

Type: Symposium

Language: English

Chair: Dr. Kristy Buccieri

Discussant: Dr. Devon Stillwell

Presenters: Dr. Devon Stillwell, Dr. Elizabeth Torrens, Sonya Hill, Cristina Ariza, Dr. Kristy Buccieri

Title: Weaving Trauma-Informed Pedagogy into Higher Education

Students come into higher education classrooms with different backgrounds and histories. For some, this includes the experience of traumatic events, which make it more difficult to focus, feel safe, and learn. Additionally, sometimes course content is traumatic, due to the nature of the topics being discussed. This symposium showcases three papers from Canada about Trauma-Informed Pedagogy (TIP), which is an approach that aims to make learning more accessible for all students by implementing course policies and classroom practices that account for the needs of those dealing with trauma and its effects. These papers are presented as a platform for open reflection and discussion about how Trauma-Informed Pedagogy can be taken up around the world, using cross-cultural and interdisciplinary lenses. Audience engagement is encouraged throughout, and attendees will have an opportunity to participate in a survey to share their knowledge about TIP in their geographic location. The first paper provides an overview and working group model for expansion. The second shares findings from a study of nationally awarded scholars involved in teaching and researching trauma-related topics. The final paper offers a framework for others to adopt and adapt, using a quilt to structure our model.

Paper 1, *Trauma-Informed Pedagogy in Canada* is presented by Dr. Devon Stillwell. This session explains what Trauma-Informed Pedagogy is and outlines how it can be adopted by educators, with the purpose of encouraging the development of context-specific TIP research and dissemination practices. It details the background, purpose, structure, and functioning of a working group model for TIP and shares recent collaborative efforts including hosting a Trauma-Informed Symposium Day. It proposes the working group model as a valuable form of scholarly inquiry and capacity building for exploring, understanding and implementing trauma and trauma-informed approaches in higher education. Attendees will leave the session with an understanding

of the potential of the working group model for advancing work in TIP; a framework for how to build a sustainable working group; and project suggestions for implementation in their own geographic and cross-cultural contexts.

Paper 2, *Findings from a Study of Nationally Recognized Trauma-Informed Educators*, is presented by Dr. Elizabeth Torrens and PhD student Sonya Hill. This study used phenomenological interviews with eight award-winning educators working in areas related to Indigenous studies, the Holocaust, gender and social justice, environmental issues, and disability rights. Participants were asked to consider the strategies they implement when researching or teaching about potentially traumatic topics, through Zoom interviews lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. Responses were coded for key themes and considered in relation to the principles of trauma-informed care outlined by the Substance and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2014). The findings elucidate several thematic areas that should be considered when undertaking trauma-informed teaching. Participants articulated the value of storytelling in sharing findings related to challenging content and connecting with one's audience as well as the importance of connection, collaboration, and forming supportive relationships. Attendees will leave this session with a keener understanding of the importance of recognizing power dynamics and systemic imbalances, as well as the value of facilitating support and empowerment within unbalanced relationships.

Paper 3, *Quilting Trauma-Informed Knowledge*, is presented by Dr. Kristy Buccieri and PhD student Cristina Ariza. This presentation builds on the previous findings with eight nationally awarded educators to provide a framework and set of tools that facilitate trauma-informed teaching and knowledge sharing. The framework takes the shape of a quilt, which presenters will have on display. It is made up of squares reflecting the key pillars of empowerment and voice; relational and community awareness; transparency and institutional reflexivity; safety, care, and space; and communication and audience awareness. For each of these pillars, there are considerations that guide and inform one's choice of actions. This framework is blanketed within the macro considerations of structural and environmental considerations; cultural and historical inequities; power dynamics; and the personal, collective, and intergenerational nature of trauma. At its core is the informed responsibility we have in knowledge sharing as scholars and educators. Attendees will leave this session with theoretical

knowledge and a practical set of tools to help integrate trauma-informed teaching and knowledge sharing into their own practices.

Collectively, this symposium offers attendees an opportunity to learn about what Trauma-Informed Pedagogy is and how it can be supported through a working group model in their local context. Findings from Canadian scholars were rooted in global and local trauma-related events and issues that provide a general approach for addressing this in the classroom. Models and tools provided through this session are therefore put forward for adaptation and adoption based on localized understandings of trauma and trauma-related cultural considerations.

References

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *SAMHSA concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Keywords: Framework, Qualitative, Trauma, Trauma-Informed Pedagogy