

Conceal, Don't Reveal: The Impact of LGBTQ+ College Students Hiding Their Identity

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Abstract

A concealable stigmatized identity (CSI) is an identity that has been stigmatized historically, but is not immediately visible to others, and therefore can be concealed (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Many people with CSIs are motivated to conceal their identity to avoid stigma, but this action is significantly associated with higher levels of depression and generalized anxiety, reduced positive affect, and increased negative affect (Feinstein et al., 2020; Mohr et al., 2019). College students are under a lot of stress in general (Saleh et al., 2017) and college students with CSIs experience additional stressors which can negatively affect their college experiences. This study sought to explore the relationship between concealment factors of LGBTQ+ college students and their academic performance and college involvement. Forty-four LGBTQ+ college students completed an anonymous survey regarding their level of outness, experience with discrimination, amount of internalized stigma, academic performance, and involvement at their college, among other things. This paper describes the discovered relationships between the aforementioned variables and reinforces the implementation of measures that will reduce stigma and provide campus support to LGBTQ+ college students.

Keywords: Identity, stigma, LGBTQ+, college students

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An identity is a part of someone composed of characteristics which help determine who that person is, typically in relation to other people (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Humans have identities relating to many areas of life, including race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, college enrollment, and many others. As society developed, so did differing treatment toward people with identities outside of the dominant majority. In the United States, those who are not white, male, cisgendered, straight, able-bodied, neurotypical, or otherwise possess identities that line up with what is considered “typical” experience discrimination. These minorities experience stigma regularly based on their perceived identity, both overtly and in more covert ways. When someone’s perceived identity is composed of multiple minority characteristics, the discrimination associated with each can overlap and form into something more sinister, a phenomenon that is identified as intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). Discrimination based on identity often occurs systemically, or within the way that government policies were shaped and formed, which continue to perpetuate stigma. Therefore, those with stigmatized identities often experience oppression in multiple facets of their life, which could potentially affect their job, healthcare, education, housing, and more. This bias also leaves people with stigmatized identities vulnerable to stress, mental health issues, internalized stigma, and even physical harm, all of which can be detrimental to someone’s health (Ovichegan, 2014).

Some identities are categorized based on things that cannot be easily hidden, such as race. However, other qualities are less visible to those who are not aware of them. A concealable stigmatized identity (CSI) can be defined as an identity that has been stigmatized historically, but is not immediately visible to others, and therefore can be concealed (Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013).

CSIs can apply to multiple categories of identity, such as religion, LGBTQ+ identities, mental health disorders, physical disability, and more. Although many people with CSIs are candid and open with their identity, there may be instances in which they are more guarded. For instance, some individuals might find that it is safer to keep their identity hidden at least some of the time, especially from those who would be discriminatory against them (Anderson et al., 2020; Kase & Mohr, 2020; Ovichegan, 2014). Keeping secret the knowledge that someone possesses a CSI can be done through a method known as “passing”.

Benefits of Passing

Passing occurs when people assume that an individual’s identity aligns with the dominant majority, often coinciding with that individual’s concealment of their true identity (Anderson et al., 2020). For example, if someone knew a man was married, but not that he was gay, and asked how long he and his wife had been together, that man would be passing as heterosexual. There are many reasons that people choose to pass, the most frequent being to avoid the stigma associated with CSIs (Feinstein et al., 2020). The discrimination people face due to their identity is evident due to passing, through a distinct *lack* of discrimination when someone is able to pass. By passing as a member of the dominant majority, people with CSIs effectively gain the privilege associated with the dominant group and dodge possible discrimination and negative health implications associated with their minority status. Overall, it is clear that passing is used for protection, safety, and survival (Anderson et al., 2020; Kase & Mohr, 2020; Ovichegan, 2014).

Differences in class or socio-economic status (SES) can lead to discrimination. For instance, some high SES individuals hold prejudice and discriminate against people who are poorer. In India, where the caste system remains, this distinction can be even greater. The people

classified as “Dalit” --the lowest caste--are greatly affected by the stigma associated with it. A study by Ovichegan (2014) was conducted at a university in India which was required by law to reserve spaces for Dalit students to attend. This imposed quota was introduced to give Dalit students a guaranteed chance for higher education, but their identity as Dalit still resulted in problems for them. Dalit students are given different colored applications than non-Dalit students, making them an easy target for discrimination regarding their admission into the university. If the students do get accepted, they are further discriminated against, being prevented from sharing things with those of higher castes, from small things like meals to big things like university accommodations. Some teachers refused to talk to Dalit students, answer their questions, or include them whatsoever. A few of the Dalit students prefer to try to pass as non-Dalit if they can, which can result in distancing themselves from other Dalit in the process. In one case a student was able to pass as non-Dalit through her mannerisms, dress, and accent, thereby circumventing problems that might have arisen if her status had been revealed.

This same drive to avoid association with a CSI can be seen in those with mental illnesses as well. Although it is estimated that one in four adults have a mental illness, mental health conditions still carry stigma and are commonly concealed from others. Cooper and colleagues (2020) interviewed college students with depression about their experience concealing their mental illness. Some felt like they could be open with their peers, but not with their faculty mentors, partially because they thought revealing that information could make their mentor be less confident in their performance, or that they would be perceived as weaker. Other times, concealing was due to the lack of a close relationship with other members of the participant's lab. Without a personal relationship with someone, it is difficult to judge how they will react to specific information. Thus, those with a CSI may prefer to avoid the risk of negative outcomes

altogether.

Concealing an identity has been popularly associated with LGBTQ+ individuals in the media, relating to the 'coming out of the closet' narrative. Like other identities, being openly LGBTQ+ can lead to discrimination. In a study by Anderson (2020), LGBTQ+ participants were asked to recall situations where their gender expression affected experiences about their sexual orientation. They reviewed narratives where participant's sexual orientation was concealed due to gender expression, as well as where it was revealed by the participants, where it was revealed by others, and where gender expression was not relevant. A genderqueer participant (someone who is neither male nor female) described a situation where they were dressed androgynously, so they did not pass, and they were repeatedly harassed on the street for seeming LGBTQ+. Gender conformity seemed to help conceal being in the LGBTQ+ community. One participant described how being masculine made people assume he was heterosexual, rather than bisexual. Another recalled a situation where she experienced discrimination; she believed that gender conformity protected her from more intense discrimination because she seemed 'less' LGBTQ+. Fitting in with expectations seems to help people pass for a member of the majority group and avoid more negative outcomes. A study by Kase and Mohr (2020) corroborated those findings in examining experiences of plurisexual women (those attracted to multiple genders) regarding revealing or concealing their identity. In general, participants were fairly open about their sexualities. However, there were some situations that were affected due to contextual factors like perceived acceptance, others' sexual orientations, and interpersonal closeness to the conversation partner. Participants concealed less in situations where they were likely to receive social support and felt protected.

For people who are transgender, passing can have a slightly different meaning. In the case

of other CSIs, passing is specifically linked to concealing your true identity in favor of appearing like the dominant majority. Transgender people still do this, in passing as one of the two binary genders (male or female) with the aim that others will assume they are cisgendered (i.e. not transgender). However, for binary trans individuals, the gender they pass as typically *aligns* with their gender identity. For them, not being authentic with their identity could mean *not* being able to pass. Therefore, binary trans individuals are not being seen as the correct gender. Many trans individuals describe passing as a priority and wanting to live "full time" as their gender, meaning they are attempting to pass as their true gender every day (Anderson et al., 2020; Arayasirikul & Wilson, 2019). Some trans individuals pay close attention to what they say and even physically transition to give themselves a better chance at passing. Others do not even know they pass until they are directed to the correct restroom (Anderson et al., 2020; Arayasirikul & Wilson, 2019). In addition to the benefits of passing that people with other identities experience, when a trans person passes, it can create a sense of euphoria for them and have a positive influence on their mental health (Anderson et al., 2020). In these instances, passing is linked to affirming trans individuals' identity rather than concealing it. This research further demonstrates how those who pass as who they are seem to be happier than those who cannot pass, or who have to pass as someone they are not. However, for those who use passing as a method of *concealing* their true identity, long term focus on passing can actually be harmful to their health.

Detriments of Passing

People with CSIs often internalize the stigma they see and experience in society, which can influence and be influenced by passing. This is demonstrated in the findings of a 2013 study by Sasson-Levy and Shoshana which collected information on the topic of Israeli people passing as white from surveys, articles in Hebrew contexts, and interviews. As the researchers

discovered, many Israeli people do attempt to pass, and a portion do so because of shame regarding their true ethnicity. The act of passing their ethnicity off as another one, while helping them avoid stigma associated with their identity, sometimes perpetuates their shame. In general, having to maintain a false identity through passing might increase internalized stigma. Many are motivated to conceal their identity to avoid stigma, but this action is significantly associated with higher levels of depression and generalized anxiety (Feinstein et al., 2020). Similar experiences are reported in the LGBTQ+ community. Mohr et al. (2019) documented the experiences that LGB workers had with identity management (revealing or concealing) and their affect after said experience. The act of concealing reduced positive affect and increased negative affect, with the opposite happening for situations where they revealed their identity. These consequences affected participants over multiple days. The accuracy of self-depictions positively predicts life satisfaction and mood (Kase & Mohr, 2020; Mohr et al., 2019), but if people do not feel safe enough to be accurate in the depictions of their identity, they are forced to pass for protection, keeping them from the positive effects they would receive from identity authenticity.

In the workplace, people with CSIs face the additional challenges of maintaining job performance, being involved in job activities, and interacting with their coworkers. Behaviors relating to the job, job performance, job satisfaction, commitment, turnover intention, and job anxiety can all be affected by the perceived supportiveness of a workplace (Cancela et al., 2020). In a study of LGBT workers, researchers found that disclosure of identity and authenticity were positively correlated with organizational support (Fletcher & Everly, 2021), meaning the more an organization provides support, the more likely it is that their employees can be authentic with their identity. Authenticity is associated with life satisfaction. Adults who conceal their identities have higher stress, poorer peer relationships, reduced job performance, and increased risk of

mental health problems than those who do not. If this is true for adults, it is likely that college students who are emerging into adulthood experience similar negative outcomes.

College Students and Passing

College students are generally under a lot of stress. They have to manage many things all at once, including but not limited to the following: an increased workload in their classes, making and maintaining friendships and other relationships, finding or keeping up with jobs, and figuring out what they want to do with their lives (Saleh et al., 2017). In a study about how college student stress affects mental health, the vast majority of the sampled college students experienced psychological distress, anxiety, and depression, and many suffered from low self-esteem, low optimism, and low view of self-efficacy (Saleh et al., 2017). As with job performance, any combination of these factors can lead to reduced academic performance (Danitz et al., 2016). These findings are particularly concerning for college students with CSIs because they are likely to experience even more stress, especially when their college does not support them (Pitcher et al., 2018). They may not have close relationships with their peers, making them more likely to want to pass instead of revealing their identity (Cooper et al., 2020; Wessel, 2017). To reduce this stress and the issues associated with it, it is important for colleges to be explicitly supportive of their students. LGBTQ+ college students reported feeling most supported when their campuses included things such as LGBTQ+ resource centers, student organizations, and protective policies (like nondiscrimination policies) (Pitcher et al., 2018).

People who conceal identities are at greater risk of college attrition because of the negative consequences preceding and following concealment (Cooper et al., 2020; Feinstein et al., 2020). Without the added difficulties associated with guarding themselves from stigma and repercussions of concealing, students can focus more of their attention on college experiences,

both academic and social, which are associated with college retention. Thus, a welcoming and supportive environment for these students would be beneficial.

The purpose of this study is to further the research on LGBTQ+ individuals and their experiences as college students. Specifically, the study aims to answer the question: what is the relationship between concealment factors of LGBTQ+ college students and their academic performance and college involvement? To help answer this question, my hypotheses are as follows:

H1: Based on the previous research that fear of discrimination is a factor behind concealing identities (Anderson et al., 2020; Kase & Mohr, 2020; Ovichegan, 2014), participants who have experienced discrimination or are afraid of discrimination will have more concealment factors.

H2: Based on the previous research that more environmental support results in more accurate self depictions (Kase & Mohr, 2020), participants with more concealment factors will have less college involvement.

H3: Based on the previous research that concealing an identity can cause reduced performance (Cancela et al., 2020), participants with more concealment factors will have lower academic performance.

H4: Based on the previous research that organizational support results in more identity authenticity (Cancela et al., 2020; Fletcher & Everly, 2021), participants who attend supportive colleges will have less concealment factors.

H5: Based on the previous research that college students with a support system are more likely to be authentic with their identity (Fletcher & Everly, 2021; Kase & Mohr, 2020), participants with less college experience or less social support will have more concealment

factors.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited through social media and invited to complete a survey. The recruitment statement and survey invitation was posted to online communities on platforms such as Facebook and GroupMe. The use of social media platforms allowed me to reach my intended participants, LGBTQ+ college students, without the need for potential participants who are practicing concealment to expose their CSI. The survey did not collect identifying information, to protect people who otherwise might not be comfortable participating otherwise due to their level of outness. A total of forty-four LGBTQ+ college students responded to the survey. Of the participants, 25 were cisgender (19 female, 6 male) and 18 were transgender or nonbinary (10 non-binary, 5 genderfluid, 3 of other gender identities). Regarding sexual orientation, the participants were mainly bisexual/pansexual (31), with a few gay/lesbian (7), asexual (5), or bisexual and asexual (1). There was very little diversity in race, with 35 participants who were Non-Hispanic white, 6 who were Hispanic, 2 who were African-American, and one who was mixed race. The mixture of class standings was about the same, with 10 freshmen, 14 sophomores, 7 juniors, and 13 seniors.

Materials

The consent form (Appendix A) simply informed the reader that the questionnaire is only for LGBTQ+ college students and that by clicking “I consent” they give their consent to participate in the study. Those that consent are directed to the survey (Appendix B), which is broken into a few categories. The first included questions about demographics, which were explained in detail above. The second section addressed the participant’s personal experiences.

Participants answered questions about their concealment status (whether or not they are out, and to whom) in this section. We defined “outness” as how “out” someone is with their LGBTQ+ identity, which was assessed with questions such as: “What percent of the people in this group do you think are aware of your LGBTQ+ identity?” The term ‘concealment factors’ refers to both outness and internalized stigma, which will be discussed in section four. The third section focused on questions about the participant’s social support, with the same questions provided for “professors”, “family” and “friends”. Specifically, this section wanted to know how close they were to that group of people and if the participant thought that group would support them. The fourth section focused on discrimination and stigma. In this section, participants were asked about any discrimination they had experienced or if they fear experiencing discrimination, as well as about how they view their identity (with statements like, “My LGBTQ+ identity is extremely important to me”) which was used to determine their level of internalized stigma. The last section collected information about the participant’s college experience. This section of the survey covered questions about their academic achievement (GPA, approximate hours taken each semester, etc.) and involvement with peers and/or organizations on campus. Both parts included quantitative and qualitative elements, which were analyzed and averaged to an overall high, moderate, or low score for each category.

Additionally, at least once in each section, participants were given a text box where they could elaborate more about their answers, which was especially helpful for adding to qualitative responses and obtaining a better idea of the participant’s perspective.

Results

Hypothesis 1

An independent samples t-test was used to determine the difference in concealment

factors between those who had experienced discrimination or were afraid of it, and those who were not. There was no significant difference in the outness of either group ($t(42) = -.470, p = .320$), but there was a significant difference found regarding internalized stigma ($t(42) = -1.71, p = .047$). Those who had experienced discrimination or were afraid of it rated significantly higher in internalized stigma ($M = 2.39, SD = .82$) than the opposing group ($M = 1.96, SD = .59$).

Hypothesis 2

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the concealment factors in the three categories of college involvement. Outness was found to be significantly higher in students with high campus involvement ($M = 6.14, SD = 1.56$) compared to those who were only moderately involved ($M = 4.53, SD = 1.53$), as a Tukey post-hoc test revealed, $F(42) = 3.81, p = .023$. The results of the ANOVA regarding internalized stigma was not significant as it relates to college involvement ($F(42) = 1.133, p > .05$), however there was a negative relationship found between the variables, with high involvement having the lowest stigma ($M = 1.95, SD = .65$) and low involvement having the highest stigma ($M = 2.45, SD = .96$).

Hypothesis 3

This hypothesis also included a variable with three categories, so a one-way ANOVA was used here as well to explore the relationship between both concealment factors and academic performance. Neither outness ($F(42) = .363, p = .697$) nor stigma ($F(42) = .643, p = .531$) yielded significant results, but the average outness score for students with low academic achievement ($M = 5.53, SD = 1.45$) was actually higher than both moderate ($M = 4.77, SD = 1.71$) and high ($M = 5.01, SD = 1.63$). Similarly, the average stigma score for students with low academic achievement ($M = 1.78, SD = .67$) was lower than both moderate and high, which ended up with similar means ($M = 2.34, SD = .79$ and $M = 2.25, SD = .79$).

Hypothesis 4

The data for this hypothesis was measured using a Pearson correlation. The relationship between a supportive college and outness was not significant ($r(42) = .013, p = .932$). The correlation between internalized stigma and college supportiveness was similarly low and thereby also non-significant ($r(42) = -.026, p = .865$).

Hypothesis 5

A Pearson correlation was conducted for this hypothesis as well between family support and the concealment factors. There were no significant results for outness, as the correlation value was very low, meaning it was not very closely correlated with family support ($r(42) = .189, p = .218$). However, there was a significant negative correlation with internalized stigma and family support ($r(42) = -.413, p = .005$).

Additional results

This wasn't in the hypotheses, but I also wanted to see if there was a relationship between concealment and whether the participants reported having additional stigmatized identities. Of the 44 respondents, 33 of them responded affirmatively to that question. An independent samples t-test revealed that the difference between the groups was approaching significance ($t(42) = 1.597, p = .059$), as the students with one or more additional stigmatized identity had much lower outness ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.53$) than those who were only LGBTQ+ ($M = 5.68, SD = 1.81$).

There were also a few trends I noticed in how the participants responded in the free response boxes throughout the survey. Many revealed they were afraid of being treated differently as a main reason for why they weren't fully out. Others mentioned that they were afraid of discrimination because they live in the south or in a predominately red district. Almost all of the participants said they were anxious about academics most or all of the time.

Additionally, a good number also responded that they were anxious about everything. Although it wasn't the majority, several respondents also explicitly said they were grateful that they passed as straight or cis because it made them feel safer.

Discussion

Overall, no hypothesis was fully supported, although hypothesis 1, 2, and 5 did find partial support. For hypothesis 1, the relationship between discrimination and stigma was positive, as expected. This indicates that if LGBTQ+ college students experience discrimination and/or are afraid of discrimination, they are more likely to have a higher level of internalized stigma. The qualitative answers supported this hypothesis as well, with many participants expressing their concern about coming out because they were afraid of being treated differently, afraid of how their family would react, or afraid of being discriminated against in the area that they live. Some were not afraid because of their immediate situation, but instead afraid because of the general bias against LGBTQ+ individuals in this country. These results provide support the notion that LGBTQ+ college students are negatively affected by discrimination.

Relating to hypothesis 2, since outness was found to be significantly higher in students with high campus involvement as compared to lower involvement, it follows that supporting LGBTQ+ students and allowing them to be more out with their identity will encourage more involvement in the college as a whole. College retention is very important, so having students able to be more engaged might have a positive effect on retention. Conversely, if LGBTQ+ students are forced to conceal, this might have an overall negative effect on college involvement, and thereby retention. Future research with this study might include the relation between campus involvement, retention, and identity authenticity for LGBTQ+ students.

Although the correlations that were run for hypothesis 4 were not significant, they did

show a slight trend in the expected direction, with a positive correlation between a supportive college and outness, and a negative correlation between a supportive college and the student's level of internalized stigma. It is possible that these results could become more significant with more participants. There was also an additional measure for college support with questions about the college's discrimination policies and diversity training that was originally supposed to be analyzed for this section as well. Unfortunately more data needs to be collected to properly assess this component, since the vast majority answered yes or unsure, and with the unsure answer we do not know whether the school has it or not, making it hard to determine.

Many factors were considered in testing hypothesis 5, since it was considering how the concealment factors are correlated with both social support (which had both family and friend subcategories) and class standing. The results for family support were found to be significant, but the other two categories were not significant, possibly also because of the lack of participants. Regarding internalized stigma and family support, the significant negative correlation indicates that as family support goes up, internal stigma goes down, and vice versa. In some of the response sections, participants specifically cited growing up in a strict or religious family as reasons why they couldn't come out. It might therefore be beneficial for students to go through counseling to deal with these events from their past, or at least be provided with additional support so that they feel comfortable on campus. That may be beneficial for reducing their internalized stigma.

Students should not have to be afraid of being discriminated against, especially not at their college, where they should feel safe. As mentioned earlier, almost 75% of the participants reported having a mental illness like depression or anxiety, and nearly every participant described being anxious about academics. Additional stressors like fear of discrimination could

be even more detrimental to their mental health. College staff should put more effort into preventing and bringing awareness about discrimination on campuses to put an end to this negative cycle. Overall, it is obvious that LGBTQ+ college students are affected by concealment factors, especially when it comes to campus involvement. It is unclear if there is an effect on academic performance, so future research might focus more deeply on if those factors influence how well LGBTQ+ students do in college classes, as well as other things like their academic motivations/anxiety. Previous literature has explored LGBTQ+ youth in school, but this is rarely at the college level. The current study adds to the literature by providing solid quantitative support for the relationship between the outness and internalized stigma of LGBTQ+ college students and their college experience. It is now up to the institutions themselves to make changes to improve that experience.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

You are being invited to a questionnaire on the experiences of LGBTQ+ college students. Only people who are **both in the LGBTQ+ community and also college students** are able to complete the survey. College students at any level (undergraduate, graduate, etc.) are allowed. It will take between 30 minutes and an hour to complete the survey, depending on how much you write in the open response questions. No identifying information will be collected from you, so your answers will remain completely anonymous. By selecting “I consent” and clicking “Next”, you are giving consent to participate in the study and you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old. If you do not want to participate in the study or do not meet the requirements previously stated, please exit the survey now.

- I consent
- I do not consent

Appendix B

Survey Questions

[Questions to determine if they qualify]

- Do you identify as LGBTQ+?
 - Yes
 - No
- Are you currently a college student?
 - Yes
 - No

[Demographics questions]

- What is your gender identity?
 - Cis female
 - Trans female
 - Cis male
 - Trans male
 - Non-binary
 - Other
- What is your sexual orientation?
 - Heterosexual
 - Gay/Lesbian
 - Bisexual/Pansexual
 - Asexual
 - Other
- What is your race/ethnicity?
 - American Indian or Alaskan
 - Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Hispanic
 - Non-hispanic white
 - Other
- What is your class standing?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
- Do you have any other stigmatized identities? (Religion, mental health disorder, etc.)
 - [participants will be provided with a text box]

[Questions about the participant's experiences with passing/outness. The first two sets of 5 questions will be followed by an 11 point Likert scale representing 0% to 100%]

What percent of the people in this group do you think are aware of your LGBTQ+ identity?

- Members of your immediate family (parents, siblings, etc.)
- Members of your extended family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.)
- People you socialize with (friends, acquaintances, etc.)
- People at your school (professors, students, etc.)
- Strangers (someone you have a conversation with online, at a store)

How often do you avoid talking about topics related to or otherwise indicating your LGBTQ+ identity (e.g., not talking about your significant other, changing your mannerisms, changing your appearance) when interacting with members of these groups?

- Members of your immediate family (parents, siblings, etc.)
- Members of your extended family (aunts, uncles, grandparents, cousins, etc.)
- People you socialize with (friends, acquaintances, etc.)
- People at your school (professors, students, etc.)
- Strangers (someone you have a conversation with online at a store)

- If you are not out at all, only out to some people, or out to everyone, why is that?
 - [participants will be provided with a text box]
- How important is passing (as cis and/or straight) to you?
 - [participants will be provided with a 7 point Likert scale, 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely]

[Questions about the support the participants receive. The first 9 questions will be followed with a 7 point Likert scale, 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely]

- How close are you with your professors?
- How much do they go out of their way to do things to make it easier at school for you?
- How much are your professors willing to listen to your personal problems?

- How close are you with your family?
- How much do they go out of their way to do things to make it easier at school for you?
- How much is your family willing to listen to your personal problems?

- How close are you with your friends?
- How much do they go out of their way to do things to make it easier at school for you?
- How much are your friends willing to listen to your personal problems?

- My college has a written nondiscrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and gender identity
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

- My college will actually help me if I am discriminated against
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure
- My college offers diversity/inclusion training programs
 - Yes
 - No
 - Unsure

[This section will be questions about discrimination. Each question will be followed with a text box.]

- Have people treated you differently when they discovered your identity or when you came out to them? If you are not out to certain people, is it because you are afraid of that?
- Have you been harmed mentally or physically because of your LGBTQ+ identity?
- Are you afraid of being harmed mentally or physically because of your identity? Why or why not?

[This section will assess internal stigma. The participants will be provided with a 7 point Likert scale for each question, 1 = Not at all, 7 = Completely]

Please rate how true each of the following statements are for you.

- My LGBTQ+ identity is extremely important to me
- I really wish I could be non-LGBTQ+
- I feel out of place in the world because I have an LGBTQ+ identity
- I feel inferior to people who aren't in the LGBTQ+ community
- In general, I am about to live the way that I want to
- I feel comfortable being seen in public with an obviously LGBTQ+ person

[This section will be about academic performance.]

- What is your GPA? (Up to 4.0)
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How many credit hours are you taking this semester?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How many credit hours do you normally take?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- Do you think your GPA accurately reflects your academic ability?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- Have you ever been on the dean's list?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How often do you experience anxiety about academics?
 - All of the time

- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Very infrequently
- None of the time
- What are you anxious about (if anything)?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]

[This section is about college involvement.]

- How involved are you with organizations on campus? (How many are you in? Have you ever had an officer position?)
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- Do you live on campus right now? Have you lived on campus previously?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How many events do you attend on campus each semester?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How many close friends do you have at school?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]
- How often do you hang out with your friends?
 - All of the time
 - Most of the time
 - Sometimes
 - Very infrequently
 - None of the time
- How often do you experience anxiety about being involved on campus?
 - All of the time
 - Most of the time
 - Sometimes
 - Very infrequently
 - None of the time
- What are you anxious about (if anything)?
 - [students will be provided with a text box]