how power structures within higher education influence the identity integration process of students. Accordingly, the present study was able to provide new findings as well as replicate previous literature. Overall,
the study established a foundation for future research regarding the integration of social, academic, and leadership identity domains.
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Pride.


Table 1
Social Demographic Characteristics of Participants

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<td>Age</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Educational Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M (SD)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of College System</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts College</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Small (&lt;1,000 students)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (1,000 - 2,999 students)</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>75.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (3,000 - 9,999 students)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (10,000 - 15,000 students)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Large (&gt;15,000 students)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year in Postsecondary Education</strong></td>
<td>2.63 (1.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-Year</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-Year</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-Year</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth-Year</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth-Year and Beyond</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Major</strong></td>
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<td>Humanities</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>35.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
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<td>30.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Extracurricular Activities</strong></td>
<td>3.25 (1.88)</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 - 2</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>≥9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semester in Leadership Positions</strong></td>
<td>2.20 (2.08)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 2</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 - 5</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 - 8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measures</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Microaggressions</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Social Identity</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.76</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Academic Identity</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.83</td>
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<td>4. Leadership Identity</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Identity Integration</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Mentorship</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Well-Being</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***p ≤ .001, **p ≤ .01, *p ≤ .05, ' approaching significance (p ≤ .10)
### Table 4
Independent Samples t-Test Comparing Identity Integration Between Underrepresented Minority and Majority Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>-2.61***</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race or Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>-1.74*</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

***p ≤ .001, **p ≤ .01, *p ≤ .05, *approaching significance (p ≤ .10)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>$df$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>.465***</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>.217***</td>
<td>91.00</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Identity</td>
<td>-.275***</td>
<td>-5.18</td>
<td>.075***</td>
<td>26.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership Identity</td>
<td>-.077</td>
<td>-1.41</td>
<td>.006</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Integration</td>
<td>.036</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>-.344***</td>
<td>-6.66</td>
<td>.119***</td>
<td>44.29</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p$ ≤ .001, **$p$ ≤ .01, *$p$ ≤ .05, * approaching significance ($p$ ≤ .10)
### Table 6

*Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Identity Domains Predicting Identity Integration*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Identity</td>
<td>.259***</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>.067***</td>
<td>23.57</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Identity</td>
<td>.107*</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>.011*</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Identity</td>
<td>.203***</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.041***</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p \leq .001$, **$p \leq .01$, *$p \leq .05$, + approaching significance ($p \leq .10$)***
Table 7
Summary of Multiple Regression Analyses for Identity Integration, Mentorship, and the Interaction Predicting Well-Being

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>df</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>.168***</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>.237***</td>
<td>33.83</td>
<td>3, 327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>.413***</td>
<td>8.25</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration x Mentorship</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>1.47</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***$p \leq .001$, **$p \leq .01$, *$p \leq .05$, ′ approaching significance ($p \leq .10$)
Figure 1. Model displaying the associations between microaggressions, identity integration, and well-being. Additionally, the association between microaggressions and identity integration is shown to be mediated by three variables: (a) social identity, (b) academic identity, and (c) leadership identity. Furthermore, the association between identity integration and well-being is shown to be moderated by mentorship.