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Empowering communities through social media

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural competence is a cornerstone of modern day counseling psychology. The new multicultural and social justice competencies highlight the integration of social justice and multicultural frameworks. These competencies include community engagement through social justice advocacy. **Social media may be one way to advocate for social justice for underserved or marginalized communities.** Social media networks impact in the Arab Spring and the 2016 United States (U.S.) Presidential election suggests that people may utilize social media to inform and act on their social or political views. Throughout this article, we will explore the benefits of social media for raising critical consciousness, as defined by Freire, and examine how counseling psychologists can utilize social media to engage in social justice advocacy in diverse communities.

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Introduction

Counseling psychology has a long history of being concerned with the influence of culture, ethnicity, gender, and diversity (Munley, Duncan, McDonnell, & Sauer, 2004). As early as the 1980s, counseling psychology work groups noted "the importance of viewing people and their behavior in a contextual manner because psychology itself exists in a sociocultural context influenced by variables of culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, and social historical perspective" (Kagan et al., 1988, p. 351). Moreover, counseling psychologists were urged to consider ways to improve social conditions and intervene on personal or institutional levels when systemic factors operate in an oppressive manner (Kagan et al., 1988; Munley et al., 2004). Such foundational ideas may have contributed to counseling psychology inclusion and acceptance of multicultural competencies.

Multicultural competencies include counselors being aware of their own and their clients' race, ethnicity, culture, language, and power status (Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, & Wise, 1994). Multicultural competent counselors should also be aware of how these variables operate in the lives of their clients and within the clinical setting (Sodowsky et al., 1994). With the advent of multicultural counseling competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), researchers began exploring how to integrate multiculturalism into psychological research, practice, and training (Vera & Speight, 2003). As the ideals of multicultural competence became specific actions that counseling psychologists should practice, multicultural

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competence became inextricably linked to social justice (Constantine, Hage, Kindaichi, & Bryant, 2007). Within a social justice framework, counseling psychologists' research and actions should promote fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized individuals (Constantine et al., 2007; Smith, 2009).

The prominence of the social justice framework prompted the revisions of the multicultural counseling competencies to include both multicultural and social justice skills (Ratts et al., 2016). Ratts et al. (2016) established that "effectively balancing individual counseling with social justice advocacy is key to addressing the problems that individuals from marginalized populations bring to counseling" (p. 34). By including a social justice framework, multicultural competent and socially just counselors must engage in actions that align with and support multicultural and social justice competencies. One action included in these new competencies is advocacy (Ratts et al., 2016).

Advocacy and interventions at the community and policy level are key actions within a social justice framework (Goodman et al., 2004). Although many consider advocacy a necessary activity for counseling psychologists, many counseling psychologists do not engage in it (Lyons et al., 2015). There are many reasons that may prevent counseling psychologists from engaging in advocacy. Researchers cite disinterest, uncertainty, and unawareness as barriers that impede counseling psychologists in engaging in advocacy (Heinowitz et al., 2012; Lyons et al., 2015). Despite this, we assert that social media may be one way in which counseling psychologists may engage in social justice advocacy. In this paper, we will explore social media's ability to galvanize disenfranchised communities. Utilizing Freire's theory of critical consciousness, we will highlight how counseling psychologists can use social media as a way to increase social justice advocacy in marginalized communities (Freire, 2013).

Theoretical framework

Freire dedicated his life to defining and exploring social justice utilizes, and developed a theory of critical consciousness (Goodman et al., 2004). Freire's theory highlights the interconnectedness of social justice, education, and social change (Freire, 2006, 2013). Freire (2006) noted that social change does not occur individually, but collectively as humans mobilize and function as change agents within their community. Humans functioning as change agents liberate not only themselves but also their community (Freire, 2013). Critical consciousness is "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take actions against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 2013, p. 4). Thus, critical consciousness demands a high level of social engagement and action that allows people to understand how inequalities and oppression occur (Freire, 2006). A community's social engagement and action should allow them to understand their role, as a community, in the injustice and their capability as a unified force for fighting against inequality and social injustice (Freire, 2006). These acts of engaged citizenry translate into larger scale social action that can ultimately result in widespread social revolutions in diverse communities (Freire, 2006; Kincheloe, 1999). These experiences or liberatory practices promote high critical consciousness and prepare citizens to be a part of a democratic society.

Liberatory practices can include critical engagement with multiple media sources and participation in social issues as a global citizen (Alvermann & Hagood, 2000). These liberatory practices can bring new levels of awareness, and lead individuals to become active in the process of changing the world (Freire, 2006, 2013). Thus, critical consciousness functions

most effectively when people, particularly those who are marginalized within society, combine their oppressed experiences to mobilize, influence, and change the social and political climate in which they live (Thomas & Kincheloe, 2006).

Based on Freire's theory of critical consciousness, we assert that social media can be a platform that creates critical consciousness that can lead to social action and subsequent social justice. While critical consciousness existed prior to social media and all persons who utilize social media may not gain critical consciousness, social media may inform critical consciousness and social awareness. There is limited research regarding the impact of social media on perceptions of social issues. In fact, how social media impacts critical consciousness is an empirical question that has yet to be studied. Despite this, we explore the relationship of social media and critical consciousness by examining anecdotal information regarding social media.

Strengths and limitations of social media

While still in their infancy, social media networks generate billions of users worldwide, and their use resonates across age, gender, race, and continents (Duggan, 2015). Ninety percent of persons between the ages of 18–29 years old have a social media profile (Wang, Niiya, Mark, Reich, & Warschauer, 2015). At the start of 2016, Facebook membership estimated 1.79 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2016). In addition, 31% of women and 24% of men regularly use Instagram to like, post, and share information (Perrin & Duggan, 2015). The majority of adult Internet users in almost every emerging and developing nation report using social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter (Duggan, 2015; Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). Due to the convergence of social media and globalization, the world now functions in an intimate and interactive field (Chen & Zhang, 2010). Despite social media's popularity, it has several limitations.

One limitation of social media networks are their ability to be censored by governments and social media companies. Several regimes such as China, Iran, and North Korea have systematically interfered with or completely banned the use of social networking websites throughout their country (Shirky, 2011). Some governments utilize Internet police to control the type of information their citizens' use and publish to the public. For example, in 2013, Twitter and YouTube were temporarily suspended in Turkey after the Taksim Gezi Park protests (Sarikaya, 2014). Social media companies have established regulations that provide collective and individual constraints of their users (Comunello, Mulargia, & Parisi, 2016). Facebook censorship standards include removing any racial, religious and sexual rhetoric that can be considered offensive or viewed by others as hate-speech (Jan & Dwoskin, 2017). Users account can be locked preventing individuals from utilizing the service for 24 h or more without explanation (Jan & Dwoskin, 2017).

Although censoring of information by governments and social media sites is one limitation of social media, the lack of verifying information is another. The 2016 United States (U.S.) Presidential election illustrated several weaknesses within social media. Early concerns with online news included the ease in which like-minded individuals could band together and create "echo chambers" or "filter bubbles" where contrary opinions or ideas would be disregarded (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Moreover, the U.S. Presidential election demonstrated how the lack of fact-checking and editorial review, coupled with the ability to share information instantaneously to large followers, can promote "fake news" or false stories (Allcott

& Gentzkow, 2017). Despite the limitations embedded in social media, the willingness of individuals to consume and engage with information via social media may suggest it is possible to develop critical consciousness by using social media.

Social awareness, critical consciousness, and social media

One example of social media's relationship to critical consciousness is the use of social media in creating, organizing, and strengthening political and social action movements throughout the world (Bennett, 2012). The "Green Revolution" in Iran is one notable event that demonstrates the possible connection between social media and social awareness (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheaffer, 2013). The protesters use of email, blogs, and Twitter lists to organize and provide updates of the unrest sparked journalists to label the protest as a "Twitter Revolution" (Sandoval-Almazan & Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014). Citizens in both Tunisian and Egypt utilized social media to engage in democratic conversations, organize protests, and vocalize the injustice that they faced at the hands of their government (Sandoval-Almazan & Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014). Subsequently, journalists coined the revolutions in those countries as social media revolutions (Sandoval-Almazan & Ramon Gil-Garcia, 2014). The birth of Black Lives Matter, a U.S. movement dedicated to ending police brutality, is another example of social media's relationship with social awareness and critical consciousness. The movement, which began as a social media hashtag, moved from social media into the mainstream press and most recently to the forefront of American politics (Anderson & Hitlin, 2016). Participants of the movement cited the importance of social media in helping them pursue their purpose (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016; Stephen, 2015).

Beyond its use in social movements, social media is used in political voting. The U.S. 2016 Presidential elections highlighted not only the power of social media to create political and social action, but it also signified the power of social media to inform its users' political views (Shirky, 2011). In a recent Pew Research Center study, 20% of American social media users revised their position on a social or political issue because of material they saw on social media (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). In fact, within the same study, 17% of the participants stated that social media influenced their views about a specific political candidate (Greenwood et al., 2016). Although this situation exemplifies how social media can be used to misinform individuals with false news stories (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017), the story also exemplifies the potential power of social media to impact the audience's political attitudes.

Broadly, social media has surmounted beyond their original intent of connecting individuals and enhancing communication. **Social media has transformed into a mechanism that has a significant social and cultural impact upon society.** Social media has inspired political movements both in the United States and abroad. Such inspirations may be the result of social media's ability to increase critical consciousness. As people learn about social causes, they are motivated to change their lives and their community as well. Given social media's broad influence, counseling psychologists may want to engage in social media as a means of increasing critical consciousness through social justice actions.

Implications for counseling psychologists and counselors

Social media's broad reach poses new ground for counseling psychologists who attempt to engage in social justice work. While counseling psychologists are using social media sites "... to connect socially with peers, network with other professionals, and provide education to consumers of psychological services," (Kolmes, 2012, p. 606) we assert that counseling psychologists can use social media for much more. In a 2014 article that explored the role of psychologists in social change, Walsh and Gokani (2014) recommended that psychologists should engage as every-day people in "social justice through direct political struggle in solidarity with ordinary citizens ..." to help change the world (p. 42). Thus, social media may be a tool that allows counseling psychologists to engage with diverse citizens and actively engage in social justice activities with ordinary citizens to help change the world. Because of this, we suggest that counseling psychologists have a strong professional presence on social media. As Freire suggested, critical consciousness can be fostered through education and engagement with information that promotes political and social responsibility. Counseling psychologists' professional presence on social media could provide citizens the opportunity to engage with and learn about information that promotes social responsibility.

To do this, counseling psychologists must ensure their professional presence is ethical. Although social media provides easy access to all people, it also leaves a "digital footprint" or traces of actions on the Internet that may become an issue for counseling psychologists (Hartley, Tarvydas, & Johnston, 2015). Researchers suggest that counseling psychologists should be aware of the loss of privacy on the Internet; thus, they should carefully screen all of the information that they share on social media (Hartley et al., 2015). Counseling psychologists' screening process should ensure that the information shared is in line with their company's social media usage policy, if they work within an organization (Hartley et al., 2015). Given the ease in sharing fake news on social media, counseling psychologists may want to ensure the accuracy of the information they are sharing.

Other considerations that counseling psychologists may want to address while engaging in social justice work via social media are boundaries and confidentiality. Boundaries, the delicate separation of personal and therapeutic, may be difficult to maintain on social media (Hartley et al., 2015). In order to maintain boundaries with current and potential clients, some suggestions are not friending current clients (Hartley et al., 2015), adding a social media policy to your informed consent, and creating private social media personal pages that are limited to close friends and colleagues. In addition to boundaries, confidentiality is an important ethical consideration. While counseling psychologists may be tempted to share information that may possibly inform the public or decrease social ills, they may want to ensure that the information they share does not violate the rights of their clients, students, supervisees, or research participants. As social media continues to expand, its usage also increases ethical concerns. Counseling psychologists may want to ensure that they remain abreast of changes in professional ethical codes and guidelines of social media usage across the profession. If counseling psychologists are able to maintain ethics and professionalism while using social media, their use of social media may aid in social justice advocacy.

In order to aid in our discussion of how to use social media to increase critical consciousness, we have developed five themes: the researcher, informer, advocator, agitator, and supporter. These five themes are ways that counseling psychologists can promote social justice

via social media. Counseling psychologists around the world can choose one or any combination of the roles to guide their social media social activism. Within each of these themes, we will highlight how individuals and organizations can serve that role.

The researcher

The researcher social media activist uses social media as a way to inform research initiatives, conduct research, and spread research findings. One way to inform research initiatives is by engaging in lurking in order to gather information concerning diverse communities. According to Sponcil and Gitimu (2013), lurking is a person who reads posts and comments but does not make his/her presence known by commenting or liking posts. Through lurking, counseling psychologists can learn about the attitudes and thoughts of a wide array of people. By learning about opinions and thoughts different from one's personal beliefs, counseling psychologists may broaden their understanding of a problem or issue. Moreover, such lurking can create possible research questions and theories that attempt to explain new behavioral phenomena that address the issues of the masses.

A researcher social media activist may also conduct studies via social media. Currently, psychologists utilize social media platforms to measure people's thoughts, feelings, and personalities toward a topic (Schwartz et al., 2014). For example, a study conducted by psychologists at the University of California, San Diego (Coviello et al., 2014) analyzed Facebook posts to explore the phenomena of emotional contagion on social media. The researcher social media activist could utilize social media to collect data in order to conduct studies that assist in better understanding the patterns and behaviors of individuals and groups. The information collected by these social media activists would be used to further empirical research, strategies, and discussions surrounding social issues.

Research social media activists will also disseminate their research findings to the masses. Vera and Speight (2003) affirmed that distributing research findings to the public aligns with a social justice and multicultural framework. Once their findings are published, the researcher social media activists may share a summary of their findings or reference their findings in a post on social media. With regard to the spread of inaccurate news reports, the 2016 U.S. election and the subsequent Facebook controversy, highlight the influence of social media in providing news and knowledge, even if the news is false (Sanders, 2016). Thus, the masses are willing to read articles with catching headlines and that are written in nonprofessional terms. Counseling psychologists can capitalize on this phenomenon by distributing research to the masses using captivating headlines and titles that are relatable to the public. Such research studies may help to inform and progress a culturally responsive and socially just society.

Organizations that are research-oriented may be best suited to become research social media activists. Although several research-oriented organizations have social media accounts, they use their accounts to inform or serve their professional members. We suggest that organizations that wish to be research social media activists use their social media accounts to inform the masses. Thus, information will not only include pictures of meetings or announcements of upcoming events, but it will also include research findings relevant to the masses. Such organizations may wish to post 2-min videos about research findings relevant to a social justice cause. Moreover, organizations could recruit research participants via their social media page. They may desire to conduct virtual focus groups or interviews.

They may also connect other organizations that conduct research with their social media followers to help increase diversity within research samples. By increasing the diversity of research participants, findings from studies may be more valid for non-White communities (Allmark, 2004).

An example of an organizational research social media activist is Race Forward (<https://www.raceforward.org>). This organization conducts research and shares findings related to racial injustice via social media and mainstream media outlets. They also produce their own daily news media site, Colorlines, to ensure their research findings are disseminated. Moreover, they avail their staff to conduct interviews with mainstream outlets and social media news sites to further increase the dissemination of their research findings.

The informer

Informer social media activists would utilize their social media account to inform individuals about social justice issues. For instance, counseling psychologists could create a professional page, where the counseling psychologist would provide a mission statement that may include their area of specialty, values, and the purpose of their page. The informer could promote various social justice activities and programs taking place within their immediate area that residents could attend. Such activities could include information sessions, protests, town hall, city council, or school board meetings. Moreover, the informer can utilize their professional social media account to promote published articles in peer-review journals that relate to specific social justice issues. Informer social media activists could friend or follow organizations that directly advocate for factors that improve mental health outcomes. By following such organizations, they can increase their own knowledge about important advocacy efforts while increasing the information they are able to provide to their online community. Moreover, counseling psychologists can utilize the repost feature of social media to share posts that discuss psychological factors in relation to maladaptive behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, and other complex maladaptive behaviors. As the informer provides information that may challenge individual's core beliefs and conceptions, a broader understanding of social, political, and economic contradictions may occur.

Many organizations can utilize the informer social media activist role. Organizations such as universities may wish to create a program account that promotes and advocates for social justice issues. These pages could include specific information pertinent to social justice issues directly affecting undergraduate or graduate training. Articles addressing student loan debt reduction initiatives or adjunct faculty unionization may be relevant to include. Informing the public about important mental health facts and treatment options may also be helpful. Creating a blog that discusses mental health outcomes or treatment initiatives related to various social ills may provide valuable information to society. The blog could also contain various local, national, and international resources that the online community can use if they are seeking mental health treatment. Broadly, the program's social media account may serve as an extension of the program's educational reach to inform the masses about psychology, how psychology can address social problems, and how these problems may impact mental health functioning.

One example of an organization working as an informer social media activist is the United Nations (U.N.). The U.N. has successfully leveraged social media to enact international change for international issues such as the #YouthNow campaign (Pohl, 2015). The #YouthNow

campaign has empowered millennials worldwide to unite on the issue of youth investment and development (Pohl, 2015). Within just three months, #YouthNow reached over 1.9 billion mentions on social media. The hashtag was used to discuss social and economic development; to learn about global poverty, conflict, and gender rights issues; and to understand the varying causes the public can advocate for enacting change. By taking advantage of digital and social engagement, counseling psychologists can mobilize global voices to share ideas on global mental health issues such as depression, schizophrenia, and many others. Such conversations can generate not only awareness but may help to disprove the global stigmas surrounding mental illness.

The advocator

The advocator social media activist uses their social media account to engage in public policy advocacy. Public policy advocacy “promotes awareness of legislative issues such as funding to subsidize psychology training, research, and new treatment centers” (Lyons et al., 2015, p. 409). While the informer provides broad information, the advocator focuses on providing information specifically related to laws and government policies related to social justice. Providing such information is important because researchers suggest counseling psychologists can help infuse evidence-based practices into public health and legal policies through public policy advocacy (Lyons et al., 2015). Moreover, public policy advocacy aims to increase mental health awareness and psychologically grounded policy decisions (Lyons et al., 2015). Within a multicultural framework, public policy advocacy is of particular importance for diverse communities. Historically, diverse communities have been marginalized, underserved, and may encounter greater disparities that negatively influence their lives (Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, 2013). Advocating for public policies that are psychologically grounded and that promote mental health awareness may reduce disparities and vicariously improve diverse communities.

Thus, a social media advocator may share information related to proposed laws that the government bodies are considering. Advocator social media activists may keep track of social justice issues that are being discussed within local, national, and international communities. They may also share petitions that are seeking to repeal or initiate laws. An advocator activist would post information about how individuals can contact local or national lawmakers. They would connect their followers with organizations that engage in public policy advocacy.

For example, the Public Interest Directorate of the American Psychological Association (APA) serves as the public advocacy arm of APA and operates an organizational Instagram page. The page features content that informs their followers and the greater Instagram community about a variety of social justice issues such as: racism, transgender and women rights, health equity across communities, and many more. The Public Interest Directorate’s Instagram page is connected to several other mental health organizations that they frequently promote on their page. They also direct their audience to the proper entities to receive further information on the subject matter. Moreover, they encourage their followers to advocate on behalf of social justice issues as well.

Organizations that specialize in public policies, public health, or law may use their social media platforms to engage in social media advocacy. They would not only want to publicize information related to how individuals can advocate for social justice issues, but they would

also want to connect with other organizations that engage in public policy advocacy. They would engage in all of the social media activities previously mentioned and could use their social media profiles to recruit individuals for policy protests. They may share locations of local or national demonstrations and ways for individuals to call their governmental officials regarding policies. Organizations that are advocate social media activists use their social media platforms to inform, recruit, and organize their followers on topics specific to public policies.

The agitator

The social media agitator seeks to disrupt conventional thoughts and actions through provocative posts or comments. While the agitator provides information similar to the informer, the agitator is unique in that they focus on controversial topics. They use their accounts to directly challenge people's opinions. One way the agitator social media activist can challenge people's opinions is by commenting on blogs and articles. Frequently, within the comments sections of socially hot-button topics, a variety of statements will exist that may or may not uphold social justice principles. The agitator social media activist may choose to offer readers a link to an informative article that provides more clarity on the topic. Such engagements may reduce the echo chambers highlighted earlier within this article.

The agitator social media activist may use GIF or MEMEs that highlight the hypocrisy within frequently held viewpoints. Such hypocrisy may include supporting equal rights for one marginalized group (e.g. women) while not supporting equal rights for another marginalized group (e.g. sexual minorities). Agitator social media activists may also call attention to scandals. Plascencia (2016) highlights how social media helped to "mediatize" corruption and public relation scandals in Mexico and Brazil. Thus, agitator social media activists would use their social media accounts to shed light on such events. The agitator social media activist is best suited for individuals who seek to publicize scandals or controversies. This type of individual contact that seeks to point out hypocrisy can be perceived as confrontational by some users.

One example of an organization that embodied the agitator social media activist style is Invisible Children (www.invisiblechildren.org). In 2012, Invisible Children created *Kony 2012*, a documentary that highlighted the plight of children in Uganda at the hands of Joseph Kony, the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) guerilla group (Curtis & McCarthy, 2012). The documentary was posted on YouTube and viewed over 21 million times (Curtis & McCarthy, 2012). This tactic aligns with the agitator-activist style because it addressed a controversial topic and highlighted the lack of attention from several world powers including the U.S. Following the release of the film, the hashtag #Stopkony went viral on Twitter. While the Invisible Children website states that Kony remains at-large, the website boasts that the video sparked international outrage and facilitated the organization of several international communities to dismantle the LRA.

The supporter

A supporter social media activist uses his/her social media account to provide psychological and/or financial support to social justice causes. Supporter social media activists may donate to a wide array of socially just causes. They may sign petitions related to socially just issues.

They may also post positive sayings or quotes that others may find therapeutic. In addition, the supporter social media activists may facilitate community building via their social media page. Community building is identifying and strengthening networks of other activists and comrades. Thus, supporter social media activists may link groups and individuals together in order to strengthen their cause and impact. Linder, Myers, Riggle, and Lacy (2016) found that community building was one way in which campus activists used social media to raise sexual assault awareness. One way a social media supporter activist can do this is by creating an exclusive group for persons to join, network and provide support to others who are interested in the same social justice causes.

An example of a social media supporter activist is writer and activist Tarana Burke, the creator of the #MeToo (Santiago & Criss, 2017). #MeToo began as a campaign to provide emotional support for survivors of sexual assault by connecting them with other survivors and allowing them to speak out about their trauma (Santiago & Criss, 2017). While the movement started over 10 years ago, it gained national momentum in October of 2017 as a hashtag (Santiago & Criss, 2017). The #MeToo movement gained international attention, and sparked the outing of several serial sexual harassers including Harvey Weinstein, a famous American film producer.

Organizations that are supporter social media activists may use their social media accounts to create campaigns for social justice causes. They may conduct social media fundraisers via their social media page to help fund social justice causes. They may also use their expertise to help support the infrastructure of activist organizations. Thus, organizations may choose to create public videos about their expertise (e.g. accounting, law, leadership, consulting) that activists can use to strengthen and improve their respective social justice organizations. They may provide pro bono, direct services to grassroots organizers via social media. Organizations that are supporter social media activists will use their collective power to provide financial and emotional support to socially just causes via social media.

Conclusion

These five methods are ways in which counseling psychologists can use social media to promote social justice. This list is not exhaustive but hopefully provides a springboard for counseling psychologists to initiate or strengthen their social justice actions using social media. As the world works to address broad issues of social justice, social media may have a significant impact on our progress or lack thereof. Thus, counseling psychologists cannot afford to not utilize this free commodity to inform and further the impact of psychology on and around the world. By organizing and thinking critically about our social media usage, we may be able to broaden our social justice impact on diverse communities throughout the world. This article highlights a few ways, but developing taskforces through professional organizations is imperative to further the agenda of strengthening diverse communities in social justice advocacy practices through social media. Conducting pilot studies about the use of social media to increase critical consciousness may further highlight how counseling psychologists can use social media to engage in social justice. As the world and technology continue to develop and evolve, psychology and counseling psychologists can utilize such advancements to improve not only people's mental health but also social systems that negatively impact psychological functioning.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Shareefah Al'Uqdah, PhD, is an assistant professor in Howard University's Counseling Psychology program in the School of Education. Her research interest includes African-American families, African-American Muslims, and ways to empower urban communities.

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Nancy Ajaa is a third-year doctoral student in Howard University's Counseling Psychology doctoral program. Her research focuses on ethnic minority children, adolescents, and families; acculturation and mental health in African Migrants; and inter-generational family dynamics post migration.

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