

Focus Group Results and Survey

Throughout the course of this review and result of the focus group conducted in an effort to better understand the public's perception of LGBTQ individuals and communities, especially on collegiate campuses; we will demonstrate and discuss our findings and results of the focus group and survey conducted on the manner prescribed above.

Focus Group Results

Our focus group consisted of 4 participants: Justin Selke (Person A), Don Owens (Person B), Stephanie Ebert (Person C), and Allie Pierce (Person D). Stephanie and Allie are both white females, aged 21, and hospitality majors. John and Steve are both white males. Justin is 20 years old, and Don is 22 years old.

After conducting the focus group and review the transcript, we recognized three (3) themes: Mental Health, Political and Social Policies and Medical Professional Support. In terms of the theme of mental health, there was a wide array of viewpoints, but at one point or another an intersection is made. It is clear that many people observe the mental health issues that LGBTQ members face, but one focus group member shed more light on the subject. "My friends' sister has dealt with a lot of mental health problems. She has suffered from severe depression.", the member went on to discuss the importance of support systems during times of transition, as they saw how critical they were during the sensitive time for their sibling.

Another key theme that was recognized was social policies, and the ways in which they effect the LGBTQ community. One participant said: “Transgendered people are finally being understood, it seems like ever 10 years ago the trans community was not represented well at all,” which demonstrates the better society that we are living in today, and the terrible one we are leaving behind us. The group highlighted the things that were expected, and it was apparent that the individuals understand the various ways that the LGBTQ community is marginalized and left to struggle with the task of overcoming adversity.

Finally, it was noticed that the support of medical professionals was widely revered by our focus group participants. One participant went on to say: “...they fulfil one of the most important roles during the transitioning period for Transgendered people, almost as important as a family support system.” This speaks volumes to our team, and it shows how important these positions can be in the transitioning of an individual, or simply the development throughout the tough times that individuals within the LGBTQ community may go through. The professionals understand how to best help them, in most cases, and the group understood that.

Survey Design

For our survey design, we created an online survey via Survey Monkey. When distributing our survey, we emailed the link to each group member and then posted the link on our various social media platforms so many different people could be reached. As stated, the link was posted on our various social media accounts, and we were not seeking responses from any particular age group or gender, as can be seen in questions 1 and 2 from our survey. Our 60 participants will be anyone who comes across our survey link and decides to take part in the survey.

Before taking the survey, participants will be given a consent form to read thoroughly before taking the survey. The survey is aimed toward understanding the LGBTQ community and how

their mental health is affected by outside factors. Participants will remain anonymous and all of the results collected will be kept confidential. If participants wish to discontinue their participation, they can back out at any moment.

Through our survey, we want to discover the knowledge of the public in regard to understanding the LGBTQ community and how their mental health is affected by outside factors. The questions start very simple asking people for their age, gender, and sexual orientation. From there, the questions become more specific as we want to discover how much our participants are familiar with the topic at hand. For example, statements such as, “LGBTQ individuals have the same equal rights as non-members,” and “There are policies in place that prevent LGBTQ individuals from living freely as themselves.” Participants will select the answer (from a spectrum) that best corresponds with their knowledge of the statements. Many questions are answers on a spectrum, while other questions are multiple choice or open-ended, where participants can answer in their own words. After the survey has concluded, we will be more able to identify if our participants are knowledgeable about the topic we are studying.

Appendices

Thank you for participating in this focus group!

This academic project is entitled "The Insecurities behind the LGBTQ Community." This study aims at understanding the LGBTQ community and how their mental health is affected by outside factors--such as political policies and healthcare.

The focus group will last approximately 1 hour. During the focus group, notes will be written. Also, the discussion in the focus group will be tape recorded and transcribed. Researches keep your name or any information that may identify me confidentially in any reports and transcripts. The recorded and reproduced data will be used only for academic purposes.

All your information you provide will be anonymous. Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. You have the right to decline to answer any question without penalty or loss of benefits.

For any questions and concerns regarding this project, please feel free to ask researches.

| NO | DATE | PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE |
|----|----------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 11/13/18 | Alle Fere |
| 2 | 11/13/18 | Steph Obaf |
| 3 | 11/13/18 | Don (Jeeans) |
| 4 | 11/13/18 | John J. Jelle |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |
| 7 | | |
| 8 | | |

Moderator: What are some specific policies that you believe either are for or against the equality of LGBTQ individuals?

ANSWER S: I know that Gay Marriage was legalized pretty generally across the country, and I know that society is pressuring those who don't accept LGBTQ individuals to start accepting them regardless if their views match theirs or not. I think that many LGBTQ individuals are gaining the ability to live their lives the way that they want to, but I think that many still struggle to be accepted by their family, friends, and society in various ways.

ANSWER A: I would say that as I've gotten older, honestly in more recent years, there has been a more open and growing culture within the LGBTQ community. When I was younger, I don't remember seeing or knowing that "gay bars" or communal type places like that existed very openly. I always thought they were underground type places that preferred to operate in the dark, but as of recent, I have been seeing a lot of bars that have the Gay Pride flag waving out front.

ANSWER R: I don't keep that up to date on the news. However, my friend's sister is transitioning right now to be a man and I have learned a little bit more through him. He posts things on his Facebook quite frequently with the hashtag #ICan'tBeErased. I don't exactly know what is going on, but from what I gathered is that the government is trying to take away some of the rights in the LGBTQ community.

ANSWER B: I am pretty into the news, I check it throughout the day and there is typically some sort of news about the LGBTQ community. One thing that popped up in the news a little bit ago was the fact that a hospital in Oregon removed gender identification from bracelets. This is a small change, yet it really effected a lot of people. It provides inclusivity and for those people in the LGBTQ community. Regarding the current political policies, a lot of people in the United States including myself really support the LGBTQ community, however many do not. I believed that the President has definitely caused a setback for the community. He is so rude and harsh and doesn't truly understand the community and he has such a large influence on the entire country.

Moderator: How do you think policies and societal norms have influenced this?

ANSWER A: I think that in the past, society tried to diminish the LGBTQ population and tried to hide their way of life from the spotlight by creating policies that would make their lives much harder than they need to be. Telling someone who they can and cannot be in love with is just really messed up and shows that there are some deeper issues within people who are not willing to accept this way of life.

ANSWER S: Personally, I think they change the way everyone thinks of the LGBTQ community, especially in the eyes of the young and impressionable. More often than not it's the kids who are most likely to experience pressures to think that LGBTQ members are not as good as someone else, and that isn't cool.

ANSWER R: Well when gay marriage was passed that was a huge win for the community. However, after seeing all the things on Facebook about the hashtag, I feel we as a country are moving backwards. The people in the LGBTQ community face so much prejudice in their everyday lives, these new policies that are trying to get passed cannot be influencing their lives in a positive way. If anything, it is just causing more hate and fear towards that community.

ANSWER B: I think all of the policies influence the way that people in the LGBTQ community live. Transgendered people are finally being understood, it seems like ever 10 years ago the trans community was not represented well at all. However the LGBTQ community is making strides, after the election many members of the LGBTQ community were elected into office. However, for people apart of the LGBTQ community on a day to day life deal with a lot. So in some ways I think the policies are making the lives of people in the community better, but also hindering their lives at the same time

Moderator: How important are medical professionals during the transition process for Transgendered individuals?

ANSWER A: I think they fulfil one of the most important roles during the transitioning period for Transgendered people, almost as important as a family support system. Sadly, I know a lot of people that don't get the support of their family and friends, so all that they are left with is the support of the LGBTQ community and the medical professionals that are guiding them through their transition.

ANSWER S: I wouldn't say that they are as important as other support systems, but like someone else said, they are sometimes the only available support system for these individuals, so it must be pretty important of a role and a job. I think that the LGBTQ community appreciates the help of the doctors that look out for them, but I also know that some will reject their clients based on their sexuality.

ANSWER R: I do not know a lot about this to be completely honest, however I think that medical professionals play a huge role in the transition process. If the doctor is supportive and wants the best for their patient it will make the transition for a person who is transgendered a lot easier. If a person does not have a support group or does not have the support from their primary physician it could really put a lot of stress on their transition making it harder than it already is.

ANSWER B: I would imagine very important. When a person is transitioning they have to get hormones put into their body and it could be very dangerous if not done correctly. The medical profession is the direct person who is changing the transgendered person's life for the better. So if they are supportive it would make that person feel a lot better while they are transitioning opposed to someone who is judgmental and who does not have their patients best interest in mind.

Moderator: What is your knowledge of current political and social policies in support and against LGBTQ individuals?

ANSWER R: I don't keep that up to date on the news. However, my friend's sister is transitioning right now to be a man and I have learned a little bit more through him. He posts things on his Facebook quite frequently with the hashtag #ICan'tBeErased. I don't exactly know what is going on, but from what I gathered is that the government is trying to take away some of the rights in the LGBTQ community.

ANSWER B: I am pretty into the news, I check it throughout the day and there is typically some sort of news about the LGBTQ community. One thing that popped up in the news a little bit ago was the fact that a hospital in Oregon removed gender identification from bracelets. This is a small change, yet it really effected a lot of people. It provides inclusivity and for those people in the LGBTQ community. Regarding the current political policies, a lot of people in the United States including myself really support the LGBTQ community, however many do not. I believed that the President has definitely caused a setback for the community. He is so rude and harsh and doesn't truly understand the community and he has such a large influence on the entire country.

Moderator: How do you believe these policies influenced the way that LGBTQ community lives?

ANSWER A: For a long time, many of them couldn't live the way that they truly wanted to live, and that is heartbreaking because no one wants to live a life that doesn't reflect who they truly are. It has been such a big deal for so long if someone was gay, or lesbian, or bi, but frankly it's annoying and it has no place in today's society.

ANSWER S: I agree with the last person because I see it too, that people aren't able to live their own lives. I can live the way that I want to, so why can't they? It doesn't seem right, they shouldn't bother anyone just simply based on sexuality alone.

ANSWER R: Well when gay marriage was passed that was a huge win for the community. However, after seeing all the things on Facebook about the hashtag, I feel we as a country are moving backwards. The people in the LGBTQ community face so much prejudice in their

everyday lives, these new policies that are trying to get passed cannot be influencing their lives in a positive way. If anything, it is just causing more hate and fear towards that community.

ANSWER B: I think all of the policies influence the way that people in the LGBTQ community live. Transgendered people are finally being understood, it seems like ever 10 years ago the trans community was not represented well at all. However, the LGBTQ community is making strides, after the election many members of the LGBTQ community were elected into office. However, for people apart of the LGBTQ community on a day to day life deal with a lot. So in some ways I think the policies are making the lives of people in the community better, but also hindering their lives at the same time

Moderator: **Draw or describe symbols that come to mind when thinking of the LGBTQ community.**

ANSWER A: I see a Pride Flag, and I see the very bright colors of a rainbow. That is how I would best describe the community.

ANSWER S: I'm pretty sure that the rainbow flag is associated with them.

ANSWER R: The first symbol that pops into my head is the pride flag, I feel like that symbol represents the LGBTQ community the best.

ANSWER B: The pride flag definitely, that's the one with the rainbow stripes. When gay marriage became legal in the U.S that was a huge symbol that many people look at and recognize as the flag of the LGBTQ community.

Moderator: **How important are medical professionals during the transition process for transgender individuals?**

ANSWER A: To be honest, I am not the most familiar with this, so it would be kind of hard for me to expand on it beyond the fact that they are the ones who are dealing with them consistently and have no reason to reject them for who they are.

ANSWER S: Like the person before, I don't really know much about this. I can really only say exactly what they said before me, so that might be a waste of time.

ANSWER R: I do not know a lot about this to be completely honest, however I think that medical professionals play a huge role in the transition process. If the doctor is supportive and wants the best for their patient it will make the transition for a person who is transgendered a lot

easier. If a person does not have a support group or does not have the support from their primary physician, it could really put a lot of stress on their transition making it harder than it already is.

ANSWER B: I would imagine very important. When a person is transitioning, they have to get hormones put into their body and it could be very dangerous if not done correctly. The medical profession is the direct person who is changing the transgendered person's life for the better. So, if they are supportive it would make that person feel a lot better while they are transitioning opposed to someone who is judgmental and who does not have their patients best interest in mind.

Moderator: **Why do you feel this way?**

ANSWER A: Just by observing and making an educated guess.

ANSWER S: I am really not too sure.

ANSWER R: I feel this way because I personally know someone who is going through transition and I understand what that person is going through.

ANSWER B: I feel this way just because I am trying to put myself in their shoes. If I was transgendered going through transition the medical professionals that were helping me would become a very important person in my life.

Moderator: **What do you know about support groups and other various resources for transgender individuals?**

ANSWER A: I know that there are resources available, especially in places like college campuses because they have to account for a wide variety of people that could be attending their college. And making that college the best place possible is important, so there should be resources in place to help people get through their daily lives happily.

ANSWER S: I guess I've seen a few places around town or read about them on a bulletin, but other than that I really can't say that I know much about the resources.

ANSWER R: I know that there are support groups because my friend's sister is going to them while she is transitioning. I believe that he goes to them at the hospital where he is receiving the hormones. From what I have gathered, it's really beneficial for the him and he is making a lot of friends who are going through the same thing that he is.

ANSWER B: I do not know personally of any support groups. I see things on campus a lot though about groups for the LGBTQ community as well as there are help numbers that I see on twitter and Instagram, so I know they are out there I just don't know of them personally.

Moderator: How would you describe the current status of mental health in individuals of the LGBTQ community?

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ANSWER A: I would say that they have a much more difficult time with their everyday lives, and this puts a lot of stress on really anyone involved. They take a lot more and have so much pressure on them, so it is obvious why they would have a much more negatively impacted life and mental health.

ANSWER S: I would say poor, I see my friends struggle a lot and then I see the same struggles in people in the LGBTQ community. It isn't very difficult to recognize that, so it shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that this is the case.

ANSWER R: My friends' sister has dealt with a lot of mental health problems. She has suffered from severe depression. She goes to therapy a lot trying to get herself figured out. She moved back home to her parent's house to help her through her transition. Transitioning not only changes your body but also your mind and a lot of people in the LGBTQ community face mental health problems.

ANSWER B: I do not know anyone who is transgendered, however I know just from hearing statistics that the suicide rate is way higher in the LGBTQ community than other groups. Not only are many people in the LGBTQ community struggling with their own genders and sexuality trying to figure out who they really are they also are constantly put into a negative light and bullied in the news and in real life, so this most definitely effects the mental health in a negative way.

Moderator: **Why do you feel this way?**

ANSWER A: Because I can see all of this with my own two eyes, it is very apparent.

ANSWER S: I guess I really never struggled to see into people and know how they feel. I may not know much about the specifics, but I do know that I can sense people.

ANSWER R: I feel this way because I saw my friend's sister go through this her whole life. She never quite knew where she fit.

ANSWER B: I feel this way because of just reading things on the news and social media. I have also had to do some research about this in my classes. I took HDF110 a class here at CMU and that is all about gender and racism.

Moderator: What experiences do you have that would allow you to develop an understanding of mental health in the LGBTQ community?

ANSWER A: Mostly from just seeing the people around me and paying attention to the world around me, and the community I live in. It isn't very difficult to notice the changes around you and then recognize how they are impactful.

ANSWER S: I developed my sense of understanding through seeing some of my friends struggle in their lives with mental health and being able to recognize those struggles in others as well.

ANSWER R: My experience is definitely coming from my friend's sister (transitioning man). I have known him my whole life because my friend and I have been friends since we were born. So, watching him go through this has definitely made me empathetic and have an understanding for the LGBTQ community.

ANSWER B: I don't know anyone who is transgendered, so I don't have personal experience, but I have learned a great deal about it in my classes as well as being up to date in the news. That has helped me get a good understanding but there is still a lot I don't know.

Survey Consent

Informed Consent

WELCOME!

We are conducting an academic survey which is aimed to understand the LGBTQ community and how their mental health is affected by outside factors.

In this survey, you will be asked to answer various questions about specific opinions, perceptions, and preferences regarding such outside factors, as well as simple demographic information.

THE SURVEY WILL TAKE ABOUT 5-7 MIN.

The collected information will be used only for research analysis and reporting. The information you provide will be anonymous. Also, if you wish to quit the survey, you can discontinue or refuse to take part at any time. In this case, your response will be destroyed and not used for research and analysis.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact, Marissa Cavataio by e-mail at Cavat1mr@cmich.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Office of Research Compliance officer at 989-774-6601.

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I acknowledge that clicking the button, "ok" means giving my consent to participate in this study.

OK

