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The absence of trauma-informed practices in the high school production process: A qualitative study

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ABSTRACT

Theatre has the potential to impact students' mental health, especially when creating and telling stories with traumatic themes. Theatre teachers are uniquely positioned to unintentionally inflict further harm on their students if they do not incorporate trauma-informed practices (TIP) in the work they do in class and in productions. As theatre educators typically do not have special certifications or credentials in mental health, knowing TIP is crucial to help prevent the retraumatization of students who have experienced trauma. This study discusses current practices in the high school production process in the United States and the absence of TIP in theatre teacher training programs and professional development.

Statement of the problem

Educational theatre is not therapy. However, theatre can impact students' mental health, especially when creating and telling stories with traumatic themes. Theatre teachers must provide trauma-informed practices (TIP) in teaching and directing (Busselle 2021). Knowing these skills and tools is crucial for all theatre educators to prevent retraumatization for students who have experienced trauma without special certifications or credentials (Barton 1994; Vorbeck 2019). The representative literature in the field of theatre education makes it very clear that teachers are not learning TIP in their teacher training programs, and professional development is inconsistent and scarce for teachers in the field (Anderson et al. 2022; Reddig and VanLone 2022). Theatre teachers are uniquely positioned to inflict further harm on their students if they fail to intentionally incorporate TIP in the work they do in class and in productions.

Review of literature

Trauma

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines trauma as an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that has lasting

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adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA 2019). In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has declared trauma to be the most significant public health concern facing children today, as 68% of children have experienced at least one traumatic event by the age of sixteen (Cavanaugh 2016; CDC 2019; Cless and Nelson Goff 2017; Fondren et al. 2020; Minahan 2019).

Every trauma survivor processes their experience differently through their own personal, social, and cultural lenses (Knight 2019). Due to the endless possibilities of responses to trauma, mental health professionals categorized trauma into two major categories. "Big T" trauma examples include, but are not limited to, serious injury or threat of serious injury, sexual violence, life-threatening experiences, death, domestic violence, suicide, terrorism, and war (Barbash 2017; Cavanaugh 2016; Crosby, Howell, and Thomas 2018; Fondren et al. 2020). "Little t" trauma examples include but are not limited to non-life-threatening injuries, emotional abuse, death of a pet, bullying or harassment, loss of significant relationships, parental separation, household dysfunction, divorce, and legal trouble. Each trauma survivor has a unique ability for resiliency, and this directly impacts their ability to cope with their trauma. The key to understanding the nuance between big "T" and little "t" traumas is understanding how it affects the individual, not the traumatic event itself.

Triggering

Retraumatization is also known as triggering. Trauma-related responses are reactivated by newly perceived traumatic or non-traumatic stimuli (Carello and Butler 2014). The cause, or trigger, of this physical manifestation of trauma symptoms, is not always known to the individual. Trauma-informed practices are designed to help identify potential triggers (i.e. use of weapons, domestic violence, school shootings, child abuse, death of a loved one, etc.) and mitigate the risk of retraumatization (Cless and Nelson Goff 2017). When it comes to telling traumatic stories on stage and in the classroom, theatre teachers must be aware of the implications of working with traumatic content. While exposing students to traumatic content in class or in theatrical productions may not equate to retraumatization in itself, care must be given when considering that risk as a teacher likely will not know their students' trauma histories (Carello and Butler 2014; Cless and Nelson Goff 2017). Equally important is the care needed for teachers hearing traumatic disclosures as they are often not prepared for these stories to be shared and will need to mitigate their own personal trauma responses (Carello and Butler 2014).

Trauma-informed practices

Research into trauma-informed practices has been focused on in the mental health field for years and is relatively new in education (Cavanaugh 2016; Morton and Berardi 2018). Trauma-informed practices, trauma-informed competencies, trauma-informed approach, or being trauma-sensitive is an approach meant to implement best practices promoting physical, emotional, and psychological safety for both students and school personnel (Anderson et al. 2022; Ginwright 2018; Hanson and Lang 2016). TIP includes trauma-informed discipline, lesson design, and classroom activities (Crosby 2015; McIntyre et al. 2019). By understanding ways traumatic

experiences may impact the life of an individual, the survivor's needs are accommodated in an effort to avoid retraumatization (Crosby, Howell, and Thomas 2018; Harris and Fallot 2001; McIntyre et al. 2019; SAMHSA 2019). Based on the tenets of safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration, and empowerment (Harris and Fallot 2001), TIP allows for supportive relationships, self-awareness and regulation, and a growth mind-set. The application of TIP into the classroom requires educators and mental health professionals to partner and integrate each other's knowledge and skills (L'Estrange and Howard 2022; Morton and Berardi 2018).

Student success is the center of effective teaching and trauma-informed teaching. Teacher intentionality in addressing trauma can foster student success and provide them with opportunities to engage with course materials and content in safer ways to minimize retraumatization (Carello and Butler 2015; Harris and Fallot 2001; Lapum et al. 2019). The well-being of students with trauma histories can benefit from TIP socially, emotionally, mentally, and academically (Berger and Martin 2021; Dorado et al. 2016; Mendelson et al. 2015; Reddig and VanLone 2022). Teachers have direct contact with students in the classroom and are critical in providing TIP. While the work in the classroom is important, teachers who work with students outside the classroom are equally important when it comes to TIP (McIntyre et al. 2019). TIP in education is not hinged on one single practice, instead, it is a lens, and a system of support in place throughout all the teacher does that supports students who have experienced trauma (Lainson 2019). Partnering with school counselors and psychologists is encouraged to help teachers create trauma-informed classrooms (McIntyre et al. 2019).

Teacher training

Teachers respond to trauma and trauma responses in their classrooms daily. Most teachers have not had adequate training or professional development to support their students with trauma and feel ill-equipped to do so (Alisic et al. 2012; Anderson et al. 2022; Carello and Butler 2014; McIntyre et al. 2019; Miller and Flint-Stipp 2019). A 2022 study of teachers' perceptions of TIP before and after professional development found that they experienced an eye-opening pedagogy transformation in which they came to view their students as children first and as learners second as they better understood the magnitude of adversity and stress experienced by their students (Anderson et al. 2022).

Teachers receive different training and professional development throughout their careers, therefore it is essential to look at what is being taught in pre-service teacher preparation programs in terms of TIP (Reddig and VanLone 2022). There is a lack of training for pre-service teachers to observe and develop their skills in clinical experiences with respect to TIP (Alisic et al. 2012; Anderson et al. 2022; Carello and Butler 2015; Cless and Nelson Goff 2017; Crosby 2015; L'Estrange and Howard 2022; Miller and Flint-Stipp 2019; Walton-Fisette 2020). A 2022 study found that only five states in the United States required training in trauma-informed pedagogy for general certification requirements and only four states required it for alternative certification requirements (Reddig and VanLone 2022).

Theatre teachers

Theatre teachers are uniquely positioned to assist with the development of social-emotional aspects with their students. The amount of time spent with their students in afterschool activities and the nature of dealing with feelings, emotions, and relationships in the producing plays, allows them to teach to do this better than most teachers (Chrismon and Carter 2019; Lazarus 2005). Many theatre teachers see their role as a teacher to include being a counselor (Carello and Butler 2014; Chrismon and Carter 2019) and claim participating in theatre has therapeutic benefits for their students (Clift 2020; Olsen 2021).

Teaching theatre asks students to utilize their whole selves when incorporating imagination, emotions, and bodies to develop their craft. This opens the door to significant risk for participants to feel threatened, or triggered, in everyday exercises and activities in class and rehearsal (Olsen 2021). The mindful and intentional selection of acting techniques and directing methods used, audience impact, and materials selected for classwork and production is required to help reduce the risk of retraumatization (Busselle 2021).

Traditional directing and acting methods taught in theatre and theatre education training programs traditionally have focused on predominantly white and eurocentric practices. These methods tend to focus on processes that are subjective and intuitive and that work from the inside out. The internal capacities of emotion and experiences from inside the actor then drive the physical presentation outside in performance (Burgoyne, Poulin, and Rearden 1999; Tuisku 2015). Constantine Stanislavski's early system of acting, Lee Strasberg's method, and Uta Hagen's work require emotional recall, or the actor drawing on their own experiences in their life, from good memories to traumatic ones, to help them achieve realistic, authentic, and honest performances on stage (Lippe 1992). While adults may be able to navigate these practices with some success, it is critically important to note the needs of a minor in a creative environment differ from those of an adult, and modifications must be made (Shively 2022). In recent years, many of these internal processes have been deemed problematic, with the impact on the emotional well-being of the performer being compromised. It is important for theatre teachers to be aware of the risk that they ask of their students and not inflict further harm (Quoresimo 2016).

Embodied acting, or working from outside-in, alternatively focuses on starting acting work by exploring the body and understanding those findings in performance (Tuisku 2015). Methods from practitioners like Tadashi Suzuki, Rudolph Laban, Jacques Le Coq, Susan Bloch's *Alba Emoting*, Anne Bogart and Tina Landau's *Viewpoints*, Sanford Meisner, Stella Adler, and later teachings by Constantin Stanislavski called the *Method of Physical Actions* to provide ways to approach acting from a physical standpoint rather than an emotional one (Tuisku 2015).

In recent years contributions from women and practitioners of color have been made to acting with respect to trauma-informed and culturally conscious acting methods and consent-based practices. In 2016, Tonia Sina joined with fight choreographers Alicia Rodis and Siobhan Richardson to found *Intimacy Directors International (IDI)* and *IDI-UK* in 2019 (*Intimacy Directors International* 2016). In 2020 *IDI* closed and reopened as *Intimacy Directors and Coordinators (IDC)*, which offered training and certifications in their approach to theatrical intimacy (Villarreal 2022). Chelsea Pace and Laura Rickard established *Theatrical Intimacy Education (TIE)* with explicit practices and tools for establishing boundaries and the first published record of a method for intimacy choreography/

direction (Villarreal 2022). In 2020, Kate Busselle founded Heartland Intimacy Design (HID) which offered online training in intimacy direction as well as trauma-informed practices for theatre artists (Daugherty, Hertzberg, and Wagner 2020). Kaja Dunn brought attention to intimacy work to performers of color and the burden placed on them to ignore their race. In 2019 she combined critical race theory with intimacy choreography (Fairfield et al. 2019) and partnered with TIE in 2020 to develop a curriculum for “Foundations in Race, Intimacy, and Consent.” (Villarreal 2022).

In 2016 Sharrell Luckett and Tina Shaffer published the landmark text *Black Acting Methods: Critical Approaches*. This book provided an alternative to the white-Eurocentric acting methods primarily taught in theatre training programs. They bring to the spotlight methods by Freddie Hendricks, Cristal Chanelle Truscott, Rhodessa Jones, Lisa Biggs, Justin Emeka, Tawnya Pettiford-Wates, Chinesha Sibley, Daniel Banks, and Kashi Johnson and Daphnie Sicre. The new Afrocentric pedagogies center the black experience and history with the traditions and cultural practices to draw from authentic places, along with trauma-informed practices for the black actor and director to work from (James 2021; Stubbs 2019). It is noted by Kuckett and Shaffer that the methods in the book are for all artists from all backgrounds and should be as commonplace in theatre classrooms and rehearsals as any of the predominant methods currently taught and used (Luckett and Shaffer 2016).

There is ample research on trauma-informed teaching practices but little on trauma-informed teaching and directing practices specific to K-12 theatre teachers. The representative literature provides tools and strategies for working with traumatic content in productions, yet most teachers do not receive training in TIP, much less training that is tailored to theatre teachers and the unique way they work with their students, colleagues, caregivers, and the greater community at large. This study aims to add to the body of knowledge of current practices in theatre education regarding trauma-informed practices in teaching and directing.

Methodology

This generic qualitative study aimed to explore the question, “Do theatre educators incorporate trauma-informed practices in their production process?” Generic qualitative research seeks to interpret and understand human behaviors through the lens of those who have experienced them (Caelli, Ray, and Mill 2003; Kahlke 2014). This study was conducted over one month in the spring of 2021. Participants were solicited from posts in national theatre teachers’ social media groups and educational theatre organizations. Potential participants were asked to complete a survey to confirm that they met the inclusion criteria. To participate in this study, participants must have been over 18 years of age, had input on selecting plays or musicals and seasons of shows for production in a high school, and must have directed theatre productions in a high school curricular or co-curricular setting. If participants met all the inclusion criteria, a scheduling e-mail was sent to them directing them to the participant consent form and interview scheduling software. In total, thirty theatre educators participated in this study, and the participant demographics can be found in Table 1.

The researchers acknowledge that the participants predominantly self-identify as white. While a more diverse pool of participants was desired and sought out, the racial makeup of the participants aligns with landmark empirical studies that report the

Table 1. Participant demographics.

State	Gender	Age Range ^a	Race	Teaching Experience ^a	Content Area of Certification	Teaching Setting
IL	Female	41–50	Asian	13	Theatre, English	Suburban
NV	Female	18–30	Black	2	Theatre	Suburban
SC	Male	31–40	Black	2	Theatre	Suburban
IL	Male	18–30	Latinx	3	Theatre, Spanish	Suburban
TX	Male	31–40	Latinx	10	Theatre Arts	Suburban
CA	Female	51–65	White	37	Theatre	Suburban
CO	Male	18–30	White	3	Theatre, English, Gifted Ed.	Urban
FL	Male	51–65	White	9	Theatre, Language Arts	Urban
FL	Male	51–65	White	19	Drama	Suburban
IL	Female	18–30	White	1	Theatre, History, Art	Urban
IL	Male	41–50	White	25	English, Speech & Drama	Suburban
IL	Female	41–50	White	13	Theatre	Rural
IL	Female	41–50	White	15	Theatre Arts, Language Arts	Suburban
IL	Female	51–65	White	31	Theatre, English	Suburban
IL	Male	31–40	White	14	Theatre Arts, English	Suburban
IL	Female	18–30	White	4	Theatre, English	Suburban
IL	Male	41–50	White	19	Theatre	Suburban
IL	Female	31–40	White	15	K-12 Theatre	Suburban
KY	Female	31–40	White	12	Drama	Urban
MA	Female	41–50	White	21	Communication, Performing Arts	Suburban
MD	Male	41–50	White	19	Theatre	Suburban
MT	Female	31–40	White	10	Theatre & English	Rural
NC	Male	41–50	White	19	Theatre Arts	Rural
NC	Female	41–50	White	22	Theatre, Music	Urban
NC	Female	51–65	White	28	Theatre Arts/Speech	Suburban
OR	Female	51–65	White	35	Theatre, English	Rural
SC	Female	18–30	White	4	Theatre, English	Suburban
SC	- ^b	18–30	White	5	Theatre	Urban
SC	Female	31–40	White	10	Theatre	Suburban
SC	Female	31–40	White	7	Theatre	Suburban
SC	Male	31–40	White	16	English, Theatre	Suburban
SC	Male	18–30	White	6	Theatre	Rural
TX	Male	31–40	White	11	Theatre Arts	Suburban
VA	Female	41–50	White	21	Theatre, Public Speaking	Suburban

^aIn years.^bParticipant chose “Preferred not to share”.

racial makeup of the theatre education field. In 1991, the Educational Theatre Association (EdTA) expanded on the 1970 study, *A Survey of the Status of Theatre in United States High Schools: Final Report* by Joseph Peluso, by including racial demographic data of theatre teachers in the United States (Peluso 1970; Siedel 1991). The 1991 study found that 96.7% of survey respondents identified as white. In 2011, EdTA replicated Siedel’s 1991 study and found that 93% of survey respondents identified as white (Omasta 2012).

Participant interviews were conducted and recorded on the Zoom platform. Interviews ranged from sixty to ninety minutes, with the average interview being seventy-five minutes long. The interviews were fully structured, with the questions based on the authors’ pre-knowledge of a typical high school theater production process and trauma-informed practices (Percy, Kostere, and Kostere 2015). The first half of the interview asked the participants to share information about their typical production process. The interview’s second half revisited several questions from the first half, adding a trauma-informed practices lens. The interview was conducted in two halves so that participants

would first share what they were already doing in their work before the researcher introduced trauma-informed practices.

Each interview was transcribed and shared with the participant to review for accuracy and provide any content edits. All participant edits of the transcripts were made before subjecting them to the coding process. After the participant confirmed that the content of their interview reflected what they intended to share, they were sent a final survey which included the paperwork necessary to receive a \$100 gift card for their participation.

To analyze the interview data, the authors utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase guide for conducting a thematic analysis. Each author read and reread the first five interviews before independently generating initial codes. The initial set of codes was primarily based on the structure of the interview protocol. The authors met to review their initial codes for the first five interviews and created the beginning of a codebook before independently reading and coding the remaining twenty-five interviews. The authors met again after completing the initial coding of all thirty interviews and agreed upon a finalized codebook that incorporated and consolidated both authors' codes. Using the coded transcripts, the authors then searched for themes. A theme is a pattern that captures something significant or interesting about the data and research question and is characterized by its significance (Braun and Clarke 2006). The initial twenty-nine themes were reviewed against the research question, and the authors limited the scope of the themes to ones that described pedagogical practices and overall interactions with students. The authors defined the final themes through consensus, resulting in thirteen themes organized into three stages of show productions and overall theatre educator identity.

Results

For this study, interview questions were created based on the process typical to theatrical productions to find out how theatre teachers incorporate trauma-informed practices in their production process. The researchers divided the production process into four general time periods. Pre-production includes aspects of show/production season selection and show preparation practices through auditions. In-production includes the rehearsal and public performance practices of the production. Post-production includes strike and post-mortem/debriefing practices. Theatre teacher identity includes training and beliefs of the theatre teacher/director that impact their methodology and pedagogy when producing a play or musical. The results of this study are based on the verbatim responses of the participants.

Thirteen themes emerged across the four time periods and are organized under the corresponding time period. Themes under pre-production are subjectivity of trauma, if I know, then . . . mentality, consults for traumatic themes, student preparation, and outsourcing the support. The themes under in-production are acting/rehearsal methods, no deroling, intimacy and fight, and rehearsal schedules. Themes under post-production include postmortems/debriefing and student responsibility for care. Themes under theatre teacher identity are unofficial counselor and training deficit.

Pre-production

Subjectivity of trauma

Trauma is viewed as an event without a nuanced understanding of trauma's effect on the individual. The theatre educator, almost exclusively, determines what is deemed traumatic content. The participants discussed the types of trauma that they may consider discussing or showing on stage when selecting shows to produce. They discussed what constitutes trauma worth considering with the following examples:

I'm not as afraid of it [traumatic content] and I don't think the kids are either because they've lived life. I have students who have seen homelessness who are victims of violence. They are always like "Mr. XXX you're more worried about it than we are." I think that as someone from outside the community, I'm more worried about it. I've kind of relaxed because they love the traumatic pieces, the pieces that deal with those real-world issues.

If I know, then . . . mentality

Participants indicated it is not the teacher's responsibility to know their students' trauma histories; if and only when they know these histories are accommodations for the trauma intentionally made. They also shared that it is the student's and caregiver's responsibility to self-select out of the production experience if either is triggered by its content.

If I have that information, it absolutely would factor in because that's who my program is built for. It's built for the students. The last thing I would want to do is pick a play that alienates a student, or hurts a student just because of the content of the show. So assuming I know about it, and if I feel it's going to be a problem, that's something I would consider talking to the student about ahead of time, and just kind of check on their level of comfort with regards to that particular show.

Consults for traumatic themes

Participants indicated they are familiar with trauma-informed supports available to them in the show/season selection and audition processes, but they do not always readily know where to find or access them. They also indicated they do not think the supports available are always adequate.

I could probably find them, I would need to do research to find out what is available specifically.

Student trauma preparation

Participants prepare their students for traumatic content in shows by letting them know of the teacher-determined traumatic elements. They also discussed relying on disclosures and external visual cues from students to determine if any student is having difficulty with the show's content.

I don't imagine it would be that different than a normal rehearsal process in the sense that it's important to find the truth within it. Right? It's not that we want to take this traumatic content, and we're not trying to put it on a pedestal. We're not trying to hide it. It's like it's a true event. It's real. And so our goal is to find the truth within it. And that's the same whether it's traumatic, or whether it's comedic, you still want to find that truth.

Outsourcing the support

Participants shared that they do not adequately feel prepared to help students discuss traumatic material or being triggered. Due to this, they discussed ways to outsource the support for their students by having them research the trauma in the play on their own and talking to other people like specialists, caregivers, or even other students.

I never pretend that I have all the answers. I say I can ask the questions and I can get you to people who can help you process, but my job is to facilitate and to help guide and look at how we're going to tell this story. But, I'm not here to tell you why it is, or what it is, or how you should feel about it. And we get to sort of decide how we're going to put it together, and I feel like that's something that helps the kids

I'm a big proponent of go search. Go find out what people say about this particular type of trauma. Don't just assume because you have a friend that lived it that that's the only way it was done. You know, when it comes to teenage trauma, every single thing is the biggest thing. They look at everything as like "oh my gosh! I can't believe that happened. So, I always encourage them to go talk to adults or even a child.

In-production

Acting/rehearsal methods

Participants stated the predominant acting methods utilized when they direct students are based on early Constantin Stanislavski, Lee Strasberg, Uta Hagen, and Sanford Meisner which focus on using the actor's personal experiences. They also indicated they do not always know what method they are using and that they let students figure it out on their own.

A lot of it is for, especially for my students and then I still try to work on in my school is like that "pobre sito syndrome," which is like oh they're a different color, oh they're lower class, oh, they can't do things because they have all these traumas. And I try to push them and say okay, you have all these traumas. If you're comfortable using them, use them. Come to the theater as you are. Put your essence, not you personally, but your essence into that role and that's what they've done.

No deroling

Participants shared they do not have, nor utilize deroling practices consistently in rehearsals and during the run of a production.

At the end of performances I don't [derole] because at that point my thought process has always been that they're probably bouncing off the walls and they want to go eat fries somewhere, so I don't necessarily have the deroleing after performance. I assume that they'll be showered with flowers and supporters and I let them roam free.

I probably should [derole], but no. You know, we just did the work and, talked about it in the in the moment and then we let it go. I have it as an expectation that when you come into the space you're letting go of the day, and when you leave this space you leave what happens there there as well.

I can coach them on how to build emotions right. and that way they're false emotions, so it's easier to collapse from, which is probably why I don't have them. I've never thought about

doing a decompressing, because they're already knowing that it's all facade like your actors are putting on these masks, and then we can take it off easily.

Intimacy and fight

Participants shared the need for fight choreographers and intimacy directors to work on shows that require them. They defined intimacy in educational theatre to consist almost exclusively of kissing.

If after you spend 15 minutes working on something, if you find that those two people are not not comfortable or they're not going to be able to get to where they need to get, we have a couple of times, right or wrong, told them to go hang out. Be friends and go bowling, I've done that a few times. I say just go just go grab coffee, go across the street and get a coffee or something. Just so that that they get more comfortable personally because I never think that it has to do with like "ooh gross this person," I think it's more like "I don't want to kiss a stranger." I think that's just a human trait so we want them to go just to get to know each other, so it has nothing to do with the rehearsal, but it has to do with the process.

... we typically don't have so much intimacy other than like a kiss or you know things like that.

Impact on rehearsal schedules

Participants stated traumatic content in a show does not impact the creation of the rehearsal schedule. When traumatic content is considered for scheduling purposes, it is usually limited to the beginning of the rehearsal process during table work.

Only if I have to schedule a day where I have a specialist or something coming in, but that's really the rarity to be honest.

No, I don't think so. I know something might take a little longer based on what's happening in that scene, or I know I want to have a conversation for 20 minutes first, you know marginally, but I don't necessarily think it impacts that in any kind of meaningful disruption or alteration.

Post-production

Postmortems and debriefs

Participants stated they do not make it common practice to conduct postmortem or debriefing sessions with students regarding traumatic content in productions. They stated these meetings are for technical staff regarding design and technical concerns, if they happen at all.

No we don't. I mean the techs and I will sit down and go through the tech side of it. What could have been handled better. But, we really don't have any post mortem meetings. We're working on the next show. We kind of fly right into that, go right into auditions. I don't. I probably should. Usually the issues are with the tech side of it, so that's where we do it.

It depends on how they've reacted, I guess. It's sort of a little shame on me, but if I don't hear or see anything then I assume everything is fine. Which I know that's a bad assumption, because sometimes kids hold on to things. But, I guess I take a little bit of the hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil approach, which I'm not endorsing that, I just think I'm just being honest.

Student responsibility

Participants shared that it is not the theatre teacher's responsibility to follow up on potential trauma concerns with students once a show has ended. They stated it is the student affected by the material who holds the responsibility to communicate their concerns with the teacher.

You know, my door is always open if the topic of this show is still troubling you or is haunting you, or has moved you, so if you want to continue talking, I'm here.

How am I going to know if they don't tell me?

Theatre teacher identity

Unofficial counselor

Participants shared that they consider themselves unofficial counselors, social workers, or therapists for their students. Due to the relationships formed with their students by the nature of being theatre teachers, they regularly open themselves up to hearing potentially traumatic stories.

I think as theatre teachers, we are often like the counselors to for the kids. I would argue that theater teachers have a different relationship than any other teacher in the school. We have these kids for four years, both inside and outside of the classroom. I mean I don't know that kids go to their math teachers with their problems, as much as they do with.

Therapist: so many of my students come to me as, and they just trauma dump because a lot of my students are going through so much all of the time.

I'm one of the few BIPOC teachers, so I've had some students who I know mostly through the theatre program come to me and you know, talk about some like microaggressions and to kind of sort out what are some courses of action that can be taken if anything; they needed someone who kind of got it to talk to.

Trauma-informed training in directing and teaching deficit/lacking

Participants stated they do not receive adequate training in trauma-informed practices in their teacher training programs. They also indicated professional development in trauma-informed practices is rarely helpful and is rarely tailored to the specific needs of theatre teachers.

I am the only theater person in the district, and so these PD days, while I love hanging out with my colleagues and everything, they don't address what I do.

None in my formal undergrad training which is, I would argue, what most people have had. Most people don't get master's degrees in theater teaching, most people just have undergrads and unfortunately, theatre teaching is such a monster of a beast as it is you don't you get a lot of breadth, but not a lot of depth than anything.

Discussion

The theatre teachers in this study overwhelmingly saw themselves as unofficial counselors for their students. Theatre teachers are typically not trained as mental health professionals, social workers, or psychologists. Theatre teachers are also not adequately trained in trauma-informed practices. Theatre teachers have a unique relationship with their students, and the importance of that relationship should not be minimized. Theatre teachers' work with their students involves significant time commitments, trust and risk-taking, and collaborations on social-emotional and educational levels. Theatre teachers must understand boundaries to provide their students with the best support possible when they disclose trauma histories. Further education and professional development on trauma-informed practices may help theatre teachers understand that trauma is not the event that happens to an individual but rather the effects of that event on the individual who experienced it. This may help theatre teachers look at their work through a trauma-informed lens that is not limited to catastrophic events and potentially risking retraumatizing students.

There is a lack of training in trauma-informed practices in education. There is a deficit in training in trauma-informed practices tailored to theatre teachers' work. Teacher preparation programs at the undergraduate level provide minimal training for new teachers to work with students with trauma histories. Specifically, in theatre teacher training programs, most acting and directing programs focus on internalized acting methods that ask the actor to use their personal lived experiences to help create and develop convincing and realistic characters. While the canon of theatre theorists widely taught is based on this method, further attention should be considered to external or physical acting methods to balance the training and support individuals with trauma histories. Additionally, if it is not already, deroling should be added to the standard practices for theatre teachers. Equally important as physical and vocal warm-ups and methods used in rehearsal is the need for a formalized deroling process at the end of rehearsals and performances.

Professional development is needed to continue educating teachers on best trauma-informed practices. Additionally, content-specific professional development needs to be developed for theatre teachers to better equip them with tools and knowledge to support their students. Training for advanced topics in theatre practice, like fight and intimacy direction, should be considered for theatre teachers. It is best practice to bring an outside specialist for those specific moments of violence and intimacy. However, the financial burden of hiring a specialist may be cost-prohibitive. Therefore, if a teacher has this training, they can incorporate it into their program's culture in their work.

The theatre teachers in this study described reactionary care for individuals with trauma. The participants in this study stated they consider trauma responses to shows read in class and produced on stage when they know their students' trauma histories; the "If I Know, Then . . . Mentality." Trauma-informed practices are suitable for all students involved in the theatre program. A theatre teacher will never know all the traumas that their students come to them with. Nor do they need to. As discussed previously, a trauma-informed approach would assist with intentionality regarding professional development in methodology, pedagogy, and self-care practices for theatre teachers. It would also encompass planning for the show when they select shows, developing the rehearsal schedule, preparing students for the show's content, and having consultations to provide immediate and outside support for the student company. The rehearsal and performance of the show could be impacted, as

discussed, with intimacy and fight direction skills, a variety of acting methods that do not require a student to tap into their trauma histories, and a deroling process for the student company.

Finally, post-production care of the student company of actors, technicians, and staff should be considered when closing a show with debriefing or postmortem opportunities that do not solely focus on the technical aspects of the show, instead care given to all students in the company to debrief about traumatic content in the show and the experience with it. Further supports from mental health professionals could be helpful in these instances. This would also provide an opportunity for the theatre teacher to own the responsibility of following up on the traumatic themes with students and, in essence, deroling the company from the show, rather than leaving it in the hands of the students to deal with on their own.

Conclusion

This study's findings highlight the absence of trauma-informed practices in the high school theatre production process. The researchers would like to acknowledge that the theatre teachers interviewed for this study all expressed genuine care, concern, and even love for their students. There is no indication in the interviews conducted that theatre teachers are intentionally trying to harm their students. Effective teachers are lifelong learners. When one knows better, they do better. In addition to TIP being taught at the theatre teacher preparation level and in professional development, future research is recommended to support individuals beyond the student production company. Considerations are needed for other participants in the production process, such as audience members, caregivers, and the wider community. Finally, further research is needed on the effective implementation of TIP into the production process to support developing codified best practices for this process.

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