

An Examination of Sense of Community in School Counseling Hybrid Courses

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate students' feelings of and desire for a sense of community (SOC) in hybrid school counseling courses and to identify contributing factors associated with students' feelings of and desire for SOC. Results showed that the majority of the participants either moderately or strongly desired SOC, however about half of the participants reported lower than average scores in feelings of SOC. Female students and those who were enrolled in the theory course, had part-time jobs, had more advanced computer skills, and had fewer completed course credits were more likely to score higher in the total scores of feelings of SOC. Students who were in the theory course and had completed fewer course credits were more likely to perceive a higher level of SOC in the Learning Community Subscale. Students' answers to the qualitative question revealed that students perceived the hybrid format as very flexible and they enjoyed the hybrid experiences. Discussions and implications of the results were included.

In recent years, the number of online courses and degree programs offered by universities has continued to grow in a variety of disciplines as more students realize this educational format allows them to further their education despite time and distance constraints (Lewis, McVay-Dyche, Chen, & Seto, 2015). However, in the field of counseling and counselor education, there has been some hesitation and the advancement in adopting online or hybrid teaching into the curriculum has been slow (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011; Greenidge & Daire, 2005). A major concern among reluctant counselor educators is whether skill-based courses could be sufficiently offered online due to the personal nature of counseling (Wantz et al., 2003). Nevertheless, there has been a growing interest in using online instructional approaches in graduate counselor education programs, as those in the field have realized that integrating technology and online instruction into higher education is essential for graduate programs to remain competitive in attracting students (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011; Patrick, 2005; Watson, 2012).

Nearly 50% of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs' currently accredited programs have begun integrating some level of online instruction into their existing programs (Blackmore, Tantam, & van Deurzen, 2008; Shaw & Shaw, 2006). Fully online accredited programs exist in a variety of these programs as well, such as clinical mental health counseling (Adams State University, Capella University, Wake Forest University, Walden

University); community counseling (Regent University); school counseling (Adams State University, Capella University, Regent University, Wake Forest University); marriage and family counseling (Capella University) and counselor education and supervision (Regent University).

Despite the popularity of integrating online technology into counseling programs, it is still a relatively new practice for counselor educators to teach online or hybrid courses. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a lack of empirical research concerning online or hybrid teaching specifically in counseling programs (Cicco, 2013; Nelson, Nichter, & Henriksen, 2010). One of the greatest challenges of teaching online or hybrid courses is to develop and maintain a sense of community among students who do not regularly meet in person (Lewis et al., 2015). Considering the interpersonal nature of counseling, developing a strong sense of community could be crucial for those enrolled in counselor education programs. Online students experiencing a sense of community could develop similar relationships with one another as those achieved in a typical face-to-face setting (Watson, 2012). However, there is very little research on the sense of community among students in school counseling programs. The present study aims to fill this research gap by investigating school counseling students' feelings of and desire for sense of community in hybrid graduate-level courses.

Literature Review

Sense of Community (SOC)

In the text *Psychological Sense of Community: Prospects for a Community Psychology*, Seymour Sarason (1974) described experiencing a sense of community as maintaining "a readily available, mutually supportive" group of connections that assist in reducing feelings of isolation and in coping with stressors (p.1). Following Sarason's initial work, SOC began to appear in research literature, but remained a fairly ambiguous concept (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). McMillan and Chavis (1986) later expanded the definition of SOC to include a focus on the positive emotional experiences of acceptance, value, and support from others within the group. More recently, Rovai (2002a) developed the concept further and defined "classroom community" as the "spirit, trust, interaction, and commonality" co-occurring with a desire to learn within a classroom environment, either virtually or physically (p.4). In this definition, two dimensions of community were included: (1) social community (i.e., connectedness to the instructor and fellow students); and (2) learning community (i.e., common norms and values, and satisfaction of learning goals) (Rovai, Wighting, & Lucking, 2004) to provide a more in-depth understanding of SOC in classroom settings. While each of these definitions inform current understandings of SOC, Rovai's (2002b) definition is more useful from an empirical standpoint because he also developed a widely adopted scale of classroom community (the Classroom Community Scale; CCS) that is a reliable and valid measure of this construct (Rovai, 2002b).

Researchers have examined the relationship between sense of community and other variables such as: academic burnout (McCarthy, Pretty, Catano, 1990), feelings of overall well-being (Pozzi, Marta, Marzana, Gozzoli, & Ruggieri, 2014), and participation in civic groups (Cicognani, Mazzoni, Albanesi, & Zani, 2014). Mixed results have been found when examining students' experiences of sense of community in online courses. Some found positive results (e.g. Exter, Korkmaz, Harlin, & Bichelmeyer, 2009; Liu, Magjuka, Bonk, & Lee, 2007; Reinhart, 2010); while others found students in online courses experienced less sense of community than their traditional classroom counterparts (Haar & Scanlan, 2012; Rovai, Wighting, & Liu, 2005).

Furthermore, SOC has been found to be an important mediator in the retention of students in distance education (Rovai, 2002a; Rovai et al., 2005). As one of the traditionally recognized challenges for online teaching (Angeli, Valanides, & Bonk, 2003), lack of physical presence is the main factor to explain students' feelings of isolation and disconnection in online environments. These feelings of isolation, in turn, are associated with lower levels of retention (Tyler-Smith, 2006).

Sense of community in an online course can positively contribute to students' experiences. Feelings of sense of community have coincided with online students' perceptions of their knowledge attainment and course approval (Liu et al., 2007), and a strong sense of community has been found to encourage student involvement and communication in online courses (Tsai et al., 2008). Therefore, it is important to examine students' sense of community in online and hybrid learning experiences.

However, in the field of school counseling, literature that investigated sense of community among school counseling students was scarce. One study conducted by Rockinson-Szapkiwa, Pritchard, McComb-Beverage, and Schellenberg (2013) indicated that school counseling students experienced a greater sense of community and learning when participating in a collaborative, multimedia wiki writing assignment using web-based technology.

SOC in Hybrid Courses

Hybrid (also called blended) courses, which combine online work with a reduced amount of in-person class time, provide an additional option that addresses concerns instructors and students may have towards an online-only course format. Some research recommended the use of this course format to address the difficulties that may arise in supporting a sense of community in online learning (Chen & Chiou, 2014; Moskal, Dziuban, & Hartman, 2013; Rovai et al., 2005; Yapici, 2016). Students in hybrid courses experienced a higher sense of community than those in traditional and online courses (Chen & Chiou, 2014; Rovai & Jordan, 2004). These results may support hybrid course design as a good balance between integrating the flexibility of online learning and the community of a traditional classroom. While these studies show promise for the support of SOC in hybrid courses, more research is needed to further investigate the desire for and presence of sense of community for students participating in hybrid courses. While the previous studies have viewed SOC in undergraduate students and in master's level students in education programs, no studies have investigated SOC among graduate students in school counseling programs. Furthermore, past studies have not examined whether students desire SOC when enrolled in hybrid courses nor the factors that contribute to students' feelings and desire for SOC. This study aims to investigate these questions and contribute further to the expanding literature by answering the following research questions:

1. Do students in hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses feel and desire SOC?
2. What factors contribute to students' feelings and desire for SOC in hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses?
3. What are students' perceptions of their learning experiences in the hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses?

Method

Participants

A total of 56 students from a medium-sized private, Roman Catholic university located in a metropolitan area in the Southern United States participated in this study. This study used a convenient sample since the authors were affiliated with the university. Students came from three hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses: Introduction to School Counseling (n=20), Research and Evaluation in Counseling (n=21), and Theories in Counseling (n=21). The first author was the instructor of all the three courses. Six students were concurrently enrolled in two or three of the selected courses, but their responses were only counted once in this study. Among the participants, 87.5% (n=49) were female students and 12.5% (n=7) were male students, with an average age of 28.57 years (ranging from 21 to 45 years old). A majority of them (n=39) were White, with only 13 Black and three Hispanic. Almost all (n=53) students were employed at the time of this study, among which 38 were full-time and 15 were part-time, with an average of 9.70 years of working experience (ranging from 0.5 to 25 years). As shown in Table 1, participants varied in terms of computer skills, previous hybrid or online course experience, and stages in the current school counseling program. In regard to individual characteristics and learning styles, students rated themselves as more intrinsically-motivated, self-directed, and able to work independently than as preferring an autonomous class environment.

Procedures

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the first authors' institution. In the last class meeting of the 2016 spring semester, students were invited to participate in this study by voluntarily completing a survey in their classroom following their formal course evaluation. It was clearly stated to students that their participation was completely voluntary and they were free to leave the room if they chose not to participate. All enrolled students for the three selected courses attended the last class meetings and all agreed to participate.

In all three courses, there were eight in person sessions and seven online sessions throughout the semester. In online sessions, students were provided an activity list to follow where there was a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning activities. Specific online activities varied by course. In the Introduction to School Counseling course, online activities included discussion board postings via Blackboard, Google Hangout group meetings, and personal reflections; in the Research course, students watched video-recorded lectures, independently completed practice exercises to verify mastery of content, and completed VoiceThread postings of their personal reflections; and in the Theory in Counseling course, students completed role-play sessions and group discussions via Google Hangout as experiential activities to further their understanding of different counseling theories.

Table 1

Summary of Descriptive Statistics of Academic Background, Learning Style, and Scores in Classroom Community Scale

	<i>M</i> <i>n=56</i>	<i>SD</i>
Computer Skills ¹	3.61	0.73
# of hybrid or online courses taken	2.96	6.12
# of credits complete in current program	6.27	6.92
Personal Characteristics & Learning Style		
Autonomous ²	3.23	0.83
Self-directed	3.91	0.61
Intrinsically-motivated	4.04	0.85
Work independently	3.84	0.83
Desire for SOC ³	3.29	0.68
Score in Social Community Subscale	26.86	4.84
Score in Learning Community Subscale	32.09	4.47
Total Score in SOC	58.95	8.13

Note. ¹ 1= do not know how to use computers, 2=minimally skilled, 3=moderately skilled, 4=advanced-level skilled, 5=highest-level skilled.

² 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

³ 1=I do not desire it at all, 2=minimally desire, 3=moderately desire, 4=strongly desire, 5= I have a highest level of desire

Measures

Demographic Questions. Students were asked to provide their demographic information in the first part of the survey. Demographic questions included gender, age, ethnicity, employment status (full time or part time), length of employment, and students' academic background information including computer skills, number of hybrid or online classes taken, and number of credits completed in their current graduate program.

Desire for SOC. Students' desire for sense of community was measured by a question in the students' questionnaire: "How much do you rate your own desire for sense of community in this course?" Definition of sense of community was provided following this question. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=I do not desire it at all, 2=minimally desire, 3=moderately desire, 4=strongly desire, or 5= I have a highest level of desire).

Feelings of SOC. Students' feelings of sense of community were measured using the "Classroom Community Scale" (CCS), developed by Rovai (2002b). This scale is comprised of 20 self-reported items measuring students' perceptions of learning and connectedness in the classroom. There were two subscales in the CCS: Social Community Subscale and Learning Community Subscale. Social Community Subscale measures students' social connections in the course and Learning Community Subscale measures students' perceptions of their learning outcomes and the process of their learning in the course (Rovai, 2002b). Sample items in the Social Community Subscale included "I felt that students in this course care about each other" and "I felt connected to others in this course." Sample items in the Learning Community Subscale included "I feel that my educational needs are not being met" and "I felt this course results in only modest learning." Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, and 5= strongly agree), with a maximum score for the whole scale of 80 (40 for each subscale). Higher total scores of CCS indicated a stronger sense of classroom community and higher subscale scores indicated more positive perceptions of learning experience or social connectedness (subscales). Rovai (2002b) conducted validity and reliability analysis for the CCS and the results revealed that the CCS possessed high content and construct validities. The CCS had a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .93 (Rovai, 2002b). In the present study, the internal consistency for the overall scale had a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .89, with subscales having a Cronbach's alpha of .84 (Social Community Subscale) and .84 (Learning Community Subscale), respectively.

Students' Perception of Learning Experiences. Lastly, the questionnaire included an open-ended question: "What are your perceptions of your learning experiences in this hybrid course?" This open-ended question allowed students to provide additional information regarding their hybrid learning experiences.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v23. To answer the first research question about whether students in hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses feel and desire SOC, we conducted descriptive statistics analysis with the variables related to students' desire for and feelings of SOC, as well as students' demographic information and academic background information. To answer the second research question about the factors contributing to students' feelings and desire for SOC in hybrid introductory-level school counseling courses, we

conducted four multiple regression analyses with four different dependent variables in each model (desire for SOC, feelings of SOC, Social Community Subscale score, and Learning Community Subscale score) to examine which regression model was significant and what factors were significant predictors in these models.

Qualitative data were analyzed using conventional qualitative content analysis procedure. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Authors started the data analysis by reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the general idea. Then, data were read word by word to derive codes by first highlighting the exact words from the text that appeared to capture key thoughts or concepts (Morse & Field, 1995). Codes were then sorted into categories based on how different codes were related and linked (Patton, 2002). In the present study, many of the students answered the open-ended questions with only one or two phrases and this yielded a small amount of texts data to be analyzed. Therefore, in this study, the content analysis procedure was simplified to first forming the codes and then comparing the codes between two authors. The two authors did the coding procedure individually and then met to compare the codes in order to find common codes. After comparing the codes that emerged from all the students' answers, common themes were found upon the agreement between two authors.

Results

Desire for SOC

As shown in Table 1, students had an average score of 3.29 in their self-rated level of desire for SOC. We also ran frequencies of desire for SOC and the results showed that 91.1% of the participants either moderately or strongly desired SOC, while only 8.9% of the participants did not or minimally desired SOC. None of the participants had a "highest level of desire" for SOC.

Feelings of SOC

In terms of participants' feelings of SOC, scores ranged from 38 to 76 (minimum score of the scale is 0 and maximum score is 80), with 44.6% of the participants scoring lower than the average score ($M= 58.95$, $SD= 8.13$). The average score on the Learning Community Subscale was higher than the average on the Social Community Subscale. We also conducted One-Way ANOVA to compare the total score and two subscale scores among different groups based on gender, ethnicity, and course enrollment. A significant difference was found between female ($M= 27.47$, $SD= 4.42$) and male ($M= 22.57$, $SD= 5.86$) in the Social Community Subscale scores ($F= 6.95$, $p= 0.01$). Besides, ANOVA results showed that students surveyed in the theories course scored significantly higher than students in the research course for the total SOC ($F=5.38$, $p= 0.007$) and also for each of the two subscales ($F= 4.30$, $p= 0.019$; $F= 3.55$, $p= 0.036$). No significant difference was found based on ethnicity.

Factors Contributing to Feelings of and Desire for SOC

As shown in Table 2, multiple regression analysis (using "enter" method) revealed two significant models, one with feelings of SOC as the dependent variable and the other with subscale scores in Learning Community as the dependent variable. For the model with feelings of SOC as the dependent variable, class, gender, full-time/part-time job, computer skills, and number of credits completed in the current graduate program emerged as significant predictors in

the model. These factors together explained 45% of the variances in students' feelings of SOC. Specifically, female students who were enrolled in the theory course, had part-time jobs, had more advanced computer skills, and had fewer completed course credits were more likely to score higher in the total scores of feelings of SOC. In the model with Learning Community Subscale scores as the criterion variable, class and number of credits completed emerged as significant predictors and they explained 52% of the variances in the dependent variable. Students who were in the theory course and had completed fewer course credits were more likely to perceive a higher level of SOC in the Learning Community Subscale.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis Results for Predicting Total Score and Subscale Scores in “Feelings of” and “Desire for” SOC

	Total Score in Desire for SOC				Total Score in Feelings of SOC				Score in Social Community Subscale				Score in Learning Community Subscale			
	B	Beta	t	p	B	Beta	t	p	B	Beta	t	p	B	Beta	t	p
Class	-.05	-.05	-.34	.73	-3.30	-.32	-	.02*	-1.8	-.31	-2.2	.03*	-1.5	-.26	-	.04*
							2.39								2.08	
Gender	-.75	-.35	-	.05*	-	-.42	-	.01*	-	-.53	-	.00**	-	-2.04	-	.16
			2.02		10.58		2.70		7.68		3.31		2.90		1.42	
Age	.07	.68	1.87	.07	.77	.59	1.85	.07	.55	.75	2.24	.03*	.22	.30	1.00	.32
Ethnicity	-.18	-.16	-.93	.36	-1.95	-.14	-.95	.35	-	-.25	-	.12	-.01	-.001	-	.99
									1.94		1.59					.001
FT/PT job	.52	.35	1.93	.06	6.46	.36	2.28	.03*	3.51	.35	2.09	.04*	2.95	.30	1.99	.053
Length of Employment	-.01	-.64	-	.11	-.76	-.62	-	.08	-.58	-.84	-	.03*	-.18	-.22	.83	.41
			1.65				1.81				2.33					
Computer Skills	.26	.27	1.73	.09	3.16	.29	2.04	.05*	1.66	.26	1.80	.08	1.51	.24	1.86	.07

#of Hybrid Courses	-.01	-.04	-.25	.80	.55	.24	1.65	.11	.25	.19	1.24	.22	1.51	.24	1.75	.09
#of Credits Completed	-.04	-.43	-	.02*	-.54	-.47	-	.006**	-.28	-.42	-	.02*	-.26	-.41	-	.01*
Autonomous	.03	.04	.21	.83	-1.21	-.12	-.78	.44	.02	.003	.02	.99	-.12	-.22	-	.14
Self-directed	-.15	-.13	-.72	.48	1.74	.13	.79	.43	-.44	-.06	-.34	.74	2.18	.29	1.9	.07
Intrinsically-motivated	-.09	-.11	-.64	.53	1.24	.13	.84	.41	.22	.04	.26	.80	1.01	.19	1.32	.19
Work independently	-.19	-.23	-1.3	.20	-1.15	-.12	-.76	.45	-	-.23	-	.16	.14	.03	.17	.87
R^2			.30				.45				.40				.52	
F			1.26				2.40 *				1.96				3.17**	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Supplementary Results from Open-Ended Question

In addition to the quantitative results, authors also found a common theme in the answers to an open-ended question in the survey: “What are your perceptions of your experiences in this hybrid course?” Common themes were that students perceived the hybrid format as very flexible and they enjoyed the hybrid experiences. To illustrate, one student from Introduction to School Counseling course said: “I really enjoyed, and benefited from the flexibility that this hybrid course offered. As a full-time working professional, I really appreciated the opportunity to be able to execute some assignments on my own time.” Another student from the Theories in Counseling course said:

I think we are given the opportunity whether to choose to learn a lot or a little– in that way we have some control. I enjoyed the hybrid course format– being independent forces you to be more responsible and put effort in rather than sitting and maybe occasionally zoning out in class.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine school counseling students’ desire for and feelings of SOC in hybrid courses and the factors that contribute to these constructs. The results indicated that a large majority of the students moderately or strongly desired SOC but only half of them scored higher than average in feelings of SOC. This result is aligned with what previous research has found regarding the challenging nature of developing and maintaining SOC in online or hybrid courses (Lewis et al., 2015). Comparing the averages of the two SOC subscales, students in this study indicated a significantly higher degree of Learning Community SOC than Social Community SOC. Rovai and Ponton (2005) conducted a study with 108 students in an online Doctor of Education program and found that participants scored higher in the Learning Community Subscale, compared to the Social Community Subscale.

In the present study, female students scored significantly higher than male students in the Social Community Subscale. Previous studies have addressed how gender differences could impact emotions, attitudes, participation, study habits, motivation, performance, perceptions, and communication behaviors in online learning environment (e.g. Anderson & Haddad, 2005; Rovai & Baker, 2005; Sullivan, 2001; Taplin & Jegede, 2001; Yukselturk & Bulut, 2009), while Lewis et al. (2015) found that gender difference was not significant in students’ sense of classroom community in online doctoral education programs. In this study, gender was a significant factor in students’ perceived SOC in school counseling hybrid courses. When looking at this inconsistency, the imbalanced number of female and male participants might have skewed the results in this study.

This study also found a significant difference in SOC levels between the theory course and the research course in all measures utilized (SOC total, Social Community Subscale, and Learning Community Subscale). A previous study examining students’ SOC in an online doctoral degree program also found that course could make a difference in the level of SOC experienced (Lewis et al., 2015). In the present study, students felt significantly lower level of SOC in the research course than in the theory course. The challenging nature of the research course and the different online activities carried out in these two courses might explain the differences found in students’ perceived SOC levels. There were more synchronous online learning activities (e.g., role-plays and group discussions via Google Hangout) in the theory course than the research course.

In a study conducted by Drouin and Vartanian (2010), students who worked more hours outside the home, enrolled in more credit hours, and perceived an ability to communicate with fellow students and course instructors, felt more connected to their classmates. The present study also conducted multiple regressions in order to find contributing factors associated with students' feelings and desire for SOC. The only two significant models found in the present study had students' feelings of SOC and the subscale score in learning community as dependent variables. Students who were in theory course, female, had part-time jobs, had more advanced computer skills, and had completed fewer credits were more likely to feel a higher degree of SOC. Students who were in theory course and had completed fewer credits were more likely to feel a higher degree of SOC in the learning community. It's not surprising that female students and those working part-time and with more advanced computer skills could feel more connected to the class community. It is quite interesting to see that students in theory course and students who were newer in the program perceived more connectedness in general and in the learning community. The differences among the three courses and the reason as to why the theory course yielded the highest level of students' feelings of SOC could be explained by the differences in course content and course design. There were more peer or group activities (role plays and online discussion groups) in the theory course than the other two courses, which might have created more opportunities for students to interact and get to know each other. In terms of understanding the findings about newer students' feelings of more SOC, it might be assumed that newer students might feel the urge and needs to connect more with their fellow students since they might not know many people in the program yet. Therefore, new students might feel stronger to connect with others than veteran students who might have already formed a circle of friends and could get their social needs met through that circle.

The qualitative results from this study revealed that flexibility is most favored by students in these three hybrid school counseling courses. This supports the findings from previous literature that have indicated flexibility as a positive and valued feature of hybrid course enrollment (Benshoff & Gibbons, 2011; Coogan, 2009).

Implications

This study provides several implications for counselor educators interested in student's experiences and SOC in hybrid courses. The regression results indicated that participants in the research course reported the lowest level of SOC. While it is unclear as to why this course was the lowest, it is possible that research courses pose a barrier to students' development of SOC, due to the challenging nature of the course content. Some counseling students may also have less interest in the content of research course than other courses. While further research is needed to clarify the meaning of these results, instructors teaching research courses in a hybrid format may need to utilize additional support or use other teaching strategies to specifically nurture the SOC of their students.

Furthermore, students who reported having more advanced computer skills reported higher SOC. To address this disparity in SOC, counselor educators teaching hybrid courses may need to offer additional technical support for students with less advanced computer skills. In addition to institutional computer support that is offered to students by their respective university, instructors could provide links and instructional videos within the online learning portal (Blackboard or Moodle) to assist those who are unfamiliar with technologies.

Results also indicated that students who had completed fewer courses in their program reported greater SOC than those who were farther into completing their programs. Students' lower level of SOC as they progressed through their graduate program may point out a need for continuous support of students' SOC. Course specific efforts such as integrating activities to support SOC, or programmatic efforts such as having a cohort style of program or bolstering the number of supports for continuing students may enhance SOC as students continue through their programs. Students who had completed more credits also indicated a lower desire for SOC. These results indicated an area requiring further research, as it was unclear why students' desire for SOC was lower after having completed more coursework. A possibility is that students build on connections that were made throughout their coursework in the program and no longer feel a need to connect with additional students as they become assimilated into their learning community and routines.

Descriptive statistical results indicated that average Learning Community SOC was higher than average Social Community SOC. These results indicated the need to improve social connections among school counseling students in introductory courses. Programs and faculty members could support these connections through emphasizing group conference attendance, and sponsoring self-care and wellness events to encourage interactions among students within programs and specific courses.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides further insight into student's SOC in hybrid school counseling courses, there are a few notable limitations. A convenience sample was utilized, which poses a threat to the internal validity of the results. Also, the sample size is very small, predominantly female, and limited in ethnic diversity, which may impact the generalizability of these results. Future researchers should have a larger, more diverse sample and produce more generalizable results. Also, future research could explore the specific technologies that instructors could use to help improve building students' SOC in counselor education programs.

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