

INFUSING A TRAUMA INFORMED PEDAGOGY TO PROMOTE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR AFRICAN AMERICAN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Reframing the question: "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?"
-Dr. Bruce Perry



SIX TRAUMA-INFORMED PRINCIPLES

SAMHSA (2014) advised educators, service workers, and medical professionals to employ these six principles to practice.

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment and choice
- Cultural, historical, and gender issues

INTRODUCTION

74% of undergraduate students have experienced at least one form of trauma before reaching the age of eighteen (Cherry & Wilcox, 2020). These traumatic events are referred to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Although trauma impacts everyone, research reveals that African American students have higher exposure to ACEs than their counterparts, thus leading to greater academic stress and early college withdrawal (Vasquez, 2017). Applying a trauma-informed approach to education helped improve the academic success of African American students (Boyratz et al., 2013).

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study was to analyze how trauma manifests itself within undergraduate classrooms and to determine if educators incorporated a trauma-informed pedagogy, would that strategy be effective in engaging trauma-exposed students.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A Trauma-informed Approach guided this research (Carello & Butler, 2015).

- Values a strengths-based and post-traumatic growth perspective
- Resists retraumatizing students and clients (Mersky et al., 2019)
- Considers the effects trauma has on student's mental, emotional, and social development
- Constructivist Paradigm
- Promotes Engaged Pedagogy

PRINCIPLES FOR TEACHING STRATEGIES

Safety

- Build classroom community
- Provide resources to counselor's office, campus safety, and student support

Trustworthiness and transparency

- Embrace vulnerability and transparency through sharing of lived experiences.
- Remain consistent in teaching approach

Peer support

- Promote group work
- Encourage self advocacy skills
- Teaching-learning expectations are personalized

Collaboration and mutuality

- Co-facilitate, students become leaders
- Avoid using assignment material that may induce a trauma response

Empowerment and choice

- Encourage self-determination
- If students become withdrawn, seek to understand, offer self-regulation strategies
- Foster resiliency
- Consider students whole self: Mind, body, and soul

Cultural, historical, and gender issues

- Motto: There is strength in diversity
- Critically discuss biases and stereotypes on racism, feminism, sexual orientation, sexual preference, age, religion, and gender orientation

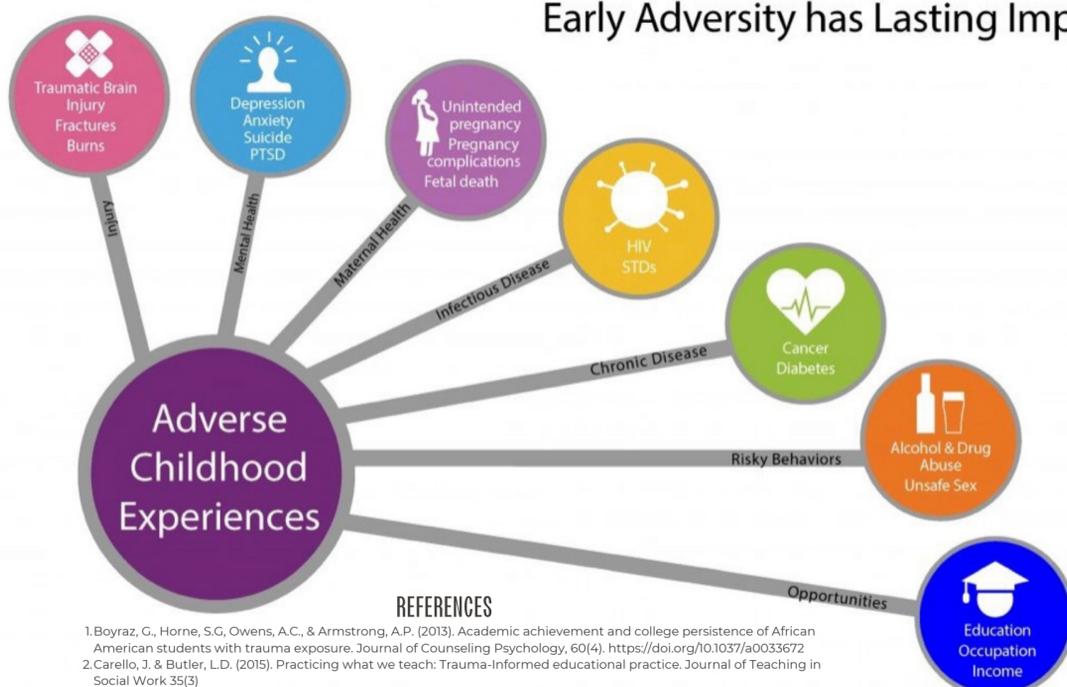
SIGNS TO LOOK FOR:

- Disengaged in class participation
- Poor academic performance
- Early withdrawal from college
- African American students, higher exposure to trauma (Remain Culturally Sensitive)

STUDENT VERSUS TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

- Low cultural representation
- Lack of belongingness
- Teachers lack of preparedness
- No adequate training available

Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



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Do you currently practice from a trauma-sensitive approach? If so, what is your biggest challenge?

