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Trauma informed practices in education and social justice: towards a critical orientation

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Abstract

Increasingly, educational practitioners committed to social justice embrace trauma-informed practices and those who advocate for and enact trauma-informed practices are committed to social justice. However, connecting social justice to trauma-informed practice requires greater conceptual clarity than is currently found, given the malleable meanings of both 'trauma informed' and 'social justice'. Further, the complex relationship between these educational aims is under-examined. To address these issues, an analytical framework is developed that brings together a model of forms of trauma-informed practice in education with orientations to social justice. This draws on models of social justice developed in social work and teaching, and teacher education. Applying this framework to trauma-informed practice indicates that trauma- informed practice, as so far developed, generally has either a conservative or a socially liberal social justice orientation. Practices are proposed that align with a critical orientation, which attends to cultural and structural relationships implicated in trauma and adversity in childhood. A critical orientation should not only consider practice but also be informed by further theoretical, philosophical and ethical engagement as part of a project of activist professionalism across educational professions.

Keywords

trauma informed, trauma sensitive, social justice, social work, teaching, school mental health, critical

Trauma-informed Practices in Education and Social Justice: Towards Critical Orientations

Trauma-informed practices in education are becoming more prevalent internationally with interest and engagement from a range of educational professionals, including school social workers, teachers, and school leaders. Increasingly, educational practitioners committed to social justice seek to embrace trauma-informed practices. Similarly, a commitment to social justice motivates those committed to trauma-informed practice (Crosby, Howell & Thomas, 2018). Take up of trauma-informed practices happens in educational organisations and systems, in classroom practices, and in professionals' activity. Trauma-informed practices in education vary, involving many types of social systems and diverse professional roles. These roles also vary within educational systems depending on educational phase, and across educational systems and from country to country.

Those advocating for and enacting trauma-informed practice in education rarely explicitly frame their concerns with reference to social justice or examine how considering social justice might strengthen trauma-informed practice (Alvarez, 2020; Crosby, Howell & Thomas, 2018; Gherardi, Flinn, & Jaure, 2020; Kelly, 2020; Ridgard et al., 2015). Advocacy for trauma-informed approaches in education comes, in part, from a concern to improve educational outcomes of children by mitigating the negative effects of trauma (Felitti et al., 1998; Larkin et al., 2012; Oral et al., 2016). Children with adverse experiences have worse educational outcomes (Goodman, Miller & West-Olatunji, 2012; Perfect et al., 2016), and greater mental health needs (Porche et al., 2016; Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Experiences of trauma and adverse childhood experiences have different degrees of prevalence in different socio-economic groups, and childhood adverse experiences are often rooted in structural disadvantage and oppression of various kinds (Burstow, 2003; Dorado, Martinez, McArthur & Leibovitz, 2016; Hatch & Dohrenwend, 2007; McKenzie-Mohr, 2004). Moreover, trauma-informed practices have the potential to counter the narrowing of educational goals to achievement in high-stakes test scores, zero tolerance behaviour policies (Hoffman, 2014), and restricted curricula in which cultural and social diversity is under- recognised.

However, the relationship of trauma-informed practice in education to social justice is underexplored and not well defined, with social justice not appropriately attended to in trauma-informed practice (Alvarez, 2020; Blitz, Yull & Clauhs, 2020; Dutro, 2017; Gómez et al., 2016). Some suggest that trauma-informed practice in education is in itself action for social justice (Crosby et al., 2018; Ridgard et al. 2015). An alternative view is that what constitutes trauma-informed practice in schools requires problematizing (Alvarez, 2020,Gherardi, Flinn, & Jaure, 2020).

Here, I build on these contributions in two ways: First, I review previous research and scholarship to make clearer the connection of trauma-informed practices to social justice. As so far developed, trauma-informed practice tends to have an implicit rather than explicit relationship to social justice. My premise is engaging with theorisations of social justice is important to connect trauma-informed practice to social justice, providing a lens to see how and why trauma-informed practice has not yet fully embraced a concern for social justice. I discuss orientations to social justice found in social work and in teaching, given the importance of both these professional roles in trauma-informed practice in schools. I use the term "orientation" here to convey that social justice is not an achievable state but something we do and move towards (Griffiths, 2009). Orientation is also used, rather than alternatives such as "position", to infer that social justice beliefs, practices and identity are better viewed as fluid and not fixed, clearly demarcated positions or types (Boylan & Woolsey, 2015). This examination leads to the second main contribution, proposing possibilities for a critically orientated trauma-informed practice that moves beyond conservative and socially liberal orientations to social justice.

In the next section, based on review and synthesis of previous descriptions, I present a model of four aspects of trauma-informed practice: interventions, teaching, development, and systems. As well as describing trauma-informed practice, this model is important to understand how different orientations to social justice manifest. I focus on social workers and teachers and discuss ways social justice relates to the professional role and responsibility in these two professions. This leads to identifying ways to undertake a critical social justice orientation in practice. Here, I summarise and build on critiques made from social justice, feminist, and critical perspectives of common trauma-informed practices.

Further, I identify three ways to broaden the theoretical basis for trauma-informed practice: deeper theoretical and philosophical engagement; exploring the affordances for an ethically engaged activist professionalism; and reflecting on tensions between supporting individuals and working to change social factors, here discussed through the concept of ethical dimensions. Before continuing, I offer three cautions. Firstly, I do not fully engage with debates about terminology, such as the potential differences in perspective that the terms "trauma informed" and alternatives such as "trauma sensitive" and "trauma aware" may imply or help generate. Moreover, the meaning of "trauma" in the education field has meanings that are different from those in therapeutic or clinical psychological discourses (see Gheradi, Flinn & Blanca Jaure, 2020).

The second caution is that existing literature and research shapes my consideration of trauma-informed practice. The paper is informed by a narrative review that draws on primary literature

describing particular instances of trauma-informed practice as well as previous review and theoretical papers. The review reflects the variety of research in the field; as this is an emerging area of practice there is inevitably a lag in research literature in relation to practice. Related to this, what constitutes trauma-informed practice in regular public education varies from that found in specialist or alternative provision, and possible differences here are not yet reflected in available literature, and so not reflected in this paper.

The third caution is that orientations to social justice are woven into discourses through which we think and write (Milner, 2007). Personal and professional experiences, identity, and commitments shape the theories, perspectives, models, concepts used, and literatures drawn on. I am positioned socially, culturally, and economically and this, as well as my perspectives on social justice, inevitably shape the paper. My professional and research practice is rooted in teaching and teacher education in England. The specific role of school social worker is not part of the education landscape that I work in. In England, the growth of trauma-informed practice in education has not originated in the school social work profession, but from mental health professionals and from within education, from teachers and school leaders. Particularly those educators committed to learner centred pedagogies and with a concern for children failed by prevailing discourses of schooling, regardless of whether they have trauma histories. In general, drawing mainly from studies from the USA and England, there are clearly important other differences between education systems in the two countries. These factors influence my positionality and so, potentially, the analysis and arguments made.

Trauma-informed Practices in Education

Trauma-informed educational practice aims to respond to the needs of children, young people and adults with trauma histories, whether this is episodic trauma or the effects of chronic stress (Walker, 2015, Hill, 2015), and adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998). Although, so far, there is little available evidence about the effectiveness of trauma-informed practice (Maynard et al., 2019), research indicates that school environment and teacher practices can either mitigate the effects of adverse experience or, conversely, risk greater traumatization and amplify negative outcomes (Walker, 2015, Hill, 2015).

The use of the phrase “trauma informed” is relatively recent, accelerating since 2011 (Becker- Blease, 2017; Maynard et al. 2019). Although a newer area of educational practice, in the USA, it is already being referenced in policy texts in schools, districts, and in some states (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016; Thomas, Crosby & Vanderhaar. 2019). Although a commitment to trauma-informed practice is not yet explicit or mandated, in England there is an increasing interest in policy on schools' role in mental health. This includes recognising that

trauma, attachment, and post-traumatic stress are phenomena schools and teachers require support in understanding (Department of Health & Department for Education, 2017).

Becker Blease (2017) documents widespread application of the term "trauma informed", extending from therapeutic interventions and assessments, to references in claims about school building and school garden design. Thus, "trauma informed" is a malleable term, with fluid meanings and lacking clear definition and used in a range of phrases within and outside education including: "trauma-informed approaches", "trauma-informed care" and "trauma-informed system" (Maynard et al., 2019). Additionally, in education, reference is made to trauma-informed teaching, and trauma-informed schools (Overstreet & Chafouleas, 2016). Like the "trauma informed" root these compound terms are each used differently across professional roles (Maynard et al., 2019; Thomas, Crosby & Vanderhaar, 2019). In addition, descriptions and studies of trauma-informed practice are often generic and so do not specify the context in terms of the diverse type of educational settings.

Trauma-informed practitioners often work inter-professionally and across professional boundaries (Thomas, Crosby, & Vanderhaar, 2019). A boundary, in this sense, refers to practices, discourses, cultures and knowledge found in different professions. In the context of trauma-informed practice in schools, relevant professionals are teachers, school social workers, counsellors, school leaders and administrators, as well as a variety of other professional roles and designations, depending on the context. Consequently, in order to work together, or carry out trauma-informed practices, practitioners draw on, or need to be conversant with, bodies of disciplinary knowledge originating or developed by other professions.

As identified in a comprehensive review of research (Thomas, Crosby, and Vanderhaar. 2019), there is currently no dominant or formally agreed framework for trauma-informed practices. To review evidence for the effectiveness of trauma-informed approaches, Maynard et al. (2019) used the generic term trauma- nformed approaches. They define these as programs and systems that recognise the impact of trauma and respond through policies and practices to mitigate the effects of trauma and reduce retraumatization. Policies and practices include workforce development, trauma focused services, and organizational environmentand practices.

However, a finer grained model may aid analysing trauma-informed practice with regard to social justice. I propose a framework of four types of practice. In the proposed framework, the term trauma-informed practice encompasses: trauma specific interventions; trauma-informed teaching, trauma-informed development including professional development; and trauma-informed systems. Each of these is now considered.

Trauma-informed Interventions

With regard to trauma-informed practice, the term "intervention" is itself problematic; it has two meanings. One accords with the current general use where any action or attempt to change practice or outcomes in education might be referred to as an intervention. In this discourse, a professional development programme or a project aiming to change school climate or systems is an intervention. This meaning accords with a common usage in reviews of literature on trauma-informed practice (Thomas, Crosby & Vandehaar, 2019).

However, "trauma-informed intervention" has a specific clinical or quasi-clinical meaning, aiming to improve outcomes of individuals or groups with trauma or adverse childhood experiences. From a social work perspective, interventions of this type are part of a service delivery model (Chafouleas, Johnson, Overstreet et al., 2016). Trauma-informed interventions may comprise therapeutic and protective interventions to:

- address the effects of trauma,
- target trauma centred or related concerns through psychoeducation for individuals,
- benefit all children and young people but be of particular value to those experiencing the effects of trauma, such as developing coping and social skills.

In the USA, school-based counsellors or school social workers often undertake such interventions. In England such roles are not commonplace. Children and young people identified with relatively severe mental health needs can, in theory, access assessment by educational psychologists, but generally children's mental health services are not well integrated with education (Veale, 2019). In English schools, various practitioners including "learning mentors", school nurses, teachers and teaching assistants carry out therapeutic interventions.

Trauma-informed Teaching

Trauma-informed teaching has four aspects. The first relates to classroom management practices and teacher responses to classroom behaviour (Thomas et al., 2018). Practices like restorative justice seek to facilitate changes in behaviour through dialogue and reflection (Teasley, 2014). Restorative justice aligns with trauma-informed practices in seeking to develop self-regulation and contrasts with practices that are more punitive. The second form of trauma-informed teaching is psychoeducation, including social and emotional learning and metacognitive learning. Here, there are overlaps with trauma-informed interventions, as programmes for all pupils may extend psychoeducation for individuals to support greater understanding by all children of their responses to situations and events. Trauma-informed teaching extends this to support psychoeducation for all learners.

The third aspect relates to general pedagogy, emphasising the importance of relational pedagogies such as attachment-aware practices that benefit children when used in school classrooms (Demkowicz & Humphrey, 2019). Also, in this category are pedagogies such as collaborative and play-based pedagogies, that may mitigate the effects of trauma through support for pros-ocial responses. A fourth possibility for trauma-informed teaching relates to how trauma studies might inform main subject curricula. This can include both an awareness and sensitivity that some curriculum content may be particularly catalysing for learners with trauma histories (Dutro 2017), as well as applying a trauma lens to social, cultural, and psychological phenomena relevant to trauma

Trauma-informed Development

For implementation, the two aspects of trauma-informed practice so far considered - interventions and teaching - may require professional and workforce development, as well as organisational and cultural change processes. Descriptions of features of trauma informed and trauma sensitive schools explicitly include staff training (e.g. Craig, 2016; TISUK, n.d.). Three broad categories are found in guides, for educators, about trauma-informed practice and trauma-informed care: (a) building knowledge to understand the nature and impact of trauma; (b) shifting perspectives and building emotionally healthy school cultures; and (c) self-care for educators (Thomas, Crosby, Vanderhaar, 2019, p.426), As yet, there is little research on the effects of trauma-informed professional development, either on whole school change or on individual practitioners' perspectives or practice (Perfect et.al., 2016).

Trauma-informed Systems

Systemic change is possible when trauma-informed interventions and teaching take place and are supported by organisational and professional development. The term “trauma-informed systems” refers to systemic practices, usually within organisations. Most commonly in education these organisations will be schools as in “trauma-informed schools” (Overstreet, & Chafouleas, 2016), but the designation is also used for Early Years settings, such as kindergartens and nurseries, and in post-compulsory education, including Universities. An alternative term is “trauma-sensitive schools” (Gherardi, ·Ryan Flinn & Jaure, 2020).

Reference to trauma-informed schools may not necessarily entail practice at a system wide level; a school may refer to itself as trauma informed if professionals working in it undertake trauma-informed interventions. However, when adopted as a whole school and systemic philosophy, it entails aligning school pedagogy, curriculum, and behaviour policies with trauma theory. For example, Dorado, Martinez, McArthur, & Leibovitz (2016) describe a tiered approach in which interventions are rooted in "universal supports" such as school

wide policy and activity to help develop a conducive learning environment, alongside psycho-education for students, staff and the wider school community including parents. Examples of systemic approaches are the *Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative* (Osher, 2018) in the USA and *Trauma Informed Schools UK* framework for recognition of school wide practice (TISUK n.d.).

Social Justice Orientations in Social Work and in Teaching and Teacher Education

In introducing the above framework of aspects of trauma-informed practice, I noted that the term is malleable and without agreed definition. Social justice similarly has an ill-defined and fluid meaning, as recognised in social work (Morgaine, 2014), and is sometimes used to justify policies of the powerful against the vulnerable (Caputo, 2002; Morgaine, 2014). These perspectives are echoed in teacher education where social justice is a contested term with multiple meanings (Chubbuck, 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2003; Kapustka et al., 2009) or even bleached of meaning, yet used to evoke emotion (Chubbuck, 2010). Thus, the term social justice requires interrogation in relation to schooling. I turn to this in the next sections with regard to, first, social work and school social work and, second, teaching and teacher education.

Social Justice in Social Work and School Social Work

Professional codes and ethics in social work recognise that social justice is important. *The Council for Social Work Education in the USA* has a social justice competency, and, in the UK, social justice is acknowledged in the *British Association of Social Workers'* definitions of social work and code of ethics. For both professional bodies social workers are advocatesand instigators for social change.

Kim (2014) notes that, from its beginnings in the 19th century, social work has developed through two traditions. A conservative orientation focuses on the individual, contrasting with a social reform perspective. Particularly, relevant to school social work and trauma-informed practice is the growth of the doctrine of evidence informed practice centred on interventions (which has a parallel "what works" movement in education). Thus, this therapeutic stance in social work continues a long-standing tradition focused on individuals.

A commitment to social justice may mean a commitment to significant social change, not least in professional practice. For example, Caputo (2002) proposes an understanding of social justice grounded in an ethics of care that entails resistance to a market and consumer orientated vision of welfare services, disputing the idea of welfare dependency with an alternative conceptualisation of receiving societal care. Taking the same issue that Caputo identifies - the marketization of welfare practice - critical social work advocates offer

a sharper criticism, pointing to social work's surveillance role, compelling relatively powerless social workers to enact practices and policies that entrench the powerlessness of those they work with (Cree, 2013).

Those advocating a more criticalist orientation, argue that social work is embedded in a neo-liberal capitalist system in which the state's role is justified to protect some from marginalised and lawless "others" (Kamali, & Jönsson, 2019). In general, critical social work conceptualises social justice as entailing:

- a structural analysis of society's problems;
- recognition of the significance of history, culture and context;
- a synthetic and adaptive rather than rigid ideological perspective;
- an understanding of the interconnectedness between domestic and international issues;
- awareness of the role of race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation in the marginalisation of certain populations (Reisch, 2013, p.72).

Turning to school social work, the USA's National Association of Social Workers (NASW) occupation profile for school social workers (NASW, 2010) describes work with children, young people, families, professional development roles, and supporting school systems. The type of critical awareness suggested by Reisch (2013) is not immediately apparent, although general codes and ethical principles of social work still apply.

From the NASW profile, school social work appears as an apolitical activity and there are few specific studies of school social work practice and social justice. Recently, Dafrety (2020) examined anti-oppressive school social work practice and identified three overarching themes: providing leadership in social justice work and anti-oppressive practice; increasing visibility and integration on campus and in the classroom; and complementing student interventions with psycho-education and social-emotional support for teachers. The first of these is closely connected with social justice. The latter two themes, arguably, point to expanding the school social worker role to foster social justice. Daftary (2020) also noted school social worker preparation should give greater time to anti-oppressive practice in relation to micro and personal interventions, as well as action at other levels such as classroom, school and district. Woodside and Hardy (2020) describe a small-scale professional development programme for school social workers about racial equity that demonstrates the possibilities for and challenges to effecting change through such programmes.

Social Justice in Teaching and Teacher Education

Echoing stances found in social work, typologies of teachers' relationships to social justice identify differences in understandings of social justice (Chubbuck 2010; McClaren 1995; Mills & Ballantyne 2012, Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Chubbuck (2010) proposes that socially just teaching aims, minimally, to improve learning opportunities and outcomes for those who experience injustice; but beyond this may aim for the transformation of educational structures and practices, and,more controversially, transformation of structures outside of school. Commitments to social transformation are influenced, in part, by the view that teachers are, agents for social change (Cochrane-Smith, 2010).

Examining multiculturalism, McClaren (1995) identified three primary orientations to social justice - conservative, liberal and critical. Building on this, Gorski (2009) undertook a content analysis of multicultural education coursework syllabi and expanded McLaren's typology topropose the following distinctions:

- teaching the other,
- teaching with cultural sensitivity,
- teaching with multicultural competence,
- teaching in a sociopolitical context,
- teaching as counter hegemonic practice.

Multiculturalism in both McClaren and Gorski's typology goes beyond a focus on race and ethnicity and includes sexual orientation, gender, sex, socio-economic status, and language.

Education researchers have drawn parallel distinctions in relation to specific oppressions. For instance, in relation to LGBTQ+ advocacy, distinguishing between, safe, positive, and queer spaces (Goldstein, Russell, & Daley, 2007). Similarly, Lalvani (2013) identified three meanings of inclusion in relation to disability – inclusion as privilege, as compromise, or as social justice. Kumashiro (2000) offers a related framework for anti-oppressive education: education for the other; education about the other; education that is critical of privileging and othering; and education that changes students and society.

Synthesising these conceptualisations leads to the following tripartite model (adapted from Boylan, 2017):

- *Conservative* - the focus in this orientation is on improving learning opportunities and outcomes for those who experience injustice in education based on teaching about the other.

- *Socially-liberal* - this orientation recognises that educational structures and practices need transforming, that teaching should be culturally sensitive and multiculturally competent or skilled in culturally responsive teaching, and that othering

and privilege should be challenged.

- *Critical* - this orientation recognises that for social justice to be realised in schools, social structures beyond school need transforming, socio-political contexts should be recognised, and teaching become a counter-hegemonic practice so that education can be part of changing students and society.

The three-fold model is about practitioners' *professional* beliefs and practices. Orientations to social justice may or may not align with practitioners wider political beliefs. It is possible, for example, to have a conservative orientation to social justice in schools whilst in other areas, such as electoral politics, having other commitments. For instance, in England, within the neo-traditionalist pedagogical movement, there are teachers and educators who style themselves as politically progressive but "neo-trad" teachers. A neo-traditionalist teacher is one who embraces a view of teaching that combines traditionalist teacher centred instruction, justified and underpinned through cognitive science theory and rule-based, "strict" behaviour management (see Watson, 2020).

Turning to teacher education, many teacher education programmes, particularly in the USA, assert a commitment to social justice in their curricula. Yet in many such programmes, there is ambiguity about what this means or the extent programmes put into practice commitments (Chubbuck, 2010; Cochran Smith, 2009; Kapustka et al., 2009; McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). In teaching and teacher education, advocates for social justice have argued for some time for teachers to embrace social justice as a core aspect of their role. However, this is an ongoing project. Whilst the *American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education*, has equity, diversity and inclusion as a goal, this is framed in socially liberal terms rather than critical terms. In England, the *Chartered College of Teaching* professional body is silent on social justice in its aims and mission statement.

Framing Social Justice in Education

Below, Figure 1 summarises orientations to social justice are framed in social work and teaching professional practice.

Figure 1 Social justice orientations in school social work and teaching and teacher education

	Beliefs and practices	
Orientation	**School social work**	**Teaching and teacher education**
Conservative	Individual interventions to address disadvantage or needs	Opportunity, meritocracy, social mobility, individual progress
Socially-liberal	Anti-racist/anti-oppressive modes, practice informed by ethics of care Aim to reform educational practices/systems/organisation	Cultural sensitivity, promote social justice in teacher and school practices Change in teaching, curriculum, assessment and school organisation to further social justice
Critical	Structural analysis Counter marginalisation and oppression	Recognise structural foundations of injustice, pedagogy and curriculum aimed at developing critical awareness, goals of social transformation

The Relationship of Trauma-informed Practice to Social Justice Orientations

Applying this framework of social justice orientations to trauma-informed practice in education indicates a relationship that is ambiguous and problematic. Discussing individual interventions, Dutro (2017) argues that a medicalised and health perspective on trauma can lead to pathologizing children and young people. Narratives can slip from responding to individual's histories and their consequences, to othering of those who are historically disenfranchised. For example, in medicalized definitions of trauma and its causes, criteria are absent that recognise discrimination and race-incident based trauma. Similarly, given that trauma may not only arise from intense episodes but also from ongoing toxic stress, there is a lack of attention to the effects of ongoing microaggressions (Gómez et al., 2016).

A conservative orientation views adverse childhood experience and trauma as individualised, with a view of family, home and community background that identifies the balance between harmful

and protective factors, but rooted in a deficit perspective. Thomas, Crosby and Vanderhaar (2019) identify interventions designed "for oppressed, marginalized and high-risk groups of students", p.432. The use of “for” here is apt, fitting with a model of education/intervention for the other (Kumashiro, 2000). Similarly, interventions to develop resilience may ignore ongoing discrimination and oppression, or its role in amplifying the effects of trauma (Mayorga, & Rosales, 2019).

Similarly, with regard to trauma-informed teaching, social justice concerns are not attended to or, if they are, this is often limited to attempts at cultural adaptation. Practices like culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002) may take into account cultural difference without recognising the importance of structure and power (Ijadi-Maghsoodi et al., 2017).

Often trauma-informed professional development aims to engage practitioners with research on adverse childhood experiences and its consequences (e.g. Blodgett, & Lanigan, 2018). Professional development of this type may challenge practitioner beliefs and motivate them to adopt trauma-informed practices. However, from a social justice perspective, it may also reinforce deficit views of those experiencing adversity. There is a risk of the misapplication of the social and epidemiological concept of adverse childhood experiences as primarily individual phenomena. This can lead to under-recognition of structural and political mechanisms in reproducing adversity or in reducing protective factors. Similarly, a lack of clarity about how injustice and trauma relate to each other can lead to misidentifying as personal trauma the effects of discrimination, marginalisation and oppression. The legacy of intergenerational and cultural trauma may be overlooked and how this shapes people's experience (Alvarez, 2020; McGee & Stovall, 2015). Alternatively oppressed groups as a whole may be labelled as traumatized (Blitz, Yull & Clauhs, 2020). In either case the complex interaction between oppression and personal trauma is ignored.

Turning to trauma-informed systems and organisations, arguably, when it is recognized that all educational practitioners should know about the effects of trauma, at least a socially liberal conception is embraced. However, where socio-economic and cultural roots are not fully recognised and trauma is seen as only an individual misfortune, the ambition for systemic change may be limited to the organisation. In summary, as far as trauma-informed practice considers and embraces social justice, it usually does this from conservative and socially liberal orientations tending to disregard the cultural and socio-economic dimensions.

Embracing a Critical Orientation to Social Justice for Trauma-informed Practice

In this section, I discuss implications of embracing a critical orientation towards social justice for each of the four aspects of trauma-informed practice previously outlined.

Critically Orientated Trauma-informed Interventions

A critical orientation to social justice poses questions about who are the subjects of interventions, how this is decided and by whom, who provides interventions, as well as the form and focus of the interventions. Alvarez (2020) argues that, in the USA, trauma-informed interventions are inevitably racialised with a disproportionate amount of those who make decisions and assessment being white and those who are assessed and subjects of intervention are black and brown.

Vericat Rocha and Ruitenberg (2019) note trauma-informed interventions often aim to support self-regulation, and the same would apply to psychoeducation undertaken as trauma-informed teaching. The premise is some emotions and disregulation interfere with cognitive development, as well as having implications for meeting behavioural expectations and academic achievement. Thus, the aim, they argue, is to socialize children. Having identified the socialization imperative, they draw historical (and, arguably, ongoing) parallels with the educational history of socialization of indigenous children by settler societies. In general, they caution that notions of self-regulation, within a discourse of economic rationalisation, can serve to frame intervention in terms of labour reproduction and economic outcomes. An alternative to regulating and controlling emotions is to explore and express them. They argue anger is not simply a negative emotion. When expressed purposefully it is a healthy response to perceived threats. Extending this, anger can mobilize actors against injustice (Boler, 1999; Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Whilst Vericat Rocha and Ruitenberg focus on early childhood care, their argument is extendable to older children and young people.

With regard to the form of interventions, therapeutic, healing or protective processes can be more or less critical in nature. In education, Freirian and similar traditions aim to support the agency of learners; there are parallel currents in psychiatry, clinical psychology, psychotherapy and counselling. For instance, Gómez et al. (2016) propose non-pathologizing practices that attend to contextual, social and cultural influences within a therapeutic relationship as part of relational cultural therapy. This approach includes openness to creative activities and activism.

Critically Orientated Trauma-informed Teaching

There are rich traditions and bodies of knowledge and practice to draw on to develop critical orientations to trauma-informed teaching, such as funds of knowledge (Rodriguez, 2013) and Frierian informed practices (e.g. Gutstein, 2006). These traditions point to possibilities for extending trauma-informed teaching into subject areas. History, geography and social studies are obvious curriculum areas for this. Perhaps less obvious are opportunities in mathematics and literacy. For example, embedded in the construct of adverse childhood experiences is access to secure housing, with multiple moves as a child associated with negative education, health and socio-economic outcomes. Gutstein (2006) describes working with diverse students to explore mathematically the way access to housing is racialized in the USA. The purpose is to support students to read the world mathematically. A similar critical mathematical literacy is need for students to engage with how models such as adverse childhood experiences narrate their lives. In turn, examination of social phenomena that underpin adverse experiences can support such critical mathematical literacy.

In relation to language literacy practices, if children write about their lives then stories of trauma may arise, whether personal, or, in the context of the USA, of institutional and systemic traumatizing practices such as those around race. Dutro (2017) argues that these narratives too often are triage tools to identify children for interventions and not a collective means of bringing into conversation aspects of lived experience. Critical trauma studies provide rich sources for extending psychoeducation about neurobiological responses to include cultural and historical understandings of trauma and its history. Developing such understandings may help to reduce shame associated with trauma by decentering from personal narratives through embracing collective awareness (see Zembylas, 2008).

Critically Orientated Trauma-Informed Development

Given that a key aspect of trauma-informed practice is workforce and organisational development to support awareness of trauma and inform practice, such development also requires a critical orientation. However, as yet, accounts are lacking of what this might look like in practice. Morgan et al. (2015) found trauma-informed professional development supported teachers to develop relational practices that particularly supported relationships with disenfranchised young people. However, a close reading of the reported study leads to questions about the extent to which the professional development occasioned this or participants were already so disposed.

A potential source to inform trauma-informed professional development is a model of teacher education pedagogy for social justice. Boylan and Woolsey (2015) identify the power of a pedagogy with four aspects: enquiry, discomfort, compassion, and respect. A pedagogy of enquiry supports investigation into the effects of dominant educational practices and structures, and how

these influence educational outcomes for those who are not economically or culturally privileged.

Discomfort unsettles taken for granted assumptions such as the unconsciousness of whiteness as privilege. A pedagogy of discomfort also seeks to mobilize anger against injustice (Boler, 1998; Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Such discomfort and the struggle with gaps between espoused and enacted beliefs, means that a pedagogy of compassion is also needed (Carson & Johnston, 2001), not least for the challenge of the identity-work that is entailed in reflecting on one's privilege and/or oppression. A pedagogy of respect starts from an understanding that philosophical and ethical positions and personal histories shape beginning teachers' orientations to social justice and aims to engage these positions and histories rather than attempt to overpower them or deny space for expression of them.

This four-fold pedagogy has potential when applied to trauma-informed professional development. Understanding that adverse childhood experiences and trauma are common is uncomfortable. Engaging with the trauma of others risks vicarious traumatization of participants (McKenzie Mohr, 2004). Thus, professional development should be informed by a pedagogy of compassion and respect for participants' history and identity. This is particularly so where professional development addresses marginalisation and oppression, and practitioners' rank, position and bias are part of the content (see for example, McKenzie Mohr 2004). However, including phenomena like whiteness and homophobia allow the often unspoken to be spoken (Jones, 2012), and so creating space for discussion of trauma may similarly allow for conversation about experiences that have affected professionals.

Critically Orientated Trauma-informed Systems

As with trauma-informed professional development, so far, there appear to be no accounts of instances of system level implementation of a critical orientation to social justice. Thus, the suggestions I make here are necessarily tentative. Organisations or systems can implement a critical orientation by attending to the scope of activity and the balance of different aspects of practice. With regard to scope, it is noteworthy that in reviews of trauma sensitive and trauma-informed practice there is notable absence of subjects like racism, ethnicity, immigration and refugees, sexism, sexual violence, homophobia, and transphobia. This means the scope of trauma-informed practice is narrowed, and ways societal and cultural phenomena and social policy influence trauma are not considered, with schools rarely acknowledging they can be sources and sites for trauma (Gherardi, Flinn, & Jaure, 2020).

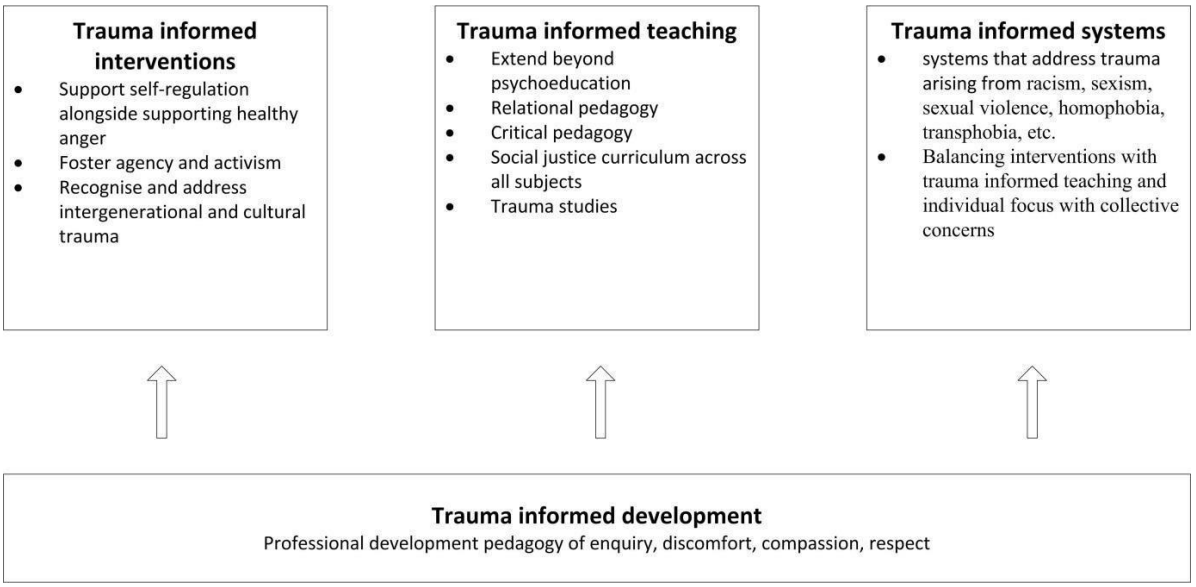
Embracing a wider scope, and accepting the importance of structure, is likely to lead to a change in the proportion of the priority given to, and prevalence of, the four areas of trauma-informed practice in organisations. For example, collective experiences addressed in trauma-informed teaching may be at the centre of what trauma

informed practice means in an organisation.

A Framework for a Critically Orientated Trauma-informed Practice

The figure below summarises a proposed framework for trauma-informed practice across the four areas of practice.

Figure 2 A framework for critically orientated trauma-informed practice



Developing Theoretical Foundations for Practice

In the previous sections, I proposed possibilities for critically orientated trauma-informed practice across four aspects of practice - interventions, teaching, development, and systems. These ways to develop practice are unlikely to be appropriate in all contexts, given that trauma-informed practices and social justice relate in fluid and complex rather than static and simple ways. To support critical trauma-informed practice, theoretical foundations need developing in three ways: theoretical and philosophical engagement, activist professionalism, and considering levels and dimensions of action.

Theoretical and Philosophical Engagement

The range of psychological, neurobiological and social theory that underpins trauma-informed practice in education is arguably narrow. Engaging with critical and radical trauma theory can widen this (Burstow, 2003). Similarly, a key driver in the trauma-informed movement is the application of neuroscientific understandings of

human development and biology. Such views counter essentialist narratives of genetic determinism that have underpinned and justified traumatizing educational practices. However, from a critical stance, such scientific theories are better understood as models, with evolutionary understanding of fight-flight-freeze mechanisms and cortisol responses complemented with alternative neuropsychological insights into emotions as constructed (see, for example, Barrett, 2006a, 2006b).

Moreover, constructions, such as adverse childhood experiences, and the way trauma itself is conceptualised, have been challenged for promoting a medicalised lens and individual pathology (Burstow, 2003; McKenzie-Mohr, 2004), and so do not recognise the importance of environment, culture and social relationships (Bloom, 1998). In the longer term, focussing on individuals means educational practitioners and schools do not fully contribute to reducing the reproduction of trauma across generations (Alvarez, 2020).

Conversely, some models of trauma-informed care suggest a greater attention to the cultural and structural than is common in trauma-informed practice in education. Gherardi, Flinn & Jaure (2020) analyse recommendations in *Trauma-informed Guidelines* (SAMSHA, 2017), produced by the USA's *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*. In the guidelines, context is emphasised and a socio-ecological model advised to understand trauma, advocating for a "broader systemic perspective that acknowledges the influences of social interactions, communities, governments, cultures, and so forth, while also examining the possible interactions among those various influences" (SAMSHA, 2017, p. 36).

Based on this, Gherardi, Flinn and Jaure (2020) suggest that application of trauma-informed awareness in education may be less developed in relation to understanding the influence of structural and cultural levels on the personal than found in trauma-informed care, as practiced in other professions. Applying the model of orientations to social justice, the SAMSHA trauma-informed care model is arguably a socially liberal conception. The socio-ecological model seeks to identify ways that social and cultural factors mediate and influence trauma experiences. A critical orientation, in contrast, would identify ways that cultural and structural aspects of trauma are important to supporting wellbeing and that cultural, social and political forces shape processes of care. Drawing distinctions across the three SAMSHA principles identified by Gherardi, Flinn and Jaure, a critical orientation suggests extending principles of trustworthiness and transparency to interrogate and analyse technologies of knowledge production. Peer support needs augmenting with mutuality and solidarity as the basis for collective action; and empowerment/voice/choice enriching with concepts such as emancipation.

Gherardi, Flinn & Jaure suggest three other moves. They note much of adverse childhood experiences research is about individuals and does not account for social, cultural and political forces that contribute to the prevalence of trauma. They encourage engaging with the "second generation" of ACEs research that extends the initial research sample who were predominantly white and middle class, and expands the list of ACEs to include community adversity, bullying, economic hardship and discrimination - amongst other factors.

The second move is engaging in social political analysis, such as McGee and Stovall's (2015) reimagining of mental health and healing and its relationship to racism through a Critical Race Theory perspective. This, they argue, serves to reimagine Critical Race Theory. Such a theoretical move also allows for rethinking the nature of trauma. This would support criticality in all four areas of practice - interventions, teaching, development, and systems. Similarly, Alvarez (2020) calls for race conscious trauma research to avoid pathologizing trauma-exposed youth. Reviewing previous research, Alvarez suggests ways to reassess existing scholarship through a critical lens, for instance disaggregating evidence on behaviour policies in schools to include analyses of differential effects by race and socio-economic background (Dorado et al., 2016; Gherardi, Flinn & Jaure, 2020).

The third theoretical move is to draw on models of school community partnership and collaborations. Researchers can support this through application of long-standing traditions of participative and emancipatory research methodologies that can support partnership and collaboration those who have experienced trauma (SAMSHA 2014; Gheradi, Flinn & Jaure, 2020). One application of such participative methodologies is to reassess and reconstruct assessment tools generated in racialized perspectives (Alvarez, 2020). From a critical feminist standpoint, Quieros and Berger (2015) point to other possibilities for more participative research on trauma-informed practice. Mayorga and Rosales (2019) describe the potency of engaging in participatory action research that links research practice directly back to activism to foster a sense of collective endeavour.

Activist Professionalism

To reduce causes of trauma requires changing wider societal structures. Activism and advocacy are written into social workers' codes and principles of professional ethics (McLaughlin, 2009) and is also found in the notion of the activist professional that has currency in teaching in a variety of formulations (Quinn & Carl, 2015; Sachs, 2003). Part of such activism involves forging new and alternative relationships with communities.

As noted, the complexity of trauma-informed practice in relation to social justice requires an ethical sensitivity to the effect of actions in relation to multiple levels and dimensions. Vericat Rocha and Rutienberg (2019) offer foci for philosophical inquiry that can support

such ethical sensitivity. They draw on Biesta's (2009) model of possible purposes of education that explores the tension between the aforementioned principle of socialisation and that of the subjectification function of education, which in turn supports developing a unique personhood. In relation to this, the second philosophical vein they suggest as important is ethics.

This echoes the importance of ethical enquiry to foster social justice teaching identified in currents within critical teacher education (Boylan, 2017). Thus, a critical orientation in trauma-informed practice entails resisting treating educational professionals, including school social workers and teachers, as technicians implementing practices developed elsewhere.

Levels and Dimensions for Action Towards Social Justice

One tension that arises when viewing trauma-informed practice through a social justice lens is how responsibility to individuals who may have experienced trauma, relates to addressing societal factors that are implicated in trauma responses or create conditions for adverse experiences. This can lead to counter posing ethical practice related to encounter with the other (Vericat Rocha & Ruitenberg, 2019) with activity to change social and economic conditions.

It is important to support school social workers, teachers and others engaged in trauma-informed practice to navigate these tensions. Here, I suggest ways to do this, drawing on both social work and teacher education perspectives. In social work theory, the personal, cultural, and structural analysis (PCS) model (Thompson, 2012) is one way to view different aspects of human experience and social life as interconnected levels. The PCS model considers that personal beliefs and activity that are oppressive or foster injustice are nested in a cultural level embedded in social structures and power. This model suggests that social justice practice should attend to all three levels and be informed by all three.

Influenced by post-structuralist relational ethics, an alternative conception developed to inform pedagogical practice, is the concept of ethical dimension, specifically relationships to the other, the societal and cultural, the ecological and the self (Boylan, 2016). An ethical dimension is a field of relational awareness that can narrow or broaden so people attend to different forms of relationship.

This relationship to “self” is a pedagogical responsibility to help create spaces for passion, pleasure and enhancing agency and freedom (Zembylas, 2014). It also refers to the responsibility to engage in the difficult and uncomfortable work of developing a social justice teacher identity (Boylan and Woolsey, 2015) - or more generally a social justice practitioner identity. This may mean confronting one's privilege and unconscious and conscious bias or, alternatively, confronting the

effects of intergenerational trauma on one's personhood and subjectivity. In the enmeshment of these levels and dimensions, the need for a post-critical sensitivity arises within or as a supplement to a critical orientation. Such sensitivity helps navigate the aforementioned tensions between the responsibility to individuals and action that serves to address the wider societal matters that shape trauma responses or are the ground for adverse experience.

Conclusion: Developing Critical Trauma-informed Practice

The relationship of trauma-informed practice in education to social justice is underexplored both theoretically and in practice. I have argued for a clearer conceptualisation of trauma-informed practice in education based on the premise that social justice and trauma-informed practice are intertwined. There have been recent contributions to problematizing trauma-informed practice from a social justice perspective (Alvarez, 2020; Gherardi, Flinn & Jaure, 2020). I have added to these by relating trauma-informed practices to orientations towards social justice. To do this, I proposed a model of four aspects of trauma-informed practice: interventions, teaching, development, and systems. Alongside this, I discussed conceptualisations of social justice in social work practice and teaching, and so argued that trauma-informed practices are enacted in more or less conservative, socially liberal and critical ways, and proposed possibilities for critically orientated trauma-informed practice. A critical orientation is appropriate because trauma and adverse childhood experiences (Felitti et al., 1998) are not only individual experiences but also collective ones. Further, people experience trauma differently depending on wider experiences of oppression and disadvantage that can exacerbate trauma. Further, a commitment to reduce the prevalence of trauma in society, rather than focussing mainly on addressing or mitigating the effects, requires a commitment to significant social, economic and cultural transformation.

Applying a critical orientation to social justice allows for interrogating and developing practices across the four aspects of interventions, teaching, development, and systems. At the same time, engaging in foundational work to support such developments is important. Further, the apparent tension between an individualised perspective and necessity for societal and cultural change to address the causes of trauma can be resolved by using the concept of ethical dimensions to guide practice. A critical orientation in trauma-informed practice requires engaging with a wider range of theory and philosophy including critical research practices. By doing this trauma-informed practitioners can attend to the intersectional and collective experience of structural, cultural and economic forces enmeshed with personal experiences of trauma. Regardless of concerns for social justice, I suggest that attending to these three foundational areas can, in general, enrich trauma-informed practice.

In the introduction, I noted a limitation as a caution, that is the relative lack of research and scholarship on trauma-informed practice in education. This is particularly so in relation to descriptions of trauma-informed practice in which social justice is explicitly embraced. As a research agenda develops for trauma-informed practice in education, engagement with critical research methodologies and methods will help to ensure social justice themes are considered.

Regardless of methodology, the proposed framework of trauma-informed practice needs developing and testing to determine its usefulness in guiding trauma-informed practice and related research whether this is from a critical orientation or not. This requires looking at its application in practice in varied situations and locations, across educational phases and in diverse professional roles. Reflecting on differences in conceptions of social justice in social work and teaching indicated that examining similarities and differences in theorisation of practice across professions could be productive. Drawing on social work and teacher education theorisations, I have sought to exemplify how inter-professional dialogue is important to developing an activist and collaborative professionalism that involves inter-professional respect and mutual learning. A critical orientation does not counter pose a particular set of practices to others rejected because they focus, for instance, on individual interventions. Instead, it requires careful engagement and implementation across all four aspects of practice. At the same time, a more critical socially just professional practice is needed that interrogates and addresses how embedded trauma and adverse childhood experiences are rooted in structural and cultural oppressions.

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