

Formation of Self-Identity

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Background

For my thesis, I came across the topic of self identity when first studying human behavior and social environment. In the class, the professor posed an interesting question that enabled me to develop the idea further and refine the idea to a proper research topic that is of great interest to me. Social media is prevalent in today's society and with its continued growing popularity in both adults and adolescents, I want to research its impact. There is also future research in how it may affect future generations or has affected past generations. Social media is an integral part of today's culture and there are not a lot of regulations and restrictions put into place so with this research, I may be able to see the impact that social media has on people. Unfortunately, social media can have a negative influence on a person's mental health. There are pros and cons to social media and I wanted to see how it may shape the formation of a person's sense of self. There is very little hard data on the matter but there have been a lot of questions recently on if social media's cons outweigh the pros. This project will enable me to learn more about the field of social work with the research aspects and will be able to gain more knowledge and first hand experience in the Social Work Competencies including engaging in research and engaging with individuals as well as very important factors of my field placement, research interests, and communication.

Methods for a Thesis in the Social Sciences

For my thesis, I am going to be studying how a person's self identity is impacted by the use of social media, specifically among people between the ages of eighteen to twenty-seven. I want to see if there is a correlation of social media usage and a person's positive or negative self image. The research I collect could reveal a negative, positive, or the absence of correlation

between the use of social media as a contributing factor and the formation of self-identity. There is very little research on the formation of one's self identity in relation to social media so there will be many different aspects of this research that are new. Social media will continue to grow and policy may be put into place in the future, but it is all uncertain right now. This research may include the gathering of quantitative data via surveys and could possibly include in-person interviews or sessions with patients to further develop on this topic.

The research question guiding this project is: Does social media use impact one's self-identity discovery? To address this question, I will send out surveys via Qualtrics to students currently enrolled in the University of West Florida Kugelman Honors College. The survey will be open to everyone born between 1997 and 2006 for a semester. To collect the most comprehensive data, participants will be asked to answer questions with short answers which will provide the most robust qualitative data from the sample. Questions included in the survey will ask the participant their age, their gender identity, sexual orientation, the age they first start using social media, what they perceive to be social media, what social media do they use and how often do they use it a week, have they ever changed something about themselves because of social media, has social media usage ever hinder them from performing necessary tasks, and if they have every set limit on their social media usage. The dependent variable of this study is self-identity, and the independent variable is social media use. Finally, the methodology I will use is thematic analysis which will help me to identify common themes within the data relevant to my research question. As social media is a relatively new area of study, I do consider this to be exploratory research.

Objectives

For this project, I want to gain an understanding to what extent social media affects the formation of self-identity, especially in Generation Z individuals that have always had a huge social media presence. This project has room to grow into an even bigger project to get more of a scope on the effect of a social media presence for an individual. Social workers, counselors, therapists, teachers, parents, and even policy and law makers can benefit from the knowledge of this study because social media is an ever growing entity. With gained knowledge on social media and how it is affecting a person's sense of self, the future of the topic will only grow even more. Depending on what I find with the results of the survey, protections and policies can be made to protect the masses or on the opposite side where the issue is put to rest after finding no sufficient data. Survey answers may also be beneficial to social workers, therapists, teachers, and parents to better understand the effects of social media on somebody and how to help or when to intervene if it becomes an increasing problem. Every day more and more people join social media sites and there is still little to no regulation or restrictions in government, for both state or federal levels.

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