"Tell Us About Yourself": Does Sexuality Hurt Perceived Success in College?

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Introduction

LGBTQ+ group identity is on the rise. The most recent Gallup poll found that about 4.5% of the population in the U.S. identifies as LGBTQ+. This population increases to 8.2% among millennials born 1980–1999 (Newport 2018). However, despite the increasingly prevalent reality of LGBTQ+ members in the community, the basic rights and protections of homosexual and nonconforming sexual identities are still largely surrounded by controversy. According to another Gallup poll, 67% of respondents thought gay and lesbian relationships were morally acceptable, while 30% of respondents did not ("Gay and Lesbian Rights"). Although most respondents said homosexual relationships were morally acceptable, there is reason to believe that this number might still be lower than reported (Phillips 1972).

In this controversy, LGBTQ+ adolescents are especially vulnerable. They are 3.3 times more likely to have thoughts of suicide and three times more likely to attempt suicide than other teens (Hazlett 2011). Since most of these adolescents atttend public schools, how to best protect these students through school policy is under significant debate. According to the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Alliance, an organization advocating for inclusivity and safety in U.S. schools, only 49% of the LGBTQ+ community live in states that have laws to stop bullying specifically based on gender identity and sexual orientation. GLSEN argues that these types of school policies are vital for LGBTQ+ student safety. We wondered if any aspect of LGBTQ+ discrimination was not being addressed that should be in these types of protections. Specifically, we wondered whether LGBTQ+ students were academically disadvantaged.

To better identify policy changes that can help LGBTQ+ students, we first need to understand the specifics of the stigma that LGBTQ+ students face. By considering

the perceptions of and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ students, policy makers can know how to better empower LGBTQ+ individuals, and LGBTQ+ students can be better prepared to face stigma. Thus, our research question is "How do people's perceptions of a student change when that student identifies as LGBTQ+?"

To answer this question, particularly with regard to academic skill, we researched respondent perceptions of a hypothetical college applicant through a survey experiment. As such, our independent variable was including an LGBTQ+ sexual identity in the description of a college applicant. We focused on sexual identity instead of gender identity. Our dependent variables were if people thought the student in the application 1) would be accepted to college, 2) would receive a scholarship (and if so, how much), 3) would have a certain grade point average (GPA), 4) was trustworthy, and 5) was likeable. In addition to LGBTQ+ identity, we researched the intersectionality of race and LGBTQ+ attributes, specifically whether identifying as a racial minority in addition to being LGBTQ+ made an impact on perceptions more intensely than for white LGBTQ+ students.

Of the five measured outcomes, likelihood of acceptance into college and predicted average GPA in college produced null results. There was no statistically significant or substantially significant difference between a student who was gay and a student who was straight for measures of college academic success. When asked to predict the amount of scholarship the student would receive, respondents favored the gay student for more scholarship than the straight student by three percentage points. The final two measured outcomes of likability and trustworthiness also had no statistically significant difference between gay and straight students. Examining intersectional identities—being gay and black; gay and female; and gay, black, and female together—no negative statistically significant differences in perceptions were found. Intersectional identities only influenced perceptions of GPA. Respondents perceived gay females as having a 0.6 point higher GPA than straight male students. We attribute this to perceptions of females as hardworking, rather than solely a reflection of the perception of gay females.

The implications of these results are encouraging. These null results show that LGBTQ+ students are not facing significant academic discrimination, so we would not recommend efforts to focus on helping these students academically. While more work should be done in this area, this is promising evidence that many do not attach harmful associations of academic success on others based on sexual orientation.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Based on previous research on sexuality, political behavior, and political psychology, we theorized that stating a non-heteronormative sexuality or non-cisgender on a college application would adversely impact people's perceptions of the applicant. Additionally, we anticipated that when LGBTQ+ identity was combined with racial minority status, these adverse impacts would intensify. To better construct and defend this approach, we built on the current theory of "fundamental attribution error" and applied it to the specific situation of LGBTQ+ identity and racial intersectionality.

Broadly speaking, fundamental attribution error is a well-known psychological fallacy in which individuals will see one attribute of a person and use it to determine their entire character, even though a single characteristic is usually not representative (McCombs 2013). This error in judgement can be positive or negative, although positive characteristics are found to be weak in convincing individuals of another person's character. When this attribute or behavior is negative, it is much more likely to cause viewers to deem the person as entirely bad or less deserving than themselves or others. Additionally, fundamental attribution error stipulates that individuals are more critical (or experience greater judgmental error) when the person they are critiquing is different than them (Sabini et al. 2001). This difference is most easily manifest in noticeable demographic differences, such as race and gender, but can also be evident when differing political and religious beliefs are made apparent. Substantial research in both political psychology and broader psychology alike has confirmed that this error is a common occurrence in the average American (Gilovich and Eibach 2001), supporting our theory that this error would likely occur among our survey respondents.

An example of fundamental attribution error in the classroom by Claire Fox and Michael Boulton investigated teacher and peer perceptions of bullying victims. It found that individuals perceive bullying victims to have poorer social skills (Fox 2005). We wondered if there were unique perceptions of social or academic skills when individuals were LGBTQ+. No significant previous research about peer or teacher perception of LGBTQ+ student academic performance has been done.

Vast research exists about the influence of teacher bias on a variety of opportunities available to students. Harriet Tenebaum and Martin Ruck conducted a study that examined whether teachers' expectations, referrals to special programs, or positive and negative language changed depending on the race of their students. This article argues that teachers' systematic bias can affect many aspects of children's lives. In an analysis of many different studies, teachers were more likely to hold high expectations for Asian Americans and European Americans over Hispanic- or African-American students, and more positive feedback was given to European-American students over the other groups (Tenenbaum 2007). This same logic can be applied to teacher expectations of LGBTQ+ students, particularly in calibrating these expectations based on shortcuts of the fundamental attribution error. While this study focuses on teachers, everyone in children's lives can influence their self-perception and eventual success.

As such, we stipulated that for our particular research, seeing LGBTQ+ attributes on the application would engage fundamental attribution error in respondents, who would then view the overall admission as more negative, leading to lower responses on college acceptance, GPA, scholarship, trustworthiness, and likeability. The fundamental attribution error would be even stronger among intersectional identities, such as LGBTQ+ females or black LGBTQ+ men, causing even lower scoring on these outcomes.

Although identifying as LGBTQ+ is not an inherently bad or negative attribute, we theorized that current statistics and modern media representations of LGBTQ+

individuals, particularly youth and students, lead people to think negatively about this group. For example, according to GLSEN, LGBTQ+ students are at a higher risk of dropping out of high school than other students and of experiencing increased disciplinary action including detention, suspension, and expulsion (Palmer et al. 2016). These statistics are even higher for LGBTQ+ students of color, with nearly half of this demographic experiencing some form of discipline while at school. Additionally, LGBTQ+ students are three times more likely to be suicidal, act out, become depressed, and experience anxiety (NAMI 2019). We theorized that these statistics influence people's perceptions of LGBTQ+ college applicants, because people attribute these negative possibilities—dropping out, causing disciplinary problems, and developing mental health issues—with an inability to function well in college. Common perceptions show that LGBTQ+ students are less likely to perform well, and we predicted this bias would become evident in respondents' answers.

In addition to current statistics on LGBTQ+ students, modern media portrayals of LGBTQ+ characters still promote a dramatic (and often negative) stereotype of this community, which likely influences respondent fundamental attribution error. For example, LGBTQ+ people are most often portrayed as extremely dramatic, hypersexual, and mentally unstable (Cook 2018). Even media efforts to change perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community still feed into these stereotypes, such as the popular TV show *Modern Family* with its portrayal of gay-father Cam as extremely emotional, irrational, and flamboyant (The Data Lounge 2013). These media messages attach moral characteristics to the LGBTQ+ identity, ingraining such stereotypes into the typical American. Therefore, we stipulated that when respondents saw "LGBTQ+" on the application, they applied what they have seen in media—dramatic responses, hypersexuality, and lack of ambition or focus—to the characteristics of these student applicants.

Overall, we took the theory of fundamental attribution error and applied it to LGBTQ+ identity among students to hypothesize that this identification would negatively impact respondents' perceptions. To this end, our causal logic was as follows:

1. Respondents will see LGBTQ+ identifiers on the application.
2. This identifier will trigger statistics, media representation, and stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community.
3. Fundamental attribution error will influence respondents to use the LGBTQ+ identifier as a negative measure of the student's entire character.
4. This negative insight will reduce perceptions of college acceptance, scholarship, GPA, likeability, and trustworthiness.

It is important to note that we understood our current research question was in equipoise. Essentially, we recognized the possibility of our findings being directly contradictory to what we predicted. We believed this could potentially happen because of current efforts to destigmatize LGBTQ+ issues and to diversify and promote inclusion on college campuses across the U.S. (Windmeyer 2017). For this reason, we noted

the potential for null results. As homosexuality and transgenderism are becoming less taboo in American society (Morini 2017), respondents may have been less likely to be influenced by an LGBTQ+ condition at all. While these two scenarios were a possibility, we still believed that traditional stereotypes of the LGBTQ+ community and the current obstacles LGBTQ+ students still face in school and college would be more influential in determining public opinion on this issue than its positive or null alternatives.

Figure 1. Causal Chain
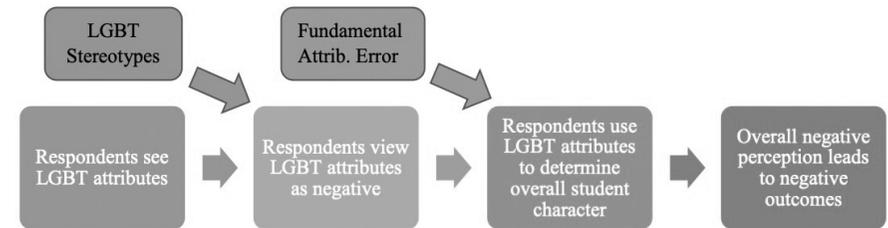
Methodology and Data
Definitions

The following is a list of relevant terms and operations for important concepts in our research:

1. LGBTQ+: This stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The "LGB" in this term refers to sexual orientation. Some do not conform to these labels and refer to themselves as queer, asexual, and so forth, hence the "Q+." This term is preferred because in this research we will be signaling non-heteronormative relationships without specifically identifying sexual orientation or gender identity.
2. Sexual orientation: We define sexual orientation as a pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions between people. Heterosexual is the attraction of men to women or women to men. Homosexual is the attraction of men to men or women to women. Finally, bisexual is the attraction of one to both sexes, but this is not a sexual orientation that we tested in this research. Sexual orientation also has reference to a person's sense of self and social identity within a community ("Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality").
3. Trustworthiness: Trustworthiness indicates the ability to be relied upon as honest or truthful. We have chosen this measure as it is a virtue typically seen as positive and valuable for interpersonal relationships. For our research, this will be measured by survey respondents agreeing with the statement "this student is trustworthy" on a 7-point scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." This is to measure the theory that people perceive LGBTQ+ people as more dramatic, prone to exaggeration, and potentially less stable or reliable than others.
4. Likability: Simply put, this means agreeableness. We have included this measure because it offers greater insight into how people might view the student

in a common setting, such as working on a college project together. Likeability is an important part of social relationships and one that will help us predict how well the student may or may not function at university.

Data Collection and Survey

Understanding the operational definitions we use, we next set out to answer our research question by gathering data through a randomly controlled survey experiment administered on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. We collected 1,500 observations and used Qualtrics survey software to randomize our treatments and record the data. We ran the survey experiment in March 2019.

We found several advantages to running a survey experiment to gather our data. The randomization feature enabled us to directly observe the impact of our treatment and, when controlling for demographic variables, we could make a stronger claim to causation through statistical analysis. Additionally, the survey gave us the ability to ask more directly about our outcome variables, which improved the accuracy and internal validity of our experiment. The survey included twelve basic demographic questions, including age, gender, ethnicity, political party, political ideology, employment status, sexual orientation, transgender identity, religion, political interest, and family income. We then showed the respondents a theoretical vignette of a high school student applying to college, randomizing sexual orientation, gender, and race. We note that after we showed the vignette, we began each survey with the following disclaimer: "On the following page, you will be shown a hypothetical biography of a high-school student preparing to apply to college. Please read the biography and then answer the questions that follow." The vignette, along with explanations for our choices, is below.

[Name] is a senior at Lincoln High School. [He/She] is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. [He/She] is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. [He/She] scored a 26 on the ACT and [his/her] GPA is 3.5. [He/She] hopes to attend college to study business administration. [Name] and [his/her boyfriend/girlfriend] recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars."

We randomized names both by gender (a boy or girl name) and race (a white- or black-sounding name). We chose the following names based on recent research determining the "whitest" and "blackest" sounding names in the U.S. (Leavitt and Dubner 2015):

1. Madeline (female, white)
2. Connor (male, white)
3. Aliyah (female, black)
4. DeShawn (male, black)

We chose Lincoln High School as the name of the school because it is the most common school name in the U.S. (Petroski 2018) and is found in all regions of the country; therefore, the name was unlikely to provoke a regional bias. We included age and "middle child" to add unbiased information about the student. We chose track-and-field,

because it is one of the top ten most popular high school sports for both boys and girls but is less likely than other sports (such as basketball or football) to qualify someone for athletic scholarship, which could skew the results (Stanmyre 2014). Additionally, we chose yearbook as an extracurricular activity, because it is one of the most popular afterschool activities for U.S. students, but it does not have a strong connotation for strong or poor academics, which again could skew the responses (Billock 2018). We included the average ACT score and GPA for university-bound students in the U.S. and chose business administration as the student's choice of study, as it is the most popular major for men *and* women and also does not carry connotation of strong or poor academics. (CollegeFactual 2017). Finally, we signaled sexuality through indicating whether the student attended prom with a boyfriend or girlfriend. To avoid the possibility that the respondents did not read the information regarding sexuality, we placed it at the end of the paragraph so that it would stand out more than if it were placed in the middle of the vignette. In total, we had the following control and treatments:

1. Heterosexual treatment (used as our baseline or control): equally randomized between white-male, white-female, black-male, and black-female vignettes.
2. Homosexual treatment: equally randomized between white-male, white-female, black-male, and black-female vignettes.

A comprehensive list of the vignettes can be found in the appendix.
Following the vignette, we asked the following five outcome measures:

1. If the respondent thinks the student will get accepted into college
   a. "What are the chances that this student will get accepted into college?"
      • Very likely
      • Likely
      • Flip of a coin
      • Unlikely
      • Very Unlikely

2. How much scholarship the respondent thinks the student will get
   a. On a scale of 0% to 100%, indicate how much scholarship you think this application would receive from the university. (0% indicates no scholarship and 100% indicates a full tuition scholarship.)

3. What GPA the respondent thinks the student has
   a. "What do you think the GPA of this student will be in college?" (scale from 1.0 to 4.0)

4. How trustworthy the student appears
   a. "This student is trustworthy"
      • Strongly Agree
      • Agree
      • Somewhat Agree

• Neither Agree nor Disagree
• Somewhat Disagree
• Disagree
• Strongly Disagree

5. How likeable the student appears
   a. "This student is likeable"
      • Strongly Agree
      • Agree
      • Somewhat Agree
      • Neither Agree nor Disagree
      • Somewhat Disagree
      • Disagree
      • Strongly Disagree

We have carefully selected these outcome measures to capture various ways individuals may view students and their college applications. The scales we used are derived from Likert scales, the most commonly used scales in academic psychology and political science survey research methods (McLeod 2008).

Using the sample from Mechanical Turk was an appropriate approach to gathering American public opinion due to its low cost and convenience, although we recognize that there are several limitations to this specific sample. Mechanical Turk respondents were typically younger, were female, had lower income, and were more liberal than the average American (Ipeirotis 2009). We recognize this sample is not representative of the U.S. public, but we stipulate that if we find the effect we are anticipating in this sample, it is likely to hold constant should we change the sample's composition (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012). We can say this with confidence, because we were testing LGBTQ+ bias among a group that is most likely to be favorable toward the queer community. If this group still exhibits the bias we expected, then we are likely to find the same effects (if not greater) among a nationally representative sample that is overall less friendly toward LGBTQ+ people. Notwithstanding these potential issues, Mechanical Turk is still regarded as an effective and prevalent source of organizational data among social and other sciences (Keith, Tay, and Harms, 2017), and we used the data we received from our survey experiment.

Once we gathered our data, we conducted simple regression analysis to identify the causal mechanisms at play. Specifically, we ran OLS regression models on each of our five outcomes and included the controls listed above. To account for the potential intersectional influences, we created dummy variables for our main treatment (sexuality) as well as binary variables for the gender and ethnicity of our treatments. We also looked at heterogeneity differences between variables of note, specifically age, political party, and ideology. Finally, we included regressions that merged the gay treatment with gender and ethnicity.
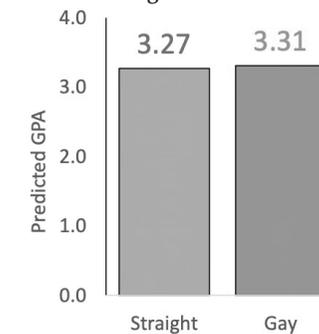
Results

Overall, our first three outcomes—likelihood of acceptance, average GPA, and scholarship—produced no results. Specifically, when asked whether the student in our profile is likely to be admitted into college, respondents answered the same for the straight treatment as they did for the gay treatment; no statistical or substantive difference between the two was found. This result also held when respondents were asked to predict the student's GPA in college, with the straight student averaging a 3.27 GPA and the gay student a 3.31 GPA, with no significant difference at the 95% level. In the case of predicting the amount of scholarship the student would receive, respondents actually *favored* the gay student, predicting that he/she would receive almost 3 percentage points more scholarship than the straight student. These findings are pictured below, and their corresponding regressions are available in the appendix.

Figure 2. "How Likely is the Student to Be Accepted into College?" by Treatment
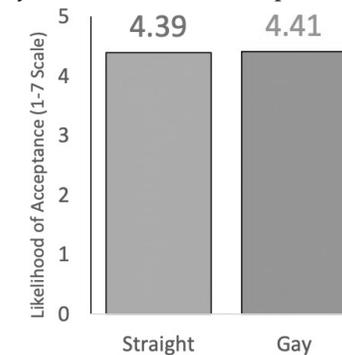
Note: This figure displays the results of the Mturk study with all respondents pooled together (N=1,500). The y-axis shows the likelihood of acceptance into college from a 1–7 scale with 1 meaning very unlikely and 7 very likely. We find no statistical or substantive difference between the two.

Figure 3. "What Do You Think the College GPA of This Student Will Be?" by Treatment

Note: This figure displays the results of the MTurk study with all respondents pooled together (N=1,500). The y-axis shows the predicted GPA on a continuous scale from 1.0 to 4.0 (1.0 meaning all Ds, 4.0 meaning all As). The x-axis represents whether the student mentions a straight or gay sexuality. We find no statistical or substantive difference between the two.

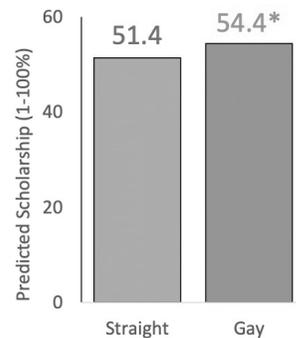**Figure 4. "How Much Scholarship Do You Think This Student Will Receive?" by Treatment**
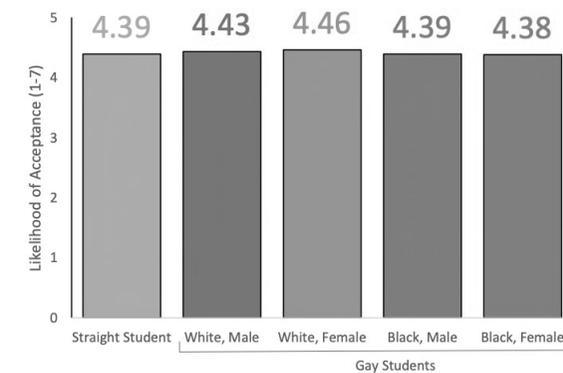

Note: This figure displays the results of the Mturk study with all respondents pooled together (N=1,500). The y-axis shows the predicted scholarship once in college on a continuous scale from 0–100 with 0 meaning no scholarship and 100 meaning 100% full scholarship. We find 90% statistical significance between the two, with the gay treatment receiving more scholarship.

In addition to analyzing whether the student's sexuality influences people's perceptions of college success, we looked deeper into intersectional identities, specifically race (being black) and gender (being female). When examining these intersectional identities—being gay and black; gay and female; and gay, black, and female together—we find no negative statistical or substantive difference in perceptions. For the most part, intersectional identities appear not to influence perceptions of success at all, except for GPA—respondents perceived gay females as having a 0.652-point higher GPA when compared to straight male students, which had a 90% statistical significance measure. This result is also substantively significant, as a 0.6 increase in GPA indicates enough of a change to influence academic scholarship. We think this is due to general stereotypes of women as harder workers and better students, though feelings of female success are possibly conflated with the influence of the gay treatment. Figure 5 below highlights the null relationships among intersectional identities with our first outcome measure, likelihood of college acceptance.

Beyond our success outcomes, our characteristic measures—how trustworthy the student appears and how likeable he/she seems—also had no statistical or substantive difference between the sexuality treatments. Interestingly, we found that the gender of the vignette positively influenced perceptions of character independent of the sexuality treatment; females (both gay and straight) experienced a 0.09-point increase in trustworthiness at the 90% level and a 0.11-point increase in likeability at the 95% level. However, both increases are on a 7-point scale and therefore carry little (if any) substantive significance. We observe similar findings among our intersectional analysis, with gay women 0.02 points more trustworthy at the 95% and 0.26 points more likeable at the 99% level. We purport that the influence of the gay-and-female interaction is significant because of the overall significance of females and not as much because of the sexuality. A full report of these regressions is available in the appendix.

Figure 5. "How Likely is the Student to Be Accepted to College?" by Intersectional Interactions

Note: This figure displays the results of the Mturk study with all respondents pooled together (N=1,500). The y-axis shows the predicted likelihood of acceptance into college from a 1–7 scale with 1 meaning very unlikely and 7 very likely. We find no statistical or substantive difference between the five.

Although our overall treatment appeared to have little to no effect, we find that splitting outcomes by certain heterogeneities uncovered unique patterns. Specifically, when looking at age, political party, and ideology, we find certain groups produced significantly different results. Age groups—split at the median age with 36 years and up categorized as "old" and 36 years and under as "young"—did not have as markedly different results as might be expected. Older people were not more likely to hold negative opinions about gay students; on the contrary, we found that among older respondents, the results showed gay students having a higher GPA, receiving more scholarship, and appearing more likeable than the baseline control at the 95% statistical significance level. These positive attitudes are in line with the overall findings and suggest that generational differences (such as biases and prejudice against the LGBTQ+ community, usually apparent in older Americans) are either not present in our sample or in the United States more generally.

While age did not produce negative differences, political party and ideology did. Although Republicans and conservatives did not exhibit any statistical differences in perceptions of student ability (including acceptance, GPA, and scholarship), they *did* showcase significantly more negative attitudes on character traits of the gay student. Both Republicans and conservatives viewed the gay student as less trustworthy and less likeable, with trustworthiness decreasing 0.26 units among Republicans and 0.31 units among conservatives and likeability decreasing 0.24 units among Republicans and 0.34 units among conservatives; all these differences are statistically significant at the 99% level. These findings are in direct contrast to Democrats and liberals, both of which showed no difference between the gay treatment and control except in trustworthiness and likeability (but in the opposite direction); both groups saw the gay student as more trustworthy and likeable, at the 90% significance level. Clearly, political party

and ideology (which are highly correlated with one another) did indeed produce different outcomes, with Republicans and conservatives exhibiting negative perceptions of the gay student's personal character.

Implications

These results indicate that knowing about sexuality does not negatively impact people's perceptions of a student's college acceptance and success. While we initially thought identifying as gay might negatively skew people's perceptions, it appears it makes no difference at all. If anything, mentioning homosexuality might actually *help* perceptions, particularly views on whether or not the student will receive a scholarship. This positive finding might be due to perceptions of diversity scholarships and showcases that people think homosexuality might qualify individuals for more unique monetary benefits.

However, these findings only hold when considering perceptions as a whole; once split by political party and ideology, perceived success remains the same but perceived character does not. This should not indicate too much of a stumbling block for future students, unless they expect to attend a strongly conservative university. For example, Brigham Young University (BYU)—with a strong history of conservative beliefs and a strict moral code—might pose an issue to openly gay students who are seeking to attend. Overall, these findings are good news for most students in high school, because they suggest that students are not being systematically discriminated against academically. This might also be encouraging for students who are considering whether to release their sexuality on college applications or to college counselors. Their sexuality is not likely to influence how these advisors view them as students (again, noting the exception of conservative universities such as BYU). On the contrary, gay students can be expected to be treated just like everyone else—even when they also identify as black, female, or both.

Of course, it is important to note some limitations to our study. Our survey pool was not nationally representative and was comprised of average Americans, not college admissions members. Additionally, Mechanical Turk is known to have more liberal, open-minded respondents; we are possibly missing more traditional, conservative Americans, who might be more likely to hold discriminatory opinions towards the LGBTQ+ community. Moreover, people's perceptions of acceptance, GPA, scholarship, trustworthiness, and likeability do not actually mean the student will achieve success in each of these categories; rather, it is meant to measure how the people in their everyday lives (such as parents, teachers, and colleagues) will view the potential success and in turn motivate the student to achieve that very success. In many regards, this is the most important measure, as it relates to how much support and encouragement a student is likely to receive, which will also affect actual potential to attend and succeed in college.

As a quantitative study, we were restricted by budget and length to only include five outcome variables. While we did our best to carefully select what dependent variables we measured, it is impossible within the scope of our survey to include all the outcomes needed to provide a completely comprehensive analysis of public opinion and perceptions of LGBTQ+ people. Additionally, the questions we seek to measure might lack external validity, as perceptions about LGBTQ+ students may change when considered within the context of a college application as opposed to other contexts, such as when creating classroom rules to protect disadvantaged students or gaining admittance into a particular program once accepted to the university. Notwithstanding the potential error in external validity, the questions we chose still cover a variety of perceptions and are broad enough to be applicable in a variety of situations.

Much still needs to be explored regarding LGBTQ+ identity and perceived success, both in college and among other important indicators. For example, our research does not address the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity; how might transgender individuals be seen differently from homosexual ones? Furthermore, using the vignette of a high school student who is comfortable enough to bring a same-gender date to prom might signal a state of privilege, as the student most likely feels safe and has enough familial and friend support to be open in high school. It would be interesting—and important—to compare perceptions of a confident student who took a date to prom with LGBTQ+ students who might be more shy or more subtle in signaling their sexuality.

Overall, one fact is clear: whether you are a student faced with answering the age-old essay question, "Tell Us About Yourself," or you are a mentor or friend encouraging a student in writing the essay, mentioning sexuality will not have a strong impact. As our research shows, little (if any) difference exists in perceptions of success, so including sexuality is not likely to shift results negatively or positively. In our modern day, minority sexualities are becoming more and more normalized, indicating that perceptions of success and character are not intrinsically tied to one's sexuality.

APPENDIX

Complete list of vignettes for survey.
White Male Heterosexual

Connor is a senior at Lincoln High School. He is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. He is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Connor and his girlfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." He hopes to attend college to study business administration.

White Female Heterosexual

Madeline is a senior at Lincoln High School. She is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. She is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Madeline and her boyfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." She hopes to attend college to study business administration.

Black Male Heterosexual

DeShawn is a senior at Lincoln High School. He is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. He is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. DeShawn and his girlfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." He hopes to attend college to study business administration.

Black Female Heterosexual

Aliyah is a senior at Lincoln High School. She is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. She is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Aliyah and her boyfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." She hopes to attend college to study business administration.

White Male Homosexual

Connor is a senior at Lincoln High School. He is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. He is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Connor and his boyfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." He hopes to attend college to study business administration.

White Female Homosexual

Madeline is a senior at Lincoln High School. She is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. She is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Madeline and her girlfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." She hopes to attend college to study business administration.

Black Male Homosexual

DeShawn is a senior at Lincoln High School. He is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. He is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. DeShawn and his boyfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." He hopes to attend college to study business administration.

Black Female Homosexual

Aliyah is a senior at Lincoln High School. She is seventeen years old and the middle child of three. She is on the school's track-and-field team and participates in yearbook club. Aliyah and her girlfriend recently attended their high school prom, "Under the Stars." She hopes to attend college to study business administration.

Regression Output
- Acceptance, by treatment and interactions
- GPA, by treatment and interactions
- Scholarship, by treatment and interactions
- Trustworthiness, by treatment and interactions
- Likeability, by treatment and interactions

How Likely Will This Student get Accepted to College

VARIABLES	(1) accept	(2) accept	(3) accept	(4) accept
Gay Treatment	0.0218	0.0301	0.0690	0.0219
	(0.0325)	(0.0460)	(0.0459)	(0.0325)
Black Treatment	-0.0236	-0.0154	-0.0234	-0.0148
	(0.0327)	(0.0460)	(0.0327)	(0.0461)
Female Treatment	0.0652**	0.0652**	0.112**	0.0740
	(0.0326)	(0.0326)	(0.0460)	(0.0460)
Gay x Black	-	-0.0166	-	-
		(0.0651)		
Gay x Female	-	-	-0.0944	-
			(0.0651)	
Female x Black	-	-	-	-0.0178
				(0.0651)
Female	0.0684**	0.0685**	0.0691**	0.0684**
	(0.0333)	(0.0333)	(0.0333)	(0.0333)
White	0.178**	0.177**	0.180**	0.177**
	(0.0818)	(0.0819)	(0.0818)	(0.0819)
Black	0.159*	0.159*	0.157*	0.159*
	(0.0871)	(0.0871)	(0.0870)	(0.0871)
Latino	0.223**	0.222**	0.222**	0.223**
	(0.0912)	(0.0912)	(0.0911)	(0.0912)
Asian	0.132	0.131	0.134	0.131
	(0.0927)	(0.0928)	(0.0927)	(0.0928)
Native American	-0.0120	-0.0133	-0.0128	-0.0123
	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.115)
Middle Eastern	-0.272	-0.274	-0.278	-0.271
	(0.271)	(0.272)	(0.271)	(0.271)
"Other" Ethnicity	0.336	0.335	0.336	0.335
	(0.321)	(0.321)	(0.320)	(0.321)
Age	0.00394**	0.00393**	0.00402***	0.00394**
	(0.00155)	(0.00155)	(0.00155)	(0.00155)
Education	0.0506***	0.0506***	0.0500***	0.0508***
	(0.0140)	(0.0140)	(0.0140)	(0.0140)
Married	0.0113	0.0114	0.0118	0.0111
	(0.0201)	(0.0201)	(0.0201)	(0.0201)
Homosexual	0.0299	0.0296	0.0292	0.0298
	(0.0255)	(0.0255)	(0.0255)	(0.0255)
Transgender	-0.122**	-0.122**	-0.122**	-0.122**
	(0.0568)	(0.0568)	(0.0568)	(0.0568)
Political Ideology	0.0517***	0.0517***	0.0526***	0.0517***
	(0.0183)	(0.0183)	(0.0183)	(0.0183)
Republican	0.0794*	0.0788*	0.0788*	0.0799*
	(0.0421)	(0.0422)	(0.0421)	(0.0422)
Democrat	0.0214	0.0213	0.0228	0.0213
	(0.0497)	(0.0498)	(0.0497)	(0.0498)
Income	0.0138***	0.0138***	0.0138***	0.0138***
	(0.00524)	(0.00524)	(0.00524)	(0.00524)
Constant	3.418***	3.415***	3.389***	3.414***
	(0.182)	(0.182)	(0.183)	(0.182)
Observations	1,517	1,517	1,517	1,517
R-squared	0.047	0.047	0.048	0.047

Standard errors in parenthese
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

What GPA do You Think This Student Will Have?

VARIABLES	(1) gpa	(2) gpa	(3) gpa	(4) gpa
Gay Treatment	0.0382**	0.0511**	0.00839	0.0382**
	(0.0173)	(0.0245)	(0.0245)	(0.0173)
Black Treatment	-0.0427**	-0.0298	-	-0.0552***
	(0.0245)	(0.0245)		(0.0245)
Female Treatment	-	-0.0258	-	-
		(0.0347)		
Gay x Black	-	-	0.0597*	-
			(0.0346)	
Gay x Female	-	-	-	0.0251
				(0.0346)
Female x Black	0.0131	0.0130	-	-
	(0.0173)	(0.0173)		
Female	0.0386**	0.0388**	0.0382**	0.0387**
	(0.0177)	(0.0177)	(0.0177)	(0.0177)
White	-0.00320	-0.00444	-0.00454	-0.00221
	(0.0436)	(0.0436)	(0.0436)	(0.0436)
Black	0.0343	0.0336	0.0356	0.0349
	(0.0464)	(0.0464)	(0.0464)	(0.0464)
Latino	0.0814*	0.0803*	0.0816*	0.0816*
	(0.0486)	(0.0486)	(0.0485)	(0.0486)
Asian	0.0412	0.0400	0.0401	0.0424
	(0.0494)	(0.0494)	(0.0494)	(0.0494)
Native American	0.0337	0.0317	0.0341	0.0340
	(0.0612)	(0.0612)	(0.0611)	(0.0612)
Middle Eastern	0.209	0.205	0.213	0.208
	(0.145)	(0.145)	(0.145)	(0.145)
"Other" Ethnicity	-0.114	-0.114	-0.114	-0.113
	(0.171)	(0.171)	(0.171)	(0.171)
Age	0.00105	0.00104	0.000991	0.00104
	(0.000826)	(0.000826)	(0.000826)	(0.000826)
Education	-0.0141*	-0.0142*	-0.0137*	-0.0142*
	(0.00745)	(0.00745)	(0.00745)	(0.00745)
Married	-0.00259	-0.00235	-0.00294	-0.00234
	(0.0107)	(0.0107)	(0.0107)	(0.0107)
Homosexual	-0.0308**	-0.0313**	-0.0304**	-0.0308**
	(0.0136)	(0.0136)	(0.0136)	(0.0136)
Transgender	-0.198***	-0.198***	-0.198***	-0.198***
	(0.0303)	(0.0303)	(0.0302)	(0.0303)
Political Ideology	0.0102	0.0101	0.00964	0.0102
	(0.00973)	(0.00973)	(0.00973)	(0.00973)
Republican	-0.00794	-0.00884	-0.00756	-0.00868
	(0.0224)	(0.0225)	(0.0224)	(0.0225)
Democrat	-0.0309	-0.0311	-0.0318	-0.0308
	(0.0265)	(0.0265)	(0.0265)	(0.0265)
Income	0.00658**	0.00657**	0.00659**	0.00664**
	(0.00279)	(0.00279)	(0.00279)	(0.00279)
Constant	3.333***	3.330***	3.352***	3.338***
	(0.0967)	(0.0969)	(0.0972)	(0.0970)
Observations	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519
R-squared	0.063	0.064	0.065	0.064

Standard errors in parenthese
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

How Much Scholarship Will the Student Receive?

VARIABLES	(1) scholar	(2) scholar	(3) scholar	(4) scholar
Gay Treatment	3.040**	3.663**	2.726	3.040**
	(1.249)	(1.767)	(1.765)	(1.249)
Black Treatment	3.288***	3.906**	3.287***	3.488**
	(1.256)	(1.765)	(1.256)	(1.769)
Female Treatment	-0.705	-0.706	-1.019	-0.506
	(1.250)	(1.250)	(1.766)	(1.766)
Gay x Black	-	-1.245	-	-
		(2.500)		
Gay x Female	-	-	0.628	-
			(2.498)	
Female x Black	-	-	-	-0.399
				(2.497)
Female	2.282*	2.288*	2.278*	2.281*
	(1.277)	(1.277)	(1.277)	(1.277)
White	-5.710*	-5.770*	-5.724*	-5.725*
	(3.142)	(3.145)	(3.144)	(3.145)
Black	5.500	5.466	5.514*	5.492
	(3.343)	(3.345)	(3.345)	(3.345)
Latino	4.105	4.049	4.106	4.102
	(3.501)	(3.503)	(3.502)	(3.502)
Asian	-2.362	-2.416	-2.374	-2.381
	(3.560)	(3.562)	(3.561)	(3.563)
Native American	6.795	6.703	6.800	6.789
	(4.409)	(4.414)	(4.410)	(4.410)
Middle Eastern	-16.48	-16.65	-16.43	-16.45
	(10.42)	(10.43)	(10.42)	(10.42)
"Other" Ethnicity	-9.604	-9.632	-9.607	-9.620
	(12.31)	(12.31)	(12.31)	(12.31)
Age	-0.134**	-0.134**	-0.134**	-0.134**
	(0.0595)	(0.0595)	(0.0596)	(0.0595)
Education	-1.330**	-1.334**	-1.326**	-1.327**
	(0.537)	(0.537)	(0.537)	(0.537)
Married	-1.017	-1.006	-1.021	-1.021
	(0.772)	(0.772)	(0.772)	(0.772)
Homosexual	-3.071***	-3.094***	-3.067***	-3.072***
	(0.979)	(0.980)	(0.979)	(0.979)
Transgender	5.415**	5.395**	5.414**	5.412**
	(2.180)	(2.181)	(2.181)	(2.181)
Political Ideology	-1.198*	-1.200*	-1.204*	-1.198*
	(0.701)	(0.702)	(0.702)	(0.702)
Republican	-1.423	-1.466	-1.419	-1.412
	(1.618)	(1.620)	(1.618)	(1.620)
Democrat	0.393	0.384	0.384	0.392
	(1.910)	(1.910)	(1.911)	(1.910)
Income	-0.395**	-0.396**	-0.395**	-0.396**
	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.201)
Constant	81.40***	81.24***	81.59***	81.32***
	(6.972)	(6.981)	(7.016)	(6.993)
Observations	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519
R-squared	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072

Standard errors in parenthese
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

How Trustworthy Does This Student Seem?

VARIABLES	(1) trust	(2) trust	(3) trust	(4) trust
Gay Treatment	0.0271	0.0511	-0.0891	0.0271
	(0.0499)	(0.0707)	(0.0705)	(0.0499)
Black Treatment	-0.00599	0.0178	-	0.118*
		(0.0706)		(0.0706)
Female Treatment	-	-0.0480	-	-
		(0.1000)		
Gay x Black	-	-	0.233**	-
			(0.0997)	
Gay x Female	-	-	-	-0.248**
				(0.0997)
Female x Black	0.108**	0.108**	-	-
	(0.0500)	(0.0500)		
Female	-0.00841	-0.00817	-0.0101	-0.00902
	(0.0511)	(0.0511)	(0.0510)	(0.0510)
White	0.282**	0.279**	0.276**	0.272**
	(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.125)	(0.126)
Black	0.220	0.218	0.225*	0.214
	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.133)
Latino	0.268*	0.266*	0.269*	0.267*
	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.140)
Asian	0.185	0.183	0.181	0.173
	(0.142)	(0.142)	(0.142)	(0.142)
Native American	0.143	0.140	0.145	0.140
	(0.176)	(0.177)	(0.176)	(0.176)
Middle Eastern	0.360	0.353	0.375	0.374
	(0.417)	(0.417)	(0.416)	(0.416)
"Other" Ethnicity	-0.342	-0.343	-0.343	-0.351
	(0.492)	(0.492)	(0.492)	(0.492)
Age	-0.00585**	-0.00587**	-0.00607**	-0.00578**
	(0.00238)	(0.00238)	(0.00238)	(0.00238)
Education	-0.0160	-0.0161	-0.0143	-0.0142
	(0.0215)	(0.0215)	(0.0214)	(0.0214)
Married	-0.0714**	-0.0710**	-0.0728**	-0.0739**
	(0.0309)	(0.0309)	(0.0308)	(0.0308)
Homosexual	-0.0653*	-0.0662*	-0.0636	-0.0658*
	(0.0391)	(0.0392)	(0.0391)	(0.0391)
Transgender	0.236***	0.235***	0.235***	0.234***
	(0.0872)	(0.0872)	(0.0871)	(0.0871)
Political Ideology	0.0563**	0.0562**	0.0541*	0.0563**
	(0.0281)	(0.0281)	(0.0280)	(0.0280)
Republican	-0.284***	-0.286***	-0.283***	-0.277***
	(0.0647)	(0.0648)	(0.0646)	(0.0647)
Democrat	-0.114	-0.115	-0.118	-0.115
	(0.0764)	(0.0764)	(0.0763)	(0.0762)
Income	0.0185**	0.0184**	0.0185**	0.0179**
	(0.00804)	(0.00804)	(0.00803)	(0.00803)
Constant	5.983***	5.977***	6.054***	5.933***
	(0.279)	(0.279)	(0.280)	(0.279)
Observations	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519
R-squared	0.050	0.050	0.053	0.054

Standard errors in parenthese
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

How Likeable is the Student in the Vignette?

VARIABLES	(1) like	(2) like	(3) like	(4) like
Gay Treatment	-0.0155	0.0116	-0.139**	-0.0155
	(0.0478)	(0.0677)	(0.0675)	(0.0478)
Black Treatment	0.00887	0.0357	0.00842	0.0576
	(0.0481)	(0.0676)	(0.0480)	(0.0678)
Female Treatment	0.127***	0.127***	0.00391	0.176***
	(0.0479)	(0.0479)	(0.0675)	(0.0676)
Gay x Black	-	-0.0542	-	-
		(0.0958)		
Gay x Female	-	-	0.247***	-
			(0.0955)	
Female x Black	-	-	-	-0.0977
				(0.0956)
Female	0.0487	0.0490	0.0469	0.0485
	(0.0489)	(0.0489)	(0.0488)	(0.0489)
White	0.0573	0.0547	0.0517	0.0535
	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.120)	(0.120)
Black	0.0495	0.0480	0.0548	0.0473
	(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.128)
Latino	0.248*	0.246*	0.249*	0.248*
	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.134)	(0.134)
Asian	-0.00269	-0.00506	-0.00731	-0.00730
	(0.136)	(0.136)	(0.136)	(0.136)
Native American	-0.0597	-0.0638	-0.0578	-0.0612
	(0.169)	(0.169)	(0.169)	(0.169)
Middle Eastern	0.388	0.381	0.404	0.394
	(0.399)	(0.400)	(0.399)	(0.399)
"Other" Ethnicity	-0.607	-0.608	-0.608	-0.611
	(0.472)	(0.472)	(0.471)	(0.472)
Age	0.00310	0.00307	0.00286	0.00312
	(0.00228)	(0.00228)	(0.00228)	(0.00228)
Education	-0.00206	-0.00223	-0.000349	-0.00139
	(0.0206)	(0.0206)	(0.0205)	(0.0206)
Married	-0.0352	-0.0347	-0.0367	-0.0362
	(0.0296)	(0.0296)	(0.0295)	(0.0296)
Homosexual	-0.0549	-0.0559	-0.0531	-0.0551
	(0.0375)	(0.0375)	(0.0374)	(0.0375)
Transgender	-0.0419	-0.0427	-0.0422	-0.0424
	(0.0835)	(0.0836)	(0.0834)	(0.0835)
Political Ideology	0.0959***	0.0958***	0.0936***	0.0959***
	(0.0269)	(0.0269)	(0.0268)	(0.0269)
Republican	-0.248***	-0.250***	-0.247***	-0.245***
	(0.0620)	(0.0621)	(0.0619)	(0.0620)
Democrat	-0.00348	-0.00387	-0.00709	-0.00375
	(0.0732)	(0.0732)	(0.0730)	(0.0732)
Income	0.0234***	0.0233***	0.0234***	0.0231***
	(0.00770)	(0.00770)	(0.00769)	(0.00770)
Constant	5.530***	5.524***	5.606***	5.511***
	(0.267)	(0.267)	(0.268)	(0.268)
Observations	1,519	1,519	1,519	1,519
R-squared	0.047	0.047	0.051	0.047

Standard errors in parenthese
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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