It is no secret that our nation and our public conversation about LGBT matters has changed in the last, not only 100 years, but more drastically in the last 20 years. This latest generation of kids have grown up in the most accepting and diverse American culture to date with respect to LGBT individuals, their families, and the issues they stand for.

This week we watched the dramatized version of The Laramie Project. A play that was written to expose and relay the stories and horrific events of that day that happened to Mathew Shepard.  As mentioned before, this is a play that is performed all over the United States. This play, like so many other plays that deal with  LGBT themes and issues have been coming more and more to the fray of our national and public conversation. We have seen the rise of gay and lesbian characters in all of our entertainment including TV, film, and of course the Theatre. We see how the last 20 years of LGBT pointed entertainment has shaped the political discourse of our nations power brokers. We are changing laws and shaping society to a far greater degree in even the last 5 years so as to tackle the discrimination against this particular group. Gay marriages are now legal all over the states and those that would decry the LGBT lifestyle as something to be covered or shunned for cultural or religious reasons are now beginning to be seen as radical and out of touch where just 10-15 years ago those same voices held the majority of political power in our nation. How far we have come from even prop 8 in California that would have made sure it remain illegal for same sex marriage in the state. In 2008 it was passed by the voters.  It was made null and void when the supreme court made same sex marriage legal in all 50 states in 2015.

The waves of change are boundless and can be seen almost daily as we here more reports of judges, states, and the federal government ending discrimination all over the nation.

**Here is the question(s) I have......**

**In light of the play you have now watched, the articles you have read, your research and your own general awareness and knowledge of the state of our national discourse with respect to LGBT issues:**

**Do you feel that it has been a positive 15 to 20 years for Gay and Lesbian issues, their families and the way we feel about them?**

**Do you feel that we have moved in a positive way as a nation since the Mathew Shepard event in 1998? Why or why not?**

**How and why do you believe we have changed so quickly in our society toward the LGBT community?**

**Have you seen any change in your own life with how you feel or behave toward Gay and Lesbian individuals?**

**Would you watch a play or view a film or television that highlights LGBT themes and values? Why or why not?**

It has to be at least 200 words. And for the response 150 word.

 Respond to student

Student #1

**Do you feel that it has been a positive 15 to 20 years for Gay and Lesbian issues, their families and the way we feel about them?**

Most definitely, however I will say that it still hasn’t come to a point where the reaction to them hasn’t been an overwhelmingly positive one either. When compared to the past, however, it is most definitely a shocking improvement.

**Do you feel that we have moved in a positive way as a nation since the Mathew Shepard event in 1998? Why or why not?**

Yes, I believe we have progressed in a positive way as a nation since the incident. Many of the people who were born in the past 20 years or so have been grown up in a much different society than those born say 50 years ago. As a result, these people have grown up with values and morals that make them more accepting of the LGBT community.

**How and why do you believe we have changed so quickly in our society toward the LGBT community?**

I believe that the media and forms of entertainment coupled with how the recent generation of people have been raised allowed such a rapid change in our society. As more and more media and entertainment starting showing acceptance of the LGBT community and include gay or lesbian people in things like movies and shows in a very natural setting, it made it easier on people to also intake this and change or mold their thinking regarding the LGBT community.

**Have you seen any change in your own life with how you feel or behave toward Gay and Lesbian individuals?**

Not really. Growing up I was always one that was much more open-minded when it came to things that were different from me. Even if it’s something that I personally don’t believe in or fond of, I tend to act neutral at the very least. However, should somebody act in a way that greatly inconveniences or even harms others as a result of acting on behalf of their belief, even if it’s LGBT, I tend to react negatively. As an example, if somebody were to talk in-depth regarding LGBT issues or even introduce themselves gay or lesbian I would have no problems and accept them openly. However, should a person take action such as threatening to harm people for not accepting LGBT or a gay/lesbian individual is aggressively and continuously flirting to me or someone when they are clearly rejecting the approach, I heavily condemn such actions.

**Would you watch a play or view a film or television that highlights LGBT themes and values? Why or why not?**

Yes, I would be willing to watch a play or film on LGBT themes and values. Although I will admit, I would not actively go out and watch on my own time. I would have no problem watching should I be invited or asked to go and watch by friends or family. However, as I personally am not interested in LGBT themes or values I would not spend my own personal time to actively seek out and watch things that are about LGBT.

Student#2

**1-Do you feel that it has been a positive 15 to 20 years for Gay and Lesbian issues, their families and the way we feel about them?**

Yes. People are more accepting of the LGBT society nowadays which is evident through the significant decrease in discrimination against them. Moreover, public attitude towards the lifestyle of the gay community has more positive and awareness about issues affecting them has significantly increased.

**2-Do you feel that we have moved in a positive way as a nation since the Mathew Shepard event in 1998? Why or why not?**

 Yes. The society has embraced gay people and lesbians; thus, they no longer have to hide their lifestyle or fear for their lives because the law protects them from any form of discrimination or violent acts against them. Moreover, Mathew Shepherds tragic death sensitized people about the rights of gay people and leads to the formation of laws in most states that protect gay people from discrimination and any acts of violence. The story of Mathew served as a warning to people who hurt the members of the gay community, that they would face the law just like the student who killed him.

**3-How and why do you believe we have changed so quickly in our society toward the LGBT community?**

The society in general has embraced the diversity of people which includes the gay community and the government too through the enactment of laws that protect them from discrimination has contributed to the acceptance and respect of their lifestyle in addition, the entertainment industry through its plays and films sensitized people on the plight of gay people, thus, made people understand and sympathize with them. Families also have ensured that they educate their children about the gay community, thus, raising a society which is sensitive on gay matters.

**4-Have you seen any change in your own life with how you feel or behave toward Gay and Lesbian individuals?**

My view of the LGBT community has greatly changed as I got to interact with them and learn more about their life style, thus, became more accepting and understanding of them. Moreover, through watching plays like the Laramie project I have become more sensitive to issues affecting them.

**5-Would you watch a play or view a film or television that highlights LGBT themes and values? Why or why not?**

Yes. I would watch a film on LGBT life because through them I get to learn more about the gay community, thus, I am able to understand them better and be more sensitive towards them for example after watching the play on the story tragic death of Mathew Shepherd who was killed by his peers simply because of being gay, I got to understand the challenges that they face like discrimination and the importance of being knowledgeable about the diverse nature of human beings.

Student#3

**In light of the play you have now watched, the articles you have read, your research and your own general awareness and knowledge of the state of our national discourse with respect to LGBT issues:**

**Do you feel that it has been a positive 15 to 20 years for Gay and Lesbian issues, their families and the way we feel about them?**

Absolutely! It is incredible to see the major change from 30% approval of gay lifestyle to 70%+ in such a short period of time. I find that people being gay is becoming less and less taboo, even to relatively conservative individuals. I would consider my boyfriend's parents to be pretty conservative, but even they have grown more tolerant of the LGBT community. However, it is important to note that we haven't progressed as much as we've needed to. Just a few weeks ago, it was in the news that Georgia passed a bill that allows adoption agencies to deny access to same-sex couples.

**Do you feel that we have moved in a positive way as a nation since the Mathew Shepard event in 1998? Why or why not?**

While I do believe we have a ways to go in terms of LGBT progression, we have certainly made great, positive change. Even just from revisiting the list of gay televisions characters we viewed in class last week, you can see that a lot of gay characters we added just after 1998. Since then, we've seen more and more inclusion of the LGBT community in TV and society. In fact, while trying to revisit that list, I ran into a list of LGBT characters who have appeared on television. While we've seen more and more transgender characters appear, I was surprised to see there have been multiple nonbinary, pansexual, and asexual on television as well.

If you're interested, here's the link https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\_of\_LGBT\_characters\_in\_television\_and\_radio

**How and why do you believe we have changed so quickly in our society toward the LGBT community?**

I have to agree with the message of this course, which is that TV, theatre, and film really does influence our perception of social issues. After the Matthew Shepard incident, many gay celebrities felt a need to call for action, and make their voices known. I believe that by having familiar gay faces, people began to grow more accepting. However, I also did a quick google search and found that religion has been steadily declining in the US. Many people have used religion as justification for gay prosecution. Perhaps the decline of religion as a whole could be an explanation as to why the LGBT community is being more accepted. I have also noticed that churches seem to be growing more and more accepting of the LGBT community as well, and so those who are religious no longer have a reason to feel animosity towards the community.

**Have you seen any change in your own life with how you feel or behave toward Gay and Lesbian individuals?**

I personally was raised in a home that has always been accepting of the LGBT community. My parents were never scared to use the words "gay" and "lesbian" around me, so it was always very open in that regard. In fact, I remember being in 7th grade when I asked my parents what Prop 8 was, and they told me it was about same-sex marriage. I remember going to school the next day and telling all my friends how ridiculous it was that same-sex marriage wasn't just legal everywhere.

**Would you watch a play or view a film or television that highlights LGBT themes and values? Why or why not?**

I would certainly watch a play or film that highlights LGBT themes. I have many LGBT friends, and I love watching art that can show their unique journey. My only gripe with LGBT film is that many LGBT characters are not played by LGBT actors. I find that this is particularly an issue with trans characters. When it comes to a trans-women, for example, I find it to be out of taste for the character to be played by a straight man. I found Nick Adams' words best when looking at the subject. "It's yet another painful reminder that, in the eyes of so many people, transgender women are really just men. That message is toxic and dangerous."

If you're interested more in the topic, here is the article I've quoted from: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/cisgender-actors-transgender-roles-elle-fanning-eddie-redmayne-more-998984

Example of a response to a student.

I totally agree with you in that the thought of having Gay or straight friends never crossed my mind. The main difference is that they revealed it to us, and nothing between us changed! I really do think that it's the way that people are brought up and how society normalizes HATE towards people who are "different." When in reality, they're just normal people like me and you. I think it would be great to have a show that highlights the LGBT community because having shows like that can display the daily struggles that they go through.  I also love Ru Paul's Drag Race, that show IS HILARIOUS AND AMAZING! I actually went to a drag show brunch for my birthday 2 years ago and it was one of the most fun experiences I've ever had!!!