



Humanistic Antidotes for Social Media/Cell Phone Addiction in the College Psychology Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This article describes “humanistic antidotes” to offset the widespread social media/cell phone addiction prevalent in current US college classrooms. The inappropriate use of cell phones to engage in social media in college classrooms is a pervasive problem that many college instructors have complained about. The dominant focus of this article is in humanistic education, in which the author’s efforts at getting psychology college students to put away their cell phones, “talk with each other,” and gain awareness of the detrimental effects of social media addiction and narcissism is illustrated. The methodology utilized in this article is based upon autoethnographic research, where relevant experiences of the researcher are considered to be an informative and fundamental part of the research. The author describes in narrative form his relevant experiences in formulating humanistic antidotes to the excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones to engage in social media, that he encountered in his college psychology teaching. These humanistic antidotes are described as a three step process: 1) take necessary actions to eliminate as much as possible the inappropriate use of cell phones in the classroom; 2) engage students in required personal/academic small group discussions every class period; 3) include small discussions about the excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones and social media, and require them to write and present project papers of their own choosing, which will likely include some papers on the topic of cell phone/social media addiction, demonstrating their awareness of the detrimental aspects of this pervasive problem.

Keywords: Autoethnography, Humanistic education, Humanistic psychology, Narcissism, Social media addiction.

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1.0 Introduction

A half-century ago humanistic psychology was considered one of the dominant forces in the world of psychology, but today the picture is very different. As I have described previously:

A half-century ago humanistic psychology was an exciting new “third force” in the world of psychology, strongly competitive with the then dominant psychologies of psychoanalysis and

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behaviorism (Moss, 2015; Taylor & Martin, 2015). Maslow's theory of self-actualization and Rogers' practice of client/person-centered psychotherapy were well-respected and popular in the psychology mainstream of the 1960's and 1970's (Maslow, 1962; Moss, 2015; Rogers, 1961; Taylor & Martin, 2015). However, in today's world of psychology the picture is very different, as humanistic psychology and psychotherapy is currently a relatively marginal force, taking a back seat to the dominant psychotherapy influences of psychiatric medications and cognitive-behavioral therapy (Aanstoos, 2015; Benjamin, 2008; Hayes, 2015; O'Hara, 2015; Taylor & Martin, 2015; Olfman & Robbins, 2012).(Benjamin, in press)²

As described by (Aanstoos, 2015):

Robots and/or computers are increasingly taking care of children and the elderly, but they do not care about them....the recipients think they are loved by machines, a shallowing out takes the place of genuine human relations....Time spent on the Internet means less time spent with friends and even with families. Research done at the early phase of this development showed that increasing computer usage results in more loneliness and depression....increasing reliance on such technologies [such as Facebook] can dangerously reshape one's emotional life, resulting in fewer and more superficial relationships....the typically more narcissistic and impulsive online "personas" are dangerous because they contribute to the person becoming more impatient and grandiose in life....The great conundrum here may be that as people now communicate more *quantitatively*, they may do so less *qualitatively* [sic]. (Aanstoos, 2015, pp. 246-247)

There is no doubt that computers and technology have enormous benefits in terms of our abilities to gather information and communicate instantaneously in a global network (Aanstoos, 2015). However, what I am concerned about and will address in this article, is what I believe are the grave social dangers of excessive technology use, which has been characterized as social media addiction, coupled with the corresponding dangers of a societal epidemic of excessive narcissism (Addiction.com Staff, 2012; Anderson, 2015; Agarwal & Kar, 2015; Augenbraum, 2014; Benjamin, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a; Lasch, 1979; McNamee, 2014; O'Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson, & Council on Communications and Media, 2011; Song, Larose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Young, 2009).

The way that I have addressed these concerns in my previous articles (Benjamin, 2015a, 2015b, In press) is based upon the qualitative research methodology of autoethnography (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004, 2009, 2015; Muncey, 2010; Wertz, 2011). I have described autoethnography and the content of my previous related articles (Benjamin, 2015a, 2015b, in press) as follows:

Autoethnography was developed in the last few decades of the 20th century, largely through the efforts of sociologist Carolyn Ellis (2004, 2009), and focuses upon the social dynamics and context that the researcher is investigating. However, unlike strict ethnographic research that does not include personal reflections of the researcher, autoethnography extends participant observation research through placing a significant reliance upon the relevant feelings, thoughts, perspectives, experiences, reflections, insights, and personal stories of the researcher, and often involves a high level of personal vulnerability in terms of revealing emotional/private aspects of oneself (Benjamin, 2011; Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013; Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2004, 2009, 2015).

In my previous related work I have described in what I have learned about social media addiction in our US society, as well as what I have referred to as "humanistic antidotes" to this social media addiction, through my teaching of two undergraduate psychology courses: Introduction to Psychology and Human Growth & Development, at a university in Maine...which I will refer to for anonymity reasons as simply University. I have also described in my previous related work

² The present article is an expansion of the social media/cell phone addiction parts of my previous article: *Humanistic Antidotes for a Narcissistic Social Media Addicted Society* (Benjamin, in press). Although relevant material is frequently repeated and referenced from that article, the descriptions of my small group discussion topics and student excerpts from their papers on topics related to social media addiction is material that I have not previously published.

what I have referred to as “unbridled narcissism” in our US society as the “new normal” (Benjamin, 2015a, 2015b).

In the present article I will expand upon my previous work as described above, describing four topics of small group discussions and a few excerpts from student papers that I utilized in my psychology courses at University, in the context of the humanistic antidotes that I intensively explored to try to offset both the social media addiction and narcissistic qualities that I observed in my psychology students during my final semester of teaching at University. I have described the challenge of inappropriate cell phone use in the context of social media addiction in my classrooms as follows.

In my Spring, 2015 teaching of Human Growth & Development at (University), I required all my students to submit three project papers, the last one being an academic psychology paper based upon a topic of their own choosing. As it turned out, the most popular topic chosen was that of excessive technology use, as out of my class of 20 students, three students chose this topic specifically and a fourth student included this topic in his more encompassing topic of “Americanization” (see below for relevant excerpts from these four papers). Referring to Agarwal & Kar (2015), one of my above three students said the following in regard to the excessive use of cell phones and technology in our society:

For just about everybody, their phone is their life. That is how they keep in contact with everyone; that is where all their pictures are, and so on. Now even today I do not think one could imagine life without technology and social media. Use of technology is essential to make the tasks of life easier; however, its abnormal, excessive unnecessary use leads to addiction and makes life more difficult.

It is precisely this “abnormal, excessive unnecessary use” of cell phones in the college classroom that I want to initially discuss, as I believe this is one of the main obstacles in establishing humanistic antidotes to the dual epidemic of social media addiction and narcissism in our US society for college students.³

It is now commonly agreed upon that in spite of the beneficial effects of the appropriate use of cell phones to effectively and quickly gather academic information, inappropriate cell phone use in high school and college classrooms is a pervasive problem in our current U.S. society. The detrimental effects reported are inclusive of distraction from schoolwork and class activities, short attention spans, diminished reading capacity, lower GPA, higher anxiety, lower satisfaction with life, cheating on tests, and rudeness (Earl, 2012; Fullbright, 2013; Hopke, 2009; Lepp, Barkley, & Karpinski, 2014; Song, Larose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004; Weimar, 2014; Young, 2009).

The basis of my attempts to offset the detrimental effects of cell phone use in my classroom revolved around the interpersonal dialogue focus of humanistic education (Rogers, 1969)⁴ that I utilized in teaching my University classes. Each semester the ubiquitous use of cell phones by my students became more and more glaring to me, both in and out of the classroom. During the Spring, 2016 semester, which I decided would be my last semester of teaching in the classroom, I required my Human Growth & Development students to engage in small group discussions every class period, three times a week, for the last two thirds of the semester. This to me was an important aspect of humanistic education, which is based upon the work of Carl Rogers (1961, 1969) and involves empathy, caring about students, genuineness on the part of the learning facilitator, student choice and control, and teaching the “whole person.”⁴ Initially when I would lecture for a half to two thirds of the 50 minute period, I could see that a handful of my students would be surreptitiously (or not so surreptitiously) engaged on their cell phones, presumably immersed in their social media communications. This struck me as incredibly rude and disrespectful, and virtually every class period I would give my students a lecture about not using their cell phones in class, occasionally singling out particular students when the

³ This excerpt is from the student I have referred to as Anonymous Student #2 in the section entitled Student Project Descriptions of the Dual Epidemic.

⁴ For more information about humanistic education, see http://3n.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanistic_education

offense was especially obvious and/or brazen. However, I knew from the responses of my students of the previous semester, that students would essentially just ignore me and find more surreptitious ways of using their cell phones during class, which is consistent with what many other educators have reported (Earl, 2012; Fullbright, 2013; Lepp, Barkley, & Karpinski, 2014; Song, Larose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004; Weimar, 2014; Young, 2009). I thus decided to make a radical change in my teaching, as I subsequently chose one particular topic to review for 10 or 15 minutes each class period, with the remaining time devoted to my students engaging in small group discussions and weekly whole class sharing of material from the week's chapter that was particularly meaningful to them, and the weekly quizzes (see the next section *Four Small Group Discussion Topics*). (Benjamin, in press)

As I described in one of my previous articles (Benjamin, 2015c), the concerns that we live in a narcissistic culture was spearheaded by Christopher Lasch's (1979) bestselling book *The Culture of Narcissism*, and the current picture painted by Twenge & Campbell, (2009) conveys how:

Virtually every aspect of the world that we (Westerners) currently live in is pervaded by the combination of "me first," self-promotion, crass materialism, physical appearance obsession, social media addiction, wanting to be "famous," credit card debt, and lack of depth in relationships. This translates into a complete transformation into what is now considered "normal" in Western society, which includes a tremendous increase in people of all ages, though especially young adults, promoting themselves continuously on social media sites, undergoing cosmetic surgery, going into lifelong debt from using credit cards beyond their financial means, and then what I consider to be the most alarming of all: posting vicious beatings and murders on videos for millions of people to watch so they become famous." (Benjamin, 2015c, p. 2)

As I have described previously in regard to my motivation for requiring my students to continuously be involved in small group discussions in my classroom:

It is exactly this context of unbridled narcissism that is inextricably connected to our society's social media addiction that I have witnessed in my University students' inappropriate and addictive use of their cell phones in my classroom, and led to me deciding to require them to "talk with each other" every class session. Now at first glance it may not seem especially radical to have students simply talk with each other, but the reality is that the kind of authentic, empathic communication that Carl Rogers (1961) wrote about over a half-century ago is nowadays extremely foreign to the vast majority of our young people. As many of my students conveyed in their small group discussions, and some of them described in their third project papers [see the section *Student Project Descriptions of the Dual Epidemic* below]...they are concerned that young people no longer know how to engage socially in "face-to-face" conversations, as they spend the dominant part of their social lives "online." It has been recommended to give students information about the detrimental aspects of inappropriate cell phone use in the classroom, in the hope that they will become more aware of these negative aspects and consequently reduce their inappropriate cell phone use in the classroom (Weimar 2014). This generic strategy was the guiding force of my choosing the topic of social media use for two of my students' small group discussion topics, and I was pleased to see that four of my students chose to write about this topic in their third project papers [see the section *Student Project Descriptions of the Dual Epidemic* below]. (Benjamin, in press)

In the following sections I will include the verbatim handouts for four of my small group discussion topics that I utilized in my Human Growth & Development psychology class (two of which pertain to social media), present some relevant excerpts from four of my student project papers on the topic of the excessive and inappropriate use of cell phones and social media, and then give a summary of my conclusions from what I have researched about this topic.

2.0 Four small group discussion topics

The following are the two handouts I gave to my students for their two social media discussions, one pertaining to social technology and the other pertaining to media violence influence.

PY 141 social technology discussion

In your small groups share with each other the extent of your day-to-day involvement in social technology media, inclusive of your involvement on personal internet sites such as facebook and twitter, cell phone texting, online dating, etc. Include in your sharing how you perceive your online social life in comparison to your face-to-face social life, and if you see any problems with your online social life interfering with your face-to-face social life. Then discuss in your groups if in general you see any problems for children and teenagers growing up in our modern technological age in regard to the extent of the social technology they are immersed in, at increasingly younger and younger ages. Relate your perspectives to material studied in this course, especially the psychosocial developmental psychology ideas of Erik Erikson which focused upon the importance of social relations for optimal development throughout the lifespan.

PY 141 media violence influence discussion

In your small groups, share honestly your own viewing habits of watching violence in the entertainment media, in particular through watching television and playing video games, especially when you were younger. Describe openly what effects, if any, watching violence on television, video games, or in any other form of media communications has and has had upon you. Have you noticed that you tended to become more aggressive in your interactions with others after watching violence in media entertainment? How much influence do you think the excessive watching of violence has upon children growing up to become violent criminals? Why do you think the progression into becoming aggressive and violent adolescents and adults does not occur for all children who indulge in the excessive watching of violent television shows and playing violent video games? What factors do you think are particularly significant such that in combination with children watching an excessive amount of violence on television and indulging frequently in violent video games, may precipitate this kind of aggressive and violent behavior in adolescence and adulthood? If you think this is a serious problem, what suggestions do you have to constructively deal with this problem and improve the situation?

As I have described previously (Benjamin, 2016b, in press), I received my “inappropriate cell phone use in the classroom” initiation the previous semester, which occurred in my Introduction to Psychology class, as I learned that all the students in the last row were using their cell phones to cheat on their quizzes. Following the above strategy, I decided to make the topic of cheating into a small group discussion, as I gave them the following handout.

PY 111 consciousness of cheating discussion

We have described consciousness briefly as awareness of ourselves and of our environment. In your small groups, share with each other some of your past experiences of what it felt like to cheat on an exam, and how you felt when you knew others were cheating on an exam. If you have ever cheated on an exam, what were the motivations that made you decide to cheat? Did you feel any sense of guilt or ethical wrongdoing? How did it feel when you studied hard for an exam and you knew others were getting good grades on the exam by various forms of cheating—such as copying work from the person sitting next to them, or from their cell phones. Do you think that this kind of cheating is excusable because of the unrealistic expectations of academia, and the importance of obtaining a college degree to earn a good living? What penalties, if any, do you think are reasonable for a college instructor and the college institution to impose upon students who have been found guilty of cheating on an exam?

NOTE: In this small group discussion, the facilitator will insure that each person in the group contributes personally to the discussion, and the recorder/presenter will present concrete examples to the class, but will present these examples anonymously.

One of the more recent innovative forms of autoethnography involves what has been described as “performance autoethnography,” where the intent is to actually “perform” what has been experienced in the context of learning about a cultural phenomenon, to have a dramatic impact on an audience (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). I decided to try this out with my Spring, 2016 Human Growth & Development class for the topic of the development of gender identity, and it turned out to be a discussion performance topic that they thoroughly enjoyed, and I believe got some educational value out of. The following is the handout that I gave to them for this discussion performance.

PY 141 Pink/Blue discussion performance

In your small groups, put on a small little skit where the facilitator will serve as the director of the skit. The skit is that one participant plays a young boy or girl, two participants play the parents, and the remaining participant or participants play either grandparents or friends of the family. Your skit should revolve around the gender expectations of the family for the little boy or little girl, bringing in the stereotypes discussed in Chapter 12 about the development of gender identity. This discussion performance allows for a good deal of creativity and is meant to be fun, but also is a vehicle to dramatically portray the significant social gender influences on the development of boys and girls in our culture. You have free range for your skit, but some themes you might want to consider are toys, clothes, hobbies, expectations, parental communication, and discipline.

I have previously described the results of my experimentation with these continuous small group class discussions in my classrooms as follows:

For the most part, students were actively engaged in self-revealing dialogue/listening with each other in the small group discussions that I required them to participate in, which I believe is an important humanistic antidote to the dilemma of unbridled narcissism in our society. This involved them conveying a wide variety of their personal experiences [ranging across topics, in addition to what I have described above]...that included their intimate relationships, their parents' adjustment to their leaving home, the effects of divorce on their family life, their grandparents' ways of dealing with retirement, their transitions from high school to college, and their experiences with death. This was complimented by each of them giving a brief presentation to the whole class of material in the week's chapter that was personally meaningful to them, in which I would change the traditional rows seating pattern into one big circle formation. Things were not perfect, as I occasionally still saw the surreptitious inappropriate use of the cell phone happening, but this now occurred much less frequently than when I was initially lecturing for longer periods, and for the last two class sessions I felt a sense of satisfaction to see that no one “dared” to take out their cell phones during the student class presentations of their chosen topics. For me, much of this was a sense of “doing the right thing” for my students who were giving their class presentations, as it struck me as so rude and disrespectful for students to be engaging in social media on their cell phones while their colleagues were vulnerably giving their class presentations. I honestly don't know how much awareness most of my students had that it was “wrong” to use their cell phones during class vs the reality that I was “on top of this” and using their cell phones would result in a lowering of their grades. But I do think that whatever they may have thought of my “policing” of their inappropriate cell phone use during class time, and my requiring them to actively take part in small group class discussions every single class session, a number of them gained a valuable experience from simply “talking with each other.” My thoughts about this are supported by my students' course evaluations from last semester, which 80% of them filled out. 50% or more of my students who filled out course evaluations found the course to be challenging and intellectually stimulating, class time was used

productively, my facilitation of discussions to be effective, and agreed that I encouraged them to share opinions and ask questions in class, and gave them helpful feedback regarding mastery of the course objectives; in comparison, less than 19% of my students who filled out course evaluations did not agree with these statements. As one student commented, "I really liked the class discussions. That was the time I got to engage in real life situations." Thus it is this "talking with each other" that I believe can serve as a dominant humanistic antidote to the dual dilemma of social media addiction and narcissism. (Benjamin, in press)

3.0 Student project descriptions of the dual epidemic

One of my Human Growth & Development students, Cameron Cietek, chose to write his third project paper on the topic of "Americanization."⁵ This paper captured my interest immediately, as Cameron's description of Americanization struck me as a witty tongue-in-cheek comprehensive formulation of the dual epidemic of social media addiction and narcissism in our US society, and I will therefore describe some of Cameron's engaging descriptions of this dual epidemic. I take pride in having stimulated this student to learn about and become aware of this dual epidemic, which is part and parcel of what I consider to be humanistic antidotes, to lessen their effects on intelligent college students, and is consistent with the suggestions given by Weimar (2014).

Cameron introduced his concept of Americanization as follows:

So what are all the bad things that come from Americanization, or should I say the "living the dream life in the land of opportunity" that go unnoticed in today's society? How about over-consumption, obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, lower intelligence, ignorance of the rest of the world, secrets and unexplained events, governmental control which can be compared to brainwashing, and last but not least, the complete ignorance that any of this is happening. (Cietek, 2016, p. 1)

Cameron proceeded to present well-documented arguments to demonstrate his main thesis, but what I am primarily interested in for the context of my present article is one characteristic of "Americanization" that he did not include in his above introduction; however, Cameron described this characteristic in a very impactful way later in his paper as follows:

A huge thing that has contributed to Americanization is all our modern technologies. According to a comprehensive survey of boys and girls ages 8-18 by the Kaiser Family Foundation, young people spend the equivalent of 8.5 hours a day on media....The system has convinced us that it makes us cool and popular to have all the new gadgets....Americans spend their money on useless things whereas people in other countries that I mentioned above struggle to provide food for their families and live on roughly \$2.00 a day. So we are living the "American Dream" in the land of opportunity and spending a third of our lives in this amazing place glued to technology and not even living our lives. But again as I've said, we're so incredibly blind that this is an issue because it has become a norm in our society to have this disorder. (Cietek, 2016, pp. 8-9)

Yes what Cameron is describing here is the same phenomenon that I have described above and in my previous articles on social media addiction and narcissism (Benjamin, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). And what Cameron conveys as "it has become a norm in our society to have this disorder" very much reminds me of the 1960's radical psychiatrist R.D. Laing's description of "normal as insanity" that he described in his provocative book *The Politics of Experience* (Laing, 1969). Cameron ended his paper in his unique engaging tongue-in-cheek way as follows:

If you put 300 million people with Down syndrome in a country together, to each other none

⁵ Cameron Cietek has given me permission to use his name in this article. I will add here that Cameron gave a passionate and impactful class presentation on his topic of Americanization.

of them have a disorder and it is normal. It is the same way with American and Americanization—that is, we all have it but none of us see it. (Cietek, 2016, p. 12)

More specifically to the point of social media addiction, the following are some anonymous relevant excerpts from the papers of my three students who wrote their papers specifically about social media use⁵. Once again, I believe that these papers were a direct result of the related small group class discussions they experienced (see above), as well as their weekly whole class sharing of material in the chapters that were most meaningful to them, as the topic of social media detrimental effects frequently came up in these formats.

From traditional television to iPads, social media, and cell phones, media and technology is becoming a dominant part of adolescents' lives...When one goes out into the public and they see adolescents not paying attention to anyone or anything but their cell phones, that comes from parenting...The amount of media use is becoming so unbelievable...Some teenagers send nearly 30,000 texts a month, often carrying multiple conversations simultaneously.... As teenagers send that ridiculous amount of texts, they are emailing, Face timing, playing video games, reading online books, using a computer, and watching television...One of the biggest problems in society today is the fact that adolescents don't know what it's like to have an actual face-to-face conversation. The social interaction in adolescents is lacking because of how caught up they are in technology...adolescents are getting involved in media and technology at a younger age⁶.

Addiction is the compulsive use of any substance, person, feeling, or behavior, with a relative disregard of the potentially negative social, psychological, and physical consequences.... The definition of an “internet addiction” is excessive or poorly controlled preoccupations, urges, or behaviors related to the use of the internet and computers, that is significantly impairing and distressing...Many people believe social media can be addictive, like Facebook for example...That's why there are 500 million users spying on one another. We're all interested in what others are doing...Now you have this real-life, breathing example right in front of you and it's so fascinating to people and they can get addicted...There are many different signs and symptoms of social media addiction. A few are the following:

When you leave your phone behind at home and feel a sense of loss and isolation because you can't check your Facebook or Twitter updates while out and about; You check your Facebook account 20 times a day; If you don't receive a comment on your latest blog post within 12 hours you have suicidal thoughts; You go away for a week without your laptop and you suffer severe heart palpitations; You have more social media icons on your phone than productivity apps; You have more online friends than you do in real life; You check out Facebook or Twitter updates “after” going to bed; Abnormally excessive use of technology; Regularly checking the mobile or internet through some important activity like meeting... (Bullas, 2010)....I'll admit that I almost always have my phone with me, and if I do not then I do have a mini panic attack, and I'm sure most people do too. If I am alone or waiting for someone, I'll casually scroll through my social media so it looks like I'm busy. I know the older generation, my grandparents and even my father, don't like it when all the grandchildren and nieces and nephews are all on their phones during family gatherings. Getting the whole family together at once is a rare occurrence, so they want to make the most of it, by not having everyone's noses stuck in their phones for the day....In a recent poll, 22% of teenagers log on to their favorite social media site more than 10 times a day....In some cases, it is replacing other forms of communication, such as face-to-face interactions...they are so obsessed with checking their Facebook or Twitter so much that they miss out on fun or important things in life.

The majority of influences of media and technology on adolescents are negative....A lot of the time adolescents don't know the difference between what's happening on TV or in their video game from what real life is and what's to be expected from them behavior-wise. If a child sees violence on TV

⁶ This excerpt is from the student I am referring to Anonymous Student #1.

and/or in a game, at that stage in development they are impressionable enough to think that is what the normal behavior is like for the rest of society....One of the main problems with adolescents being exposed to violence in television shows and video games is that more times than not they take on those actions. Just like in Bandura's theory, they are exposed to these stimuli so they use it in their behaviors. A good example of this would be my cousin Simon. He is 9 now, and every time he is around adults he is shy and withdrawn, but as soon as he starts playing video games he becomes energetic and violent. He is so impressionable that he pretends that he is shooting people, just like the actions presented in the game. This has affected him by making him a more violent individual and less aware of proper stimuli. It is events such as these that show us that technology has a major effect on how adolescents develop their personalities and how that models their development for future years....Popularity of online networking lessens the tendency to engage in social activities and face-to-face networking. Adolescents find it easier to talk to people behind a computer and feel socially awkward in other interactions with people. They develop a sense of comfort behind a screen that they feel cannot be achieved in person to person interactions. Nowadays kids and even adults have their faces shoved into their phones, oblivious to what's happening around them outside of social media....When I was a kid I spent a majority of my time playing outside and creating my own adventures, but because of the on-hand access of something that creates adventures for you, there is no need for adolescents to develop their own sense of wonder. This is becoming a huge problem for the development of our younger generations. As the lifespan goes on for these children, they become less aware of what the world was like before everything was made simpler with the use of technology⁷.

4.0 Conclusion

From what I have experienced in my college psychology teaching, I have learned firsthand about the social and educational detriments of excessive and inappropriate social media/cell phone use in the college classroom, with its related aspects of narcissism. There is widespread concern about this phenomenon, which has been characterized as social media addiction. In this article I have conveyed some educational practices that I have engaged in during my last semester of in-person college teaching, which I have described as "humanistic antidotes" to the social media/cell phone addiction prevalent in college classrooms. The foundational practice that I engaged in was requiring my students to be involved in personal/academic small group discussions every class period, accompanied by weekly whole class sharing of meaningful course material, along with significantly reducing my lecture time and focusing upon chosen specific topics. This focus on students talking personally with each other in small group discussions is a reflection of the principles of humanistic education, as formulated by Carl Rogers nearly a half century ago.

I also learned that overseeing the inappropriate use of cell phones in the classroom was an important part of putting these humanistic educational practices into place, and I included some small group class discussions pertaining to social technology and media violence. This resulted in some students choosing to do one of their class project papers on a topic related to social media addiction, which enabled them to develop their awareness of this phenomenon; consequently the detrimental aspects of social media addiction was filtered through the class in one of the class presentations related to this topic. There were a number of students who appreciated this humanistic discussion-oriented approach, though there were also students who did not appreciate this approach. All things considered, I believe that the humanistic antidotes I have experimented with and described in this article have much potential value to offset the detriments of social media/cell phone addiction and narcissism in the college classroom, and it is my hope that other college instructors utilize and improve upon these techniques in their own college teaching.

⁷ This excerpt is from the student I am referring to as Anonymous Student #3.

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