

Article 63

Social Media as an Avenue to Achieving Sense of Belonging Among College Students

Elizabeth A. Vincent

Vincent, Elizabeth A., MS, LPCA, NCC, is a doctoral candidate at North Carolina State University. She currently works within a career counseling role at the Poole College of Management but also has experience in community mental health settings. Her research interests include innovation and technology in counseling practice and counselor education, creativity in counseling, and career development.

Abstract

College students sometimes struggle with feeling connected to their peers on college campuses, as college is often a time of transition. However the widespread use of social media provides new and more accessible opportunities to facilitate social connections. The current article explores student use of social media on college campuses and provides recommendations, highlighted through a case vignette, for college counselors to assist their clients in using social media as a tool to enhance sense of belonging on campus.

Keywords: belonging, college students, social media, social connectedness

Social media platforms were first introduced and made popular as online social engagement tools in the early 21st century through Web sites such as Facebook. Over the past 15 years, the popularity of social media tools has spread worldwide, and social media use has extended well beyond friendship facilitation (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). The Pew Research Center reported that 92% of Internet users ages 18 to 29 use social networking sites (Perrin, 2015). While social media initially targeted adolescents and young adults, individuals now use these technologies across their lifespan. However, from the present time and into the future, traditional college-age students entering university campuses will have been raised in a time of open access to personal computers, Internet access, and rapid and extensive information access and consumption. This millennial generation, and those that follow, are often immersed in the world of technology and reflect their individual identities within their social media profiles (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008).

College and university campuses are environments where social media activity receives substantial attention due to the educational emphasis on technology, research, and training (Dede, 2013). In addition, college students are cited as the most frequent and

substantial social media users for both social and information gathering purposes (Martínez-Alemán, 2014). Current college students, being the most prolific generation of technology users, are developmentally at a period where identity development through social and academic interactions is a primary concern (Arnett, 2000).

Unfortunately, many students struggle to develop adequate social skills and express isolation, loneliness, depression, and anxiety during their college career (Eisenberg, Hunt, & Speer, 2013; Reetz, Krylowicz, Bershad, Lawrence, & Mistler, 2015). Before the current age of technology, professional counselors only discussed and assisted clients through face-to-face social interactions. Now, with the presence of social media, it is possible for professional counselors to aid clients in engaging in social interactions with peers within the counseling session. Counselors can help students engage with their peers online to initiate and maintain friendships. The goal of this presentation is to explore social media use on college campuses, and to recommend strategies for using social media to increase a sense of belongingness in college students. For the purposes of this article, a ‘sense of belongingness’ will be defined through the achievement of companionship, affiliation, and connectedness as outlined by Lee and Robbins (1995).

Social Media

Social media is a broad categorical term for technologies that facilitate user sharing, content creation, and information exchange within online communities or networks. Specifically, social media platforms can be defined as technologies, “that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content,” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). This definition includes tools that allow users to easily create new content, including blogs (e.g., WordPress), micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr), videosharing (e.g., YouTube), and video conferencing (e.g., Google Hangouts, Skype, Facetime).

In addition, social media encompasses tools that are referred to as social networking platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Pinterest. Social networking platforms are, “websites that allow users to connect to one another based on shared interests, activities, or characteristics” (Mastrodicasa & Metellus, 2013, p. 22). Social networking platforms can allow users to create profiles, limit the accessibility of profiles, and facilitate social connections via access of user-approved information (Martínez-Alemán, 2014). Within social networks, online users create webs of connection where the users establish virtual relationships with their contacts, which are often easily transferred to in-person relationships (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Degree of Social Media Use by College Students

The extent to which college students use social media has recently been investigated by a number of college counselors and student affairs professionals (Mastrodicasa & Metellus, 2013). In a study conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute (2007), the investigators found that 94% of first-year college students within their sample reported utilizing social media on a weekly basis. Junco (2012) reported that students accessed Facebook on an average of 5.75 times per day. This significant use of social media may be associated with the rise in mobile devices, allowing current college students to access social media through phones, tablets, and

other devices in addition to traditional computer use. In addition, the average time spent on Facebook by college students was approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes per day (Junco & Cotton, 2012). Facebook is only a singular representation of social media, and new social media platforms (e.g., Snapchat and Instagram) are challenging Facebook in popularity and use among college students. Therefore, it is very likely that the frequency and length of time spent accessing social media is much greater.

However, due to limited accessibility, the increased usage of social media platforms is not equally distributed across all populations. One barrier to accessibility of social media platforms is limited financial resources that can impact technology ownership. Approximately 12% of youth (ages 13 to 17) in the United States do not own mobile devices, and this lack of ownership is primarily found among students in lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Lenhart, 2015). While most students who do not own technological devices still report utilizing social media at least once daily, the frequency of use differs from their peers who own mobile devices (Lenhart, 2015).

To combat this issue, college campuses provide open access to various types of technology. Universities provide public access to computers, tablets, and other technology, where devices can be checked out from a library or accessed openly in public spaces. Therefore, the barrier of limited accessibility to technological resources may not be as prevalent for college students.

While technology use is prevalent on college campuses across the United States, counselors need to be aware of the differences that exist among students to ensure their interventions and suggestions are feasible and appropriate for each student. Understanding the challenges highlighted above may allow counselors to provide strategies for students that are achievable through use of university-provided technological devices and not dependent upon technology ownership. Counselors are challenged to be cognizant of barriers and challenges to technology use by clients before moving forward with recommended interventions.

Belonging

Maslow (1968) introduced belonging as a need in his hierarchy model that suggests certain needs must be met before others can be pursued. Belonging ranks third on the Maslow (1968) hierarchy after physiological and safety needs have been met, but before an individual can pursue esteem and self-actualization. The belongingness concept was later expanded upon by Kohut (1984) to view belonging as a singular concept independent from other needs. Lee and Robbins (1995) explored Kohut's work and described belonging as how individuals "seek to confirm a subjective sense of belongingness or being a part of in order to avoid feelings of loneliness and alienation" (p. 232). Belongingness was divided into three individual components: (a) companionship, (b) affiliation, and (c) connectedness (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Each of these concepts will be described below.

Companionship

Companionship begins in early infancy and is first satisfied by a parental figure that is in the closest proximity to the child for the greatest amount of time (Lee & Robbins, 1995). However, over the lifespan, need for companionship may be met by a

childhood toy, a sibling, a best friend, or a romantic partner and can change over time. Individuals who find companionship challenging may resist initiating friendships with other peers who do not share identical interests. Those who struggle to find companionship may isolate themselves and experience loneliness to avoid feelings of rejection. In addition, an individual who struggles to find companionship may take on the interests of another peer to initiate a relationship, only to later be dissatisfied by the connection (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Research findings pertaining to companionship suggest that it can predict well-being, predict social satisfaction, reduce the feeling of loneliness, and increase leisure participation (Baldassare, Rosenfield, & Rook, 1984; Rook, 1987; Unger, 1984).

As adolescents make the transition to the college lifestyle, they enter into a new environment where they seek to identify peers to fill their need for companionship. College students can achieve companionship by identifying peers with shared interests. It is easier for students who are seeking companionship to develop friendships with others based on shared personal characteristics (Lee & Robbins, 1995). These similarities can be related to any aspect of the college student identity or experience such as values, beliefs, family background, and cultural identity. While likeness is the basis for companionship, there is also an emphasis on social skill development. College students who struggle to find companionship have been found to possess low self-confidence, as well as under-developed social skills. This can create challenges when students reach out to peers for companionship because their method of interacting may not be seen as compatible.

Affiliation

Affiliation, described as identifying or aligning oneself in a group or association, is important in adolescence when peer relationships become a central focus of individual development (Kohut, 1984). Once individuals have achieved companionship and pursue affiliation, they are slightly more comfortable with the differences that exist in all relationships. However, during affiliation, the friendship development process is linked to the shared identity within group membership. Individuals pursuing affiliation seek group activities such as clubs, sports, and religious organizations. Individuals who struggle with affiliation may find it uncomfortable to participate in group activities without the support and presence of individual friends. Therefore, individuals who are comfortable with individual friendships may find group settings stressful (Lee & Robbins, 1995). While the concept of affiliation has received limited attention by researchers recently, a connection was previously established between affiliation and adolescent self-esteem, mood, stress reduction, and friendships (Brown, Eicher & Petrie, 1986; Kulik, Moore, & Mahler, 1993; Reddy, Baum, Fleming, & Aiello, 1981).

As stated above, college students who struggle with affiliation avoid participation in group activities that are often emphasized by college and universities to enhance belonging. These students do not know how to engage with multiple people within group settings and will not attend events that align with their interests unless accompanied by a friend. It is also possible these individuals have yet to locate a group identity that fits their interests. Counselors may suggest that students attend group meetings to expand their friendship networks. Unfortunately, individuals who have not achieved affiliation tend to have superficial relationships that are difficult to sustain.

Connectedness

Once companionship and affiliation are achieved, an individual is ready to pursue connectedness. Self-esteem will have increased due to successful establishment and cultivation of friendships. Individuals seeking connectedness are no longer worried about their ability to succeed within a social context and are ready to pursue deeper relationships. Social connectedness is defined as: “The subjective awareness of being in close relationship with the social world” (Lee & Robbins, 1998, p. 338). This definition extends to a variety of social relationships in various contexts such as relationships with strangers, acquaintances, peers, friends, family, community, and society. Individuals may seek connections with others outside of their comfort zone and relate to peers who are different from themselves. Therefore, relationship complexity is a major component of social connectedness.

An argument can be made that social connectedness extends to multiculturalism and an individual’s ability to seek out and embrace differences while enjoying deeper connections with peers beyond surface similarities or group affiliations. Individuals who struggle with this concept have difficulty relating to their peers and authority figures, and may emotionally distance themselves from others. While this may appear to be a regression to companionship, the difference is the overwhelming nature of the complexity of human relationships and the vast number of differences and similarities that exist within social relationships (Lee & Robbins, 1998).

Connectedness for college students relates to depth of connection between individuals and peers, friends, and the larger university community. A common concern of college students is difficulty establishing and cultivating deep or true friendships with peers on the college campus (Shany, Wiener, & Assido, 2012). These struggles to connect could be interpreted as a sign of low connectedness. While these students may possess larger quantities of acquaintances and be in constant contact with other students, they may still report feelings of loneliness, isolation, and a struggle to be understood by others.

Importance of Belongingness in College Student Success

During this intensive life transition, students face a variety of changes, including new living environments, academic expectations, and friendship networks (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). The decision to remain enrolled in college relies heavily upon student perceptions of being both academically and socially integrated into the campus community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Successful integration can assist students with developing a sense of belonging, which can combat many barriers to persistence. Unfortunately, most related research is limited to transitional issues, which occur during the first year of college enrollment. However, while the majority of students who drop out of college do so after their first year, the remaining students may still experience adjustment challenges upon returning for a second year. Students who experience a difficult adjustment within the first year have an increased likelihood of experiencing long-term emotional stress and depression (Gall, Evans, & Bellerose, 2000). Therefore, the remainder of this article focuses on achieving belonging at any stage of the college student experience.

Social Media to Achieve Belonging

Social media has made a substantial impact on the college student lifestyle and overall experience (Mastrodicasa & Metellus, 2013). As a result, research has been conducted to connect social media to the social experiences of college students (e.g. Eroglu, 2015, Hoffman, Pinkleton, Weintraub Austin & Reyes-Velázquez, 2014; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2015). This past research either describes the impact of a singular social media platform or discusses social media under the general category of technology. While various technologies and social media platforms are diverse in their features and methods of information sharing, the benefits of these platforms extend beyond a single Web site or tool. Specifically, social media has been found to contribute to positive psychosocial well-being and sense of community (Henry, 2012), increased self-esteem (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011), increased social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011), increased life satisfaction (Bargh & McKenna, 2004), facilitation of offline social interactions (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011), and facilitation of a higher quantity as well as quality of friendships (Mihailidis, 2014).

The use of social media to achieve belongingness is not without limitations and potential negative side effects. Researchers have identified a connection between social media use and loneliness and lower perceptions of social skills (Henry, 2012), academic procrastination and social isolation (Henry, 2012), increased negative cognitions and emotions after a romantic separation (Marshall, 2012), increased opportunity to experience cyberbullying (Nixon, 2014), and reduced academic performance (Junco & Cotton, 2012). While these barriers do present challenges to student success, they are moderated by: (a) the amount of time spent online, (b) reasons for social media use, (c) settings for social media use, and (d) quality of online relationships established via social media.

Next, the author(s) will present strategies to help college counselors utilize social media to achieve belonging for college students. These strategies are aligned with each of the three aspects of belonging presented above and correspond with potential online behaviors or actions, which can be facilitated by social media. A vignette will be used to apply suggestions for how counselors can utilize social media to enhance belonging within college students.

Vignette

Mary is a 20-year-old Caucasian student in her sophomore year of college pursuing a degree in business administration at a large southeastern university within the United States, approximately 300 miles from her home. Both of Mary's parents graduated from college, and she has two younger siblings who are currently in high school. Mary scheduled an appointment at the counseling center on campus because she has been feeling "unhappy" and has been unable to enjoy her time at school.

Mary lived in the same town for her entire childhood and her first experience with moving and making new friends occurred when she began college. While Mary chose to attend a university in the same state as her family home, she came to the campus interested in experiencing a new place and meeting people other than her childhood friends. Mary discloses to her counselor that her parents were nervous about the idea of

their daughter attending a university that was a long distance from home, and they warned Mary that she would miss her friends and family.

Mary's first year on campus was full of new experiences, where she met many people and formed numerous friendships. Mary shared with her counselor that her courses were going well, and she felt very capable of completing her schoolwork and making grades that satisfy both herself and her parents. Now in her second year of college, Mary noticed she was not enjoying college as much as she did during her first year. While Mary met a lot of people during her first year on campus, she had struggled to continue these friendships into her second year. Mary shared that she was spending the majority of her time in her dorm or in the library studying and no longer spending time dancing, attending concerts, or trying out new restaurants, as she enjoyed last year. In addition, Mary's romantic partner from home recently chose to end their relationship because of the distance. Mary is worried that she might have made a mistake by choosing a college where her childhood friends were not in attendance.

Developing and Maintaining an Online Presence

An initial step to enhancing belongingness and initiating social interactions is the creation of a detailed social media profile. Therefore, the counselor would first engage Mary in self-reflection in order to identify what aspects of her background and personality she wants to share with others and how to best display these traits within various social media platforms. Specifically, the counselor can discuss with Mary the potential of incorporating factors pertaining to her family, cultural background, and hometown as a way of feeling more connected to the home she has left behind. In addition, Mary has shared dancing, music, and food as interests that can be incorporated through activities such as following profiles or sites that pertain to these interests and sharing her own social media content related to her activities within these areas. The counselor can discuss in more detail the personal attributes and interests that are most reflective of Mary's identity, that highlight her strengths and reflect her life experience. This approach can empower Mary as she reflects on her strengths and selects which information to include. The counselor can process with Mary the benefits and potential consequences of including different types of personal information in a public forum. The counselor can discuss with Mary which social media platform would be best to use, based upon those that are most popular with students at her college.

The goal of this intervention is to ensure Mary's social media profiles will serve as an accurate reflection of her identity as an individual. By disclosing these interests and attributes, peers will better understand Mary's background as well as any shared traits or interests when they initiate interactions. Counselors can discuss both the students' views of themselves and how those personal views can be reflected online for others to review in order to help students develop useful and informative profiles. This is a preliminary step towards achieving belongingness because the students can connect with other students through a shared university student identity, and that process can then evolve via discoveries of additional individual similarities.

Initiating Individual Conversations

Once Mary is confident that her social media presence is representative of her own identity, the counselor can then discuss interacting with peers as a pathway to

acquiring fruitful companionships. Many social media platforms allow for online conversations to occur between individuals, which can serve as a less intimidating opportunity to engage with another person than face-to-face meetings while offering opportunities for practicing communication skills needed to build one's confidence and self-efficacy. Specifically, Mary and her counselor could work to identify peers Mary met during her first year but has lost contact with after the summer break. They can also identify individuals who Mary has not yet officially met but can identify as having shared interests or attributes. This engagement is a first step that could build into future in person social interactions.

The counselor and Mary can then identify strategies for initiating contacts with these peers through both synchronous and asynchronous discussions. From an asynchronous perspective, the counselor could encourage using options such as private messages on Facebook or commenting on pictures or posts through Instagram or Twitter. Specifically, Mary could reach out to peers she has previously met by liking their statuses or posts about returning to school or a shared activity. Mary could then follow up with peers to invite them to attend a campus event together, meet for snacks between classes, or study together in the library. To initiate real-time synchronous conversations, the counselor could suggest the use of video chat or instant messaging functions on platforms such as Facebook, Google Plus, or Pinterest. These options will provide Mary with more opportunities for reciprocal conversational without the pressure of responding in person and the barrier of locating them on campus. The counselor can brainstorm with Mary what she might want to write to these peers and process the potential outcomes depending upon the responses to her efforts.

There are two important goals for practicing one-on-one interactions online: learning how to initiate a relationship with another college student and building confidence and self-efficacy related to participating in social conversations. This intervention alone may not be sufficient to achieve companionship, and relationship building because the next step would be to achieve a transition of the online relationships to offline face-to-face formats. Therefore, counselors need to follow up with clients regarding their initial use of social media to initiate friendships in order to ensure these relationships can evolve and serve as steps toward additional constructive face-to-face social experiences.

Engaging with Online Groups

Next, the counselor can work with Mary to translate her experience with peers in a one-on-one context into group interactions also designed to achieve affiliation. The primary goal of achieving affiliation is that students will successfully make a transition from individual interactions with peers to establishing relationships in group settings. If Mary were to reveal that she misses dancing and wants to engage in dancing more often, the counselor could work with her to reach out via social media to student groups on campus that meet regularly to dance. For example, the counselor could assist Mary with writing a tweet to post on Twitter where she asks about opportunities on campus surrounding dance and tagging the university student activities and organizations office. Using hashtags, a word or phrase started with the pound sign, connects the post to other social media users and may lead to receiving responses from other peers or university offices. Universities currently use hashtags to form groups of students according to

specified categories of interest such as graduating class status, out of state status, or members of on-campus living community. These hashtags can later be searched and connected with the posts of users who may not otherwise be engaged. Mary and her counselor could review hashtags used on her campus and begin to practice the use of hashtags in her posts, which would connect her content with larger groups and increase her visibility within the university community.

Other social media strategies could involve posting a message on a Facebook group page for Mary's student body graduating class or searching for group profiles related to dance at her university. Once Mary has identified groups that fit her interests, the next step would be to engage with these groups through online conversations similar to those discussed above for achieving companionships. However, the key difference will be managing conversations with multiple respondents. The counselor may encourage Mary to watch the group activity and patterns of interaction to increase her comfort before joining conversations.

Engaging in social media group interactions assists students in achieving affiliation because the process assists both in identifying opportunities for group membership and providing group interactions in less stressful online environments. First, students are allowed to explore what groups they may or may not currently be members of simply by being an enrolled student as well as groups that may be appealing because of shared interests and experiences. In addition, once a group of interest is identified, students can then engage in collaborative group conversations as a means of practicing group interactions prior to engaging in person-to-person experiences. While an in-person group interaction may be stressful for students who worry about being embarrassed and not knowing how to engage in conversations, an online environment lowers the pressure and provides opportunities to practice interpersonal interactions, providing potential for enhancing self-efficacy.

Deepening Connections Through Expanding Personal Networks

After Mary has engaged in group interactions and established both companionship and affiliation, the counselor can assist Mary in pursuing connectedness by enhancing Mary's established relationships. As discussed above, students seeking affiliation may express the desire to have deeper relationships and build upon social relationships that are more similar to previous personal relationships. Mary's counselor can discuss with Mary how she has deepened relationships with friends from home and how these relationships grew over time. The counselor can then work with Mary to mirror those behaviors in an online format.

For example, one strategy for deepening current relationships is through more consistent and ongoing interactions between involved parties. Mary can identify how she could establish regular patterns of interaction with her peers through behaviors such as commenting on and indicating her liking online posts and pictures or by inviting current friends to attend events or outings. An ongoing pattern of communication and exchange of information allows students to interact more frequently with identified friends and develop more shared experiences. This is also important because in an online social media atmosphere, students rely on constant and immediate exchanges of information. Therefore, the process of deepening relationships and increasing frequency of

communications may be more quickly established online than by utilizing more traditional face-to-face methods.

An additional social media strategy for enhancing connectedness is to use virtual networks to expose students to peers who are different from themselves. A key aspect of connectedness is the comfort of the students when engaging in relationships with others from diverse backgrounds. First, the counselor would want to identify Mary's level of cultural awareness in order to understand her competence with diversity and development by employing an assessment such as Helms' White Racial Identity Development Model (Helms, 1990). Mary's counselor can ask her to reflect on how her current friends are either similar to or different from herself according to statuses such as ethnicity, culture, religion, and sexuality. The counselor may need to challenge Mary to engage with others outside of her comfort zone and assess her willingness to expand her current social connections.

A strategy for engaging peers who are different from Mary might involve seeking out online groups or campus initiatives that focus on open dialogue and connecting more diverse groups within the campus community or groups that bring together students of different backgrounds united by a similar mission or cause. Helping individuals to be comfortable in engaging with students with whom they do not have much in common can be a major challenge (Bahns, Pickett, & Crandall, 2011). Therefore, initiating and deepening friendships with those who are different may require more effort because of the emphasis on connections rather than on surface similarities.

Conclusion

Social media platforms are constantly influencing the lives of college students. While most students engage in social media use for a variety of reasons, it is also a tool that can be used to enhance social connections within the college community. A challenge faced by college students is developing new relationships within the college environment in order to achieve a sense of belonging. Therefore, incorporating social media platforms into the counseling process will be reflective of how the current generation of college students communicates with their peers and will also provide an opportunity to bring real-time social skill building into counseling relationships.

Before using social media as a counseling strategy, college counselors are challenged to review their counseling center's social media policy in order to ensure their practices align with the counseling center's standards. The next step is to review this policy with students when using media-related strategies. Specific conversations about informed consent, boundaries, professional relationships, and consent are necessary before introducing social media into the counseling setting. Consequently, counselors are encouraged to review section H of the 2014 American Counseling Association's (ACA) *Code of Ethics*, with a particular focus on section H.6. (ACA, 2014). One ethical standard that is of specific importance to counselors using social media with clients is H.6.c: "Counselors respect the privacy of their clients' presence on social media unless given consent to view such information" (ACA, 2014, p. 18). Counselors should not view their student's social media sites without consent of the client and should not engage with the students through personal social media accounts. While the ACA *Code of Ethics* (2014) warns counselors of behaviors to avoid in regard to social media, it also encourage all

counselors to become knowledgeable about technology and social media to better serve clients.

While social media provides beneficial tools, there are also limitations counselors should discuss with clients when meeting people online (DeLambo, Homa, Peters, DeLambo, & Chandras, 2011). Information shared online is often public and once released is officially part of the student's online record. Counselors should carefully discuss with their students how much to share online, and process the risks with disclosing too much personal information. Privacy also becomes a concern when using social media, so all counselors should reference the privacy policies of social media platforms with students to ensure appropriate privacy settings are turned on to protect the student. In addition, it is important to note safety concerns when individuals initiate virtual relationships with unknown persons before meeting them offline, and that counselors discuss safety with clients. Counselors should encourage clients to meet online friends in public spaces on campus, such as dining halls or coffee shops, and to potentially bring along another friend or roommate. Finally, while the student can control what they post online, they cannot control how others may respond. The counselor is tasked with discussing the possibility of negative reactions from other students and coping mechanisms to deal with any negative interactions with others online.

As social media platforms continue to evolve and play a significant role in the daily lives of college students, counselors will need to work to bring these technologies into their counseling sessions in order to best connect with and serve clients (e.g., ACA, 2014). With the frequency and duration of social media use by college students being so substantial, counselors can ill afford to ignore the value of this resource. Engaging with social media tools in counseling sessions will enhance the counselor's ability to better serve their clients and model healthy and useful technology behaviors.

Future research needs to be conducted on how counselors can best use social media with clients in order to enhance counseling interventions within our dynamic and innovative society. As the proposed model has not been empirically tested, it would be beneficial for a research study to explore the abilities of social media use in facilitating a sense of belonging in college students. Therefore, if this model were to be used by counselors, it would be beneficial to evaluate the client's reactions and any changes in social engagement within the campus environment.

Millennials are a unique population to serve in that they incorporate social media and online communication throughout their daily routines. Therefore, communication and interaction no longer occurs within strictly face-to-face settings. College counselors need to address social media communication within a counseling setting to remain current and best serve the needs of college students.

References

- American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469–480.
- Bahns, A. J., Pickett, K. M., & Crandall, C. S. (2011). Social ecology of similarity: Big schools, small schools and social relationships. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, *15*, 119–131.

- Baldassare, M., Rosenfield, S., & Rook, K. (1984). The types of social relations predicting elderly well-being. *Research on Aging*, 6, 549–559.
- Bargh, J. A., & McKenna, K. Y. (2004). The Internet and social life. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 55, 573–590.
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230.
- Brown, B. B., Eicher, S. A., & Petrie, S. (1986). The importance of peer group (“crowd”) affiliation in adolescence. *Journal of Adolescence*, 9(1), 73–96.
- Dede, C. (2013). Connecting the dots: New technology-based models for postsecondary learning. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 48(5). Retrieved from <http://www.educause.edu/ero/article/connecting-dots-new-technology-based-models-postsecondary-learning>
- DeLambo, D. A., Homa, D., Peters, R. H., DeLambo, A. M., & Chandras, K. V. (2011). Facebook and social media: Implications for counseling college students. In *Ideas and Research You Can Use: VISTAS 2011*. Retrieved from https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/vistas/2011-V-Online/Article_68.pdf
- Eisenberg, D., Hunt, J., & Speer, N. (2013). Mental health in American colleges and universities: Variation across student subgroups and across campuses. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 201(1), 60–67.
- Ellison, N., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2011). Connection strategies: Social capital implications of Facebook-enabled communication practices. *New Media & Society*, 13(6), 873–892.
- Eroglu, Y. (2015). Interrelationship between attachment styles and facebook addiction. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(1), 150–160.
- Gall, T. L., Evans, D. R., & Bellerose, S. (2000). Transition to first-year university: Patterns of change in adjustment across life domains and time. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19(4), 544–567.
- Gonzales, A. L., & Hancock, J. T. (2011). Mirror, mirror on my Facebook wall: Effects of exposure to facebook on self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(1/2), 79–83.
- Helms, J. E. (1990). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research, and practice*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Henry, S. K. (2012). On social connection in university life. *About Campus*, 16(6), 18–24.
- Hoffman, E. W., Pinkleton, B. E., Weintraub Austin, E., & Reyes-Velázquez, W. (2014). Exploring college students’ use of general and alcohol-related social media and their associations with alcohol-related behaviors. *Journal of American College Health*, 62(5), 328–335.
- Higher Education Research Institute. (2007). *College freshmen and online networking sites*. Los Angeles, CA: Author.
- Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of campus racial climate on Latino college students’ sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education*, 70(4), 324–345.
- Jacobsen, W. C., & Forste, R. (2011). The wired generation: Academic and social outcomes of electronic media use among university students. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(5), 275–280.

- Junco, R. (2012). The relationship between frequency of facebook use, participation in facebook activities, and student engagement. *Computers & Education, 58*(1), 162–171.
- Junco, R., & Cotton, S. (2012) No A 4 U: The relationship between multitasking and academic performance. *Computers & Education, 59*, 505–514.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of social media. *Business Horizons, 35*(1), 59–68.
- Kohut, H. (1984). *How does analysis cure?* New York, NY: International Universities Press.
- Kulik, J. A., Moore, P. J., & Mahler, H. I. (1993). Stress and affiliation: Hospital roommate effects on preoperative anxiety and social interaction. *Health Psychology, 12*(2), 118–124.
- Lee, R. M., & Robbins, S. B. (1995). Measuring belongingness: The Social Connectedness and Social Assurance Scales. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 42*(2), 232–241.
- Lee, R. M., & Robbins, S. B. (1998). The relationship between social connectedness and anxiety, self-esteem, and social identity. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45*(3), 338–345.
- Lenhart, A. (2015, April 9). *Mobile access shifts social media use and other online activities*. Pew Research Center, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/mobile-access-shifts-social-media-use-and-other-online-activities/>
- Marshall, T. C. (2012). Facebook surveillance of former romantic partners: Associations with post-breakup recovery and personal growth. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 15*(10), 521–526.
- Martínez-Alemán, A. M. (2014). Social media go to college. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning, 46*, 13–20.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand Company.
- Mastrodicasa, J., & Metellus, P. (2013). The impact of social media on college students. *Journal of College & Character, 14*(1), 21–29.
- Mihailidis, P. (2014). The civic-social media disconnect: Exploring perceptions of social media for engagement in the daily life of college students. *Information, Communication & Society, 17*(9), 1059–1071.
- Nixon, C. L. (2014). Current perspectives: the impact of cyberbullying on adolescent health. *Adolescent Health, Medicine and Therapeutics, 5*, 143–158.
- Palfrey, J., & Gasser, U. (2008). *Born digital: Understanding the first generation of digital natives*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Perrin, A. (2015, October 8). *Social media usage: 2005–2015*. Pew Research Center, Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/08/social-networking-usage-2005-2015/>
- Pittman, L. D., & Richmond, A. (2008). University belonging, friendship quality, and psychological adjustment during the transition to college. *The Journal of Experimental Education, 76*(4), 343–361.
- Raacke, J., & Bonds-Raacke, J. (2015). Are students really connected? Predicting college adjustment from social network usage. *Educational Psychology, 35*(7), 819–834.

- Reddy, D. M., Baum, A., Fleming, R., & Aiello, J. R. (1981). Mediation of social density by coalition formation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 11*, 529–537.
- Reetz, D. R., Krylowicz, B., Bershada, C., Lawrence, J. M., & Mistler, B. (2015). The Association for University and College Counseling Center Directors Annual Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.aucccd.org/assets/documents/2014%20aucccd%20monograph%20-%20public%20pdf.pdf>
- Rook, K. S. (1987). Social support versus companionship: Effects on life stress, loneliness, and evaluation by others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*, 1132–1147.
- Shany, M., Wiener, J., & Assido, M. (2012). Friendship predictors of global self-worth and domain-specific self-concepts in university students with and without learning disability. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 46*(5), 444–452.
- Unger, L. S. (1984). The effects of situational variables on the subjective leisure experience. *Leisure Science, 6*, 291–312.

Note: This paper is part of the annual VISTAS project sponsored by the American Counseling Association. Find more information on the project at: <http://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/vistas>