To Know that You Are Not Alone: The Effect of Internet Usage on LGBT Youth’s Social Capital

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## Sample

The research population in this study was the members subscribed to the social forums in the Israel Gay Youth (IGY) website, where the Internet survey was also published. The total sample included 91 teenagers and youth who volunteered to participate in the research for the chance to be included in a prize-winning raffle. Agae range: 15-21, M=17.25

# Abstract

This study’s purpose is to examine the relations between LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) youths’ Internet usage and their social capital. Previous research has shown that Internet use assists actors with similar background and interests in forming bonding social capital.
Additionally, it has been found that Internet use can assist actors from dissimilar background in forming bridging social capital. This study aims at extending these findings to LGBT youth, who may especially benefit from having a supporting social network while coping with the challenges of forming their sexual orientation/gender identity. For this purpose, an Internet survey was launched, with 82 participants, who were users of forums in the Israeli Gay Youth organization website (IGY). The survey included three measures of Internet use (i.e., amount of time spent in Internet forums, content posting activity, and emotional investment in forums), and questionnaires estimating the degrees of bridging and bonding social capital. In general, we found a positive association between forum usage and social capital. Inasmuch as Internet forum use was more intensive, the reported social capital increased. Furthermore, our findings suggest that more passive forum usage may be sufficient for forming bridging social capital, whereas bonding social capital may necessitate more active usage. These findings suggest that Internet forums designated for LGBT adolescents are important resources that can help them to cope with the special challenges they face at this turning point for their identity, deem to decrease the risk of detrimental outcomes, such as depression or even suicide.

# Outcome

It was found that time spent in forums and emotional investment was linked to higher degrees of bridging social capital (Cserni Talmud, 2015). Moreover, the relationship between time spent in forums and bridging social capital was mediated by emotional investment in the forums. In other words, teenagers who used the forums more extensively (but in a passive manner) exhibited more emotional investment in the forums, and they reported to possess greater degrees of bridging social capital. Furthermore,
levels of posting activity and emotional investment in forums (but not time spent in forums) were linked to greater degrees of bonding social capital. Teenagers who posted more messages in the forums (thus using the forums actively) and reported higher degrees of emotional investment exhibited higher degrees of bonding social capital