

## COUNSELLING AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS: THE PERILS OF MILLENNIALS AND GENERATION Z

**D Gonzalo**

New York University in Prague, US-Czech Republic

**Y**oung people born in the 90's tend to come from families with both working parents with parenting strategies including: emphasis on providing materially over emotional nourishment, superficial interactions censoring the expression of negative emotions and not modelling healthy coping strategies, offering immediate rewards over encouraging long-term effort, rating developmental success by school grades and winning prizes, and overprotecting/helicoptering, which results in stunted autonomy and delayed maturation. Children of the 90's were frequently overexposed to media characters offering poor and unrealistic role models and normalising violence and perfect beauty. When they leave home, they often experience the transition and living independently as challenging. In addition, children belonging to minority groups, such as LGBTQ, often face difficulty coming out to parents and being accepted by them, often leading to identity crises and overcompensation. Such background conditions compound with generational (e.g. omnipresence of social media, leading to reduced real-time socialising, inattention, and procrastination) and academic circumstances (internalised high expectations and obsession with grades as a measure of self-worth, competitiveness, and comparing oneself to others) often lead to negative cognitions ("I am not good enough", "I will not make it"), a sense of "internal disquiet" (often having difficulty spending unscheduled time either alone or not engaging in some structured activity), feeling depressed (incl. suicidal ideation), anxious (feeling fearful, making negative predictions, and "fear of missing out"), coping by using alcohol or other substances or binge eating (often followed by restricting). There is also a high incidence of social disconnection with fears of confrontation, vulnerability, and intimacy. For many males their first exposure to sex is through porn. Alarming is also the rise in rates of college sexual assaults often associated with binge drinking. These issues encountered by college counsellors can instigate a reflection about education provided both by families and institutions and the importance of emphasising human values as well as healthy psychological development to form a rounder future society.

### Biography

Desiree Gonzalo has completed her PhD in Cognitive Neuroscience from University College London and her Doctorate on Clinical Psychology from King's College London. Her Post-doctoral studies were at Hamburg University Hospital. She leads the Counselling services at NYU Prague since 2013. She has previously worked in private practice as a Psychotherapist and at the University of New York in Prague as a Lecturer and Counsellor.

[desiree.gonzalo@nyu.edu](mailto:desiree.gonzalo@nyu.edu)