**Paper 2: Qualitative Study**

GREV 701-61 (Wednesday)

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 *How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the health and well-being of those who identify as LGBTQIA+?*

 The purpose of this study is to learn more about how the current Covid-19 has affected the lives, health and wellness of those in the LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual) community in the United States. Now in the the ninth month of this pandemic, how are their lives being affected in positive, negative, and neutral ways? How is their physical and psychological heath? In a community where familial-like social bonds are often developed outside of (or in addition to) the typical family constructs, how has the pandemic affected the ability of these community members to maintain and build an emotional support system?

 In a qualitative study, researchers will conduct surveys with self-identified members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and researchers may conduct interviews with a smaller sub-set of the participants. The study will consider geographic locations of participants, along with living situations, relationship status, access to healthcare if needed, and more. Researchers will recruit participants through various social media as well as at universities and websites which provide services and support to people who primarily identify as LGBTQIA+. A sample size of approximately 250 participants would be ideal. A survey of approximately twenty-five questions will be developed and placed on a website with a secure log-on. An identification number will be created for each participant, and therefore no personally identifiable information will be

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collected. A subset of participants may be selected for an interview to further discuss their experiences during the pandemic. Research participants will be incentivized to complete the survey by receiving a downloadable code for a $25 Amazon gift card by using their participant code. Three evaluators will be employed (to insure inter-rater reliability) who will review survey results and to code responses into agreed upon categories.

 Researchers will create both a written document and a video to detail the purpose of the study, how the information will be used, and will state that no personally identifiable information will ever be revealed. Participants will also learn how the study may benefit members of their community as information garnered from the study may enhance services for the remainder of Covid-19, and may serve as a benchmark for future possible pandemics. Research participants will also be notified of their rights in video and written instructions, and that they may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. Participants will be informed that they may opt out of any question(s) if they deem them too sensitive in nature. Consent will have been granted by the participant when he or she enters their secure identification code into the “informed consent” box in the online survey. The secure identification code will help to maintain participant confidentiality.

 Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval will be required. Investigators will submit the appropriate protocol forms to their Mentor, who will then assist in obtaining IRB approval. Hopefully, the IRB will approve the study without recommended many (if any) changes to the study, or ask that the researchers for changes to be made and to resubmit the request for approval.