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Internet Use and the Transgender Experience: Does Social Media have a Positive Effect on the Lives of Transgender, Nonbinary, and Gender-Nonconforming People?

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Internet Use and the Transgender Experience: Does social media have a positive effect on the lives of transgender, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people?

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I. Introduction

- How does social media, along with other internet sites, effect the lives of transgender people?
- ‘Transgender’ is an umbrella term for anybody who does not identify themselves as the gender they were assigned at birth. This includes nonbinary, agender, and gender-nonconforming people
 - Because transgender people are systemically marginalized, it is sometimes difficult to find resources or community in the real world, making the internet an ideal medium for exploration.
 - Rural and conservative communities present unique challenges to transgender individuals that often go ignored. Conducting this study at Utah State University will provide an opportunity for those issues to be addressed.
 - No research focusing specifically on the transgender community has ever been conducted in relation to social media and internet use.

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II. Methods

- This study will be done using qualitative methods; primarily semi-structured, in-depth interviews with self-identified transgender individuals.
- Interviews will take place in a location chosen by the subject in order to maintain privacy.
 - Interviews will focus on the subject’s experience using the internet, especially in finding resources and community.
 - Subjects will be recruited by contacting local LGBTQ+ resource centers, such as the USU ADC and QSA and the Cache Pride Center.

IV. Hypothesis & Research Question

HYPOTHESIS
Access to the internet has a positive effect on the lives of transgender people.

RESEARCH QUESTION
How does social media, along with other internet sites, effect the lives of transgender people?

III. Related Literature

- Multiple studies have been conducted on LGBTQ+ internet use, but many neglect or ignore the experiences of transgender people. Common findings include:
- LGBTQ+ individuals use the internet to find resources and gather information (Craig & Mcinroy, 2014; Bond, Hefner, & Drogos, 2008)
 - Internet resources are beneficial for identity exploration and development of LGBTQ+ youth (Craig & Mcinroy, 2014; Gray, 2009)
 - Community and information about LGBTQ+ culture is often found online (Craig & Mcinroy, 2014; Gray, 2009; Hillier & Harrison, 2007)
 - Internet access is helpful in the coming out process (Craig & Mcinroy, 2014; Gray, 2009; Bond, Hefner, & Drogos, 2008; Hillier & Harrison, 2007)

V. Expected Results

- EXPECTED RESULTS**
As previous research has shown that LGB people benefit from using the internet, I predict that transgender and nonbinary people experience similar benefits.
- It is important to note that gender and sexuality are different things, so not everything that LGB people experience is relevant to trans people
 - A shared history and tightly knit community create similarities between the two groups, particularly in the process of coming out.

References:
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