

Coming Out: Is it Still Relevant?

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Their Stories

Rodger-

Rodger has experienced coming out since grade school. He has come to understand that it is a **process that never ends**. Mass media coverage of individuals coming out makes it seem like once someone is out it is common knowledge, but, on a personal level, individuals are coming out to new individuals as they encounter them in life. Rodger has experienced this along with tension when individuals **assume his sexual orientation** based on appearance or demeanor. He definitely believes that coming out is still important. Now that the community is recognized, it is still developing and coming into its own part of society.

Brenda-

Brenda talked about the weight and difficulties in coming out. She expressed how individuals **first come out to themselves** and then share with others. During this time, she felt suppressed in her actions, but following coming out she is more comfortable with her friends who know. She hasn't told her parents yet, as they are religious. She talked about a documentary called *Bridegroom*. It shows how individuals may be out, but may still **withhold their identity for safety**. She stresses that coming out is a complex ongoing process. She also feels that now that society is being more receptive to homosexuality it can push beyond just "gay" and recognize the whole community.

Greggory-

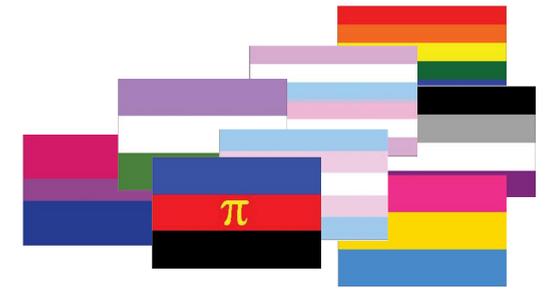
Greggory believes coming out is an **essential process for non-heterosexual** individuals. He came out to his parents when he was 10 and felt that it went over smoothly as he expected—it was casual. He feels that it made his **life more open and honest**. He feels that coming out is still very relevant, not only for the current generation, but also for the previous generation. He views our society now as a **safer and more accepting environment** for individuals to come out. He feels this allows older gay men, who were living heteronormative lives for safety, can now truly express themselves and come out.

Richelle-

Richelle views coming out as a process directed towards two different groups: a close "peer group" of friends and family, and a public group such as "facebook official." In her words she's "not fully out," as her parents just found out and her siblings don't know yet. This **causes tension** when she feels like her parents try to push heterosexuality on her. She feels that she has to be a master of everyday interactions when navigating conversations around people who don't know, but she can be genuine with those who do know. She believes coming out is still relevant as most **people still assume heterosexuality** unless someone comes off as a stereotypical homosexual.

Janice-

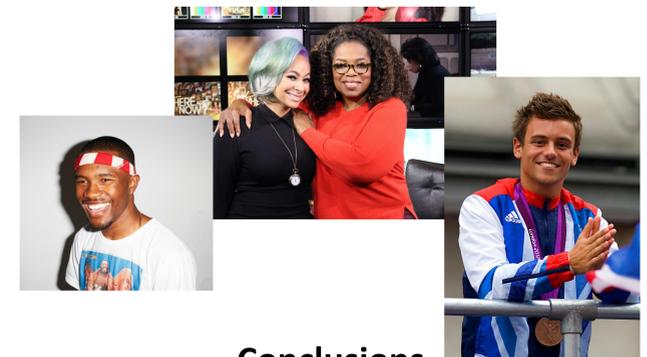
Janice feels that coming out is one of the **most important and stressful parts** of being LGBTQA (the category she allies herself with), and that the process is never truly done. She felt very liberated talking to others who were out as she could share emotions and experiences with them. Once she entered college she became very active in the community and was totally open and out. Her family and friends were very supportive, but she experienced the most **adversity from religious groups**. Even though she sees it as less dangerous, the danger is still there and even though we have made progress, there is a long way to go.



Patterns

Throughout the research, three main patterns emerged.

- Coming out for any identity was viewed as a **process** and not a single event.
- Once coming out started, individuals felt they could be more **honest and true to themselves** as they weren't suppressing or hiding themselves.
- It also was viewed as **necessary** for an individual. Even though it can be emotional or traumatic, it is more beneficial for the individual after it occurs.



Conclusions

Coming out is still extremely important

for the individual:

- Process they will go through as they realize and express themselves
- Generally aids in creating stronger and more honest relationships

for society:

- Helps determine and resolve discrimination
- Creates a space for a better understanding of the community
- Opens up a network for support

for the community:

- Creates more self-awareness
- Allows for comfortability in identities
- Helps others explore and understand their identities

Further Research

Other questions that arose during this research

- Difference between **heterosexual** relationships and **homosexual** relationships
- How coming out in the generations since the **90s affects previous generations**
- **Labeling** and its effects on one's identity and attraction
- **Intersectionality** and how coming out is affected by many identities

Abstract

This project examines the concept of "coming out" and how it relates to the current generation of LGBTQ community members. The main focus was whether or not coming out was still as important to the individual and society as it has been in the past. As the LGBTQ community has become a more prominent topic in our society through progressive equality movements such as the repealing of Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) and legalized marriage equality in 16 states, we wanted to see how it affects and is viewed by our peers. This topic generates a wide variety of reactions. In the past coming out had severe repercussions such as job loss and even hate crimes committed against "out" individuals in the public and private eye. In contrast, we now mainly see a more accepting society in the public sphere. While this public view is widely broadcasted, more private affairs are still relevant to our everyday lives. To better understand this, we interviewed peers about their experiences with coming out and how they believe it has affected themselves and others.



Methods

- Open-ended interviews with 5 participants
- Recruiting through on-campus LGBTQ organizations and support services
- Asked the following questions:
 - How do you view the concept of coming out?
 - If you are willing, would you please share your coming out experience?
 - How does this affect your daily interactions?
 - How does this affect your relations with your family, friends, etc.?
 - Do you think that there has been a shift in society's view of the LGBTQ community?

Poster Body

- *28 Points Minimum*
- *32 Points Recommended*

Headings within Poster Body

- *Bold Type*
- *44 Points Minimum*
- *48 Points Recommended*

(Horizontal Poster Layout, Sized at 42" High X 46" Wide)

Please allow for a 1" Margin along all edges of your poster for any type, charts, photographs or other graphics you add to this template.