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The Transgender Experience

The effects of isolation have been tested thoroughly on every one of us after the events of Covid-19. After months, in some cases years, of social isolation- how has our mental health fared? Research suggests that overall, it's not great. However for some communities, the isolation is even worse. Minorities such as the gay, black, and transgender communities are at a much higher risk of social isolation due to things such as racism, homophobia, transphobia, and overall general harmful stereotypes. How does living in a small town, such as Casper, impact the experience of transgender individuals?

It's no secret that Wyoming (specifically Casper) is a town with generally little tolerance. I think every member of the LGBTQ+ has dealt with extremely invasive questions around the thanksgiving dinner table. Everybody has dealt with that racist uncle. Everyone has heard Aunt Marge ask "So have you had THE SURGERY yet?" as if that's any of her damn business.

I think it's these experiences themselves that can be a source of unity between LGBT individuals. Of course, finding people that share these experiences can be rather difficult in a small town as there are fewer people that fall into the LGBT category. But they DO exist.

In my research and my own personal experience, I have found that being transgender in a town that has a large population of old fashioned individuals can be extremely difficult on one's

mental health. Wearing gender affirming clothes can result in harsh stares and rude comments, all of which are extremely emotionally taxing on an individual (especially so if they might be struggling with low self esteem, which is a common symptom of gender dysphoria). Standing out or looking different from others can make you a target of emotional or even physical abuse and assault. This makes it difficult to be true to oneself and especially difficult to wear clothing or makeup that affirm your gender in a positive way.

Feeling as though you are surrounded by enemies can be extremely anxiety inducing. This fear can lead to paranoia and generalized anxiety, as well as (as previously mentioned) creating self esteem issues. These feelings can make an individual feel the need to hide specific parts of their identity, either through their general appearance or the language they use or refer to themselves with.

For example, a non binary person might choose to wear more feminine clothes to appease the opinion of strangers, even if they would be more comfortable with a masculine sense of style. Furthermore, a person might choose to introduce themselves with the wrong name or set of pronouns because they fear potential backlash.

All of these fears seem to be amplified in the small town of Casper, where the LGBTQ+ being a minority is even more prevalent. Diversity is not something that is typically celebrated in Wyoming, much to the dismay of the trans community.

My research has only scratched the surface of the average transgender experience in Casper, Wyoming. In the future I would love to branch out and expand different ideas, such as how the experience varies through other small towns, or even the introduction of technology and its role in creating vast online social networks for LGBTQ+ specific individuals.

