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Lessons from the Pandemic

Trauma-Informed
Approaches to College,
Crisis, Change

Edited by
Janice Carello
Phyllis Thompson

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Lessons from the Pandemic

“This book is a gift to higher education. The authors acknowledge the agonizing pain of trauma, especially for those who are on the margins, but center healing and resilience through community, creativity, flexibility, and kindness. Each chapter is rich with practical examples that showcase and celebrate the different ways of knowing. Throughout, we are invited to reflect, to grieve, to celebrate, and above all, to grow.”

—Mays Imad, PhD, Professor, Pathophysiology and Biomedical Ethics,
Founding Coordinator, *Teaching and Learning Center, Pima Community
College, USA*

“Global pandemics don’t have silver linings, but they do provide materials for grinding new lenses of perception. In this curated collection of essays, the editors lend us a view of higher education through both a trauma lens sharpened by the COVID-19 pandemic and a pandemic lens sharpened by recognizing diverse trauma histories. There is something here to inform practitioners of every academic discipline.”

—Wallace E. Dixon, Jr., PhD, Chair and Professor, Psychology, Founding
Director, *ETSU/Ballad Health Strong BRAIN Institute, East Tennessee State
University, USA*

“*Lessons from the Pandemic* represents an urgent invitation for all stakeholders in higher education to consider vulnerability, disruption, and loss in our communities, and just as importantly testifies to diverse and resilient interventions. Particularly valuable as colleges and universities transition post-pandemic, this deeply thoughtful collection envisions this moment as opportunity: out of crisis, to discern and build upon what we have learned about individuals, communities, and practices, and as Carello and Thompson affirm, ‘reimagine ourselves as educators.’”

—Jeanie Tietjen, PhD, Professor, English, Founding Director, *Institute for
Trauma, Adversity, and Resilience in Higher Education, Massachusetts Bay
Community College, USA*

Janice Carello • Phyllis Thompson
Editors

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Editors

Janice Carello
Edinboro University
Edinboro, PA, USA

Phyllis Thompson
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN, USA

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This book is dedicated to all teachers everywhere. You make a difference.

FOREWORD

The first time I ever heard the words *trauma-informed care* and learned about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study was in the summer of 2014. At the time, I was working for a local Police Department in East Tennessee as the Director of a project aimed at reducing drug-related and violent crime. Of the many program goals, one was to develop a rehabilitative probation program for felony offenders with addictions in order to lower recidivism rates. Though I've lived in this region for decades, I had no idea how deeply the drug epidemic was impacting our community. Now for the first time I was viewing overcrowded prisons, hospitals delivering staggering numbers of babies whose mothers were addicted, foster care service providers with placement shortfalls, and public-school systems where I heard phrases like *cradle to prison* and *school to prison pipeline*. As a mother and grandmother, I wondered what has happened that puts so many Appalachian children at risk of being sent to prison?

ACEs research offered a scientific explanation for the opioid crisis and, I hoped, could provide new tools for addressing it. I reasoned no one picks where they start in life, and for some the hardship and abuse experienced was due to no fault of their own. Instead of communities focusing their efforts on addressing the drug problem (which efforts don't seem to be winning), we should shift our focus to addressing trauma. So, with a sense of urgency, I decided to take action and educate professionals in my town.

It was in that journey that Phyllis Thompson, Director of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at East Tennessee State University (ETSU), attended one of my trainings. Phyllis didn't need to hear this information

twice. She was convinced it was critical science capable of making an impact for both students and faculty at ETSU. Moving forward, this knowledge has influenced her work advocating for women's health and well-being to bring a trauma-informed approach to prevention and education on gender-based violence across campus and to provide trainings on trauma-informed practices to faculty and staff. Phyllis and I both serve as members of the ETSU Ballard Health Strong Brain Institute.

Janice Carello is also a professional committed to bringing a trauma-informed approach to her work as university faculty. As an Assistant Professor and MSW Program Director at Edinboro University, her research and advocacy focus are on retraumatization in educational settings and on bringing a trauma-informed approach to higher education. In 2019 she co-edited *Trauma and Human Rights: Integrating Approaches to Address Human Suffering* with Lisa D. Butler and Filomena Critelli. In January 2021, Janice was the lead facilitator of a two-day online institute "Trauma Informed Strategies for Teaching and Learning: Creating a Culture of Belonging, Fostering Retention, and Increasing Degree Completion" held at ETSU. This institute featured evidence-based approaches and modeled best practices geared to the specific needs of ETSU.

Together these two seasoned faculty members have teamed up to deliver an insightful compilation of wisdom gleaned by their own experiences as well as that from several colleagues in *Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change*. In March 2020, as the world began shutting down around the global pandemic of COVID-19, no one knew that it would provide an unexpected learning lab. As the world came to a standstill, it was soon realized that "life must go on." Yet, there was no textbook written by which to chart these unknown waters. University faculty and administration across the nation had to make broad decisions, hastily move courses to virtual learning, and distance themselves from students and associates in order to "carry on." As the chapters in this book illustrate, educators met this challenge head on. By doing what they do best, they kept on learning and discovering ways to effectively communicate and connect with students. The result of their labors is now transparently shared in *Lessons from the Pandemic: Trauma-Informed Approaches to College, Crisis, Change*. This blending of insight penned in essay style offers possibly a first reflection of its kind from this unexpected "learning lab." In my work as member of the National Trauma Campaign core strategy team, and as an international

presenter on the topic of trauma and the Adverse Childhood Experiences study, this pioneering work will possibly ignite others to make similar reflection. It is no surprise that educators like Phyllis, Janice, and the authors included in this book have welcomed the opportunity to reflect and, in doing so, teach others. Without hesitation, I recommend you share in their learning journey.

Author, Speaker, Trainer
<https://BeckyHaas.com>

Johnson City, TN, USA

Becky Haas

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca A. Adelman, PhD (she/her) is Professor and Chair of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. She is the author of *Beyond the Checkpoint: Visual Practices in America's Global War on Terror* (2014) and *Figuring Violence: Affective Investments in Perpetual War* (2019). She is also the co-editor of *Remote Warfare: New Cultures of Violence* (2020). In March 2020, she launched Coronavirus Lost and Found (pandemicarchive.com), a public archival project where anyone can log anything they've lost or found because of coronavirus.

Alka Arora, PhD (she/her) is Associate Professor of Women, Gender, Spirituality, and Social Justice at the California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS) in San Francisco, CA. Her scholarship is focused on three interrelated areas of inquiry: feminist spiritual activism, vegan ecofeminism, and transformative pedagogy. She uses an integral feminist pedagogy in her teaching, inviting students to see social justice work as a form of sacred praxis. Alka also facilitates public workshops with Gender Equity and Reconciliation International (GERI), a non-profit organization that draws on the power of truth-telling and dialogue to transform gender relations.

Laura Arpan, PhD (she/her) is the Theodore Clevenger Professor of Communication at the School of Communication at Florida State University (FSU). Her research areas are the processing of health and pro-environmental messages, the relationship between attitudes and behaviors, and the adoption of technology related to environmental and health behaviors.

Kristen Atkinson, PhD, MSW (she/her) is a full-time faculty member at Metropolitan State University (MSU) of Denver, teaching primarily in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program. Her practice background is centered around positive and community youth development and includes work to reduce interpersonal and community violence, build intergenerational partnerships and embed anti-oppression within our organizations. Kristen's research explores young people's activism for social justice and social change and draws on the methods and philosophies of community-based participatory research.

Kimberlyn Bennett, MSW (she/her) is a therapist working with survivors of sexual assault and a researcher at Metropolitan State University of Denver. She has experience in supporting clients with their mental health in the inpatient, outpatient, and school settings. During her undergraduate program, Kimberlyn completed a psychology internship in Sri Lanka where she worked with trauma survivors, individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities, and people living with mental health illnesses. She is passionate about utilizing trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and anti-oppressive practices in her clinical work. Kimberlyn's research focuses on student experiences during collective trauma.

Julia M. Bernard, PhD, LMFT, CFLE, CCTP (she/her) is Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Norwich University. She previously was an associate professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Counseling and Human Services at East Tennessee State University (ETSU). She holds a PhD in Family Studies from Purdue University. She is a clinical fellow of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. She is a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional and a Trauma-Informed Care and Mental Health First Aid trainer. She is also the immediate past president of the Southeastern Council for Family Relations.

Tony Bobadilla, PhD, LCSW is a passionate scholar-practitioner in the field of social work who divides his time between clinical practice, training, consulting, scholarly writing, and research. He is an assistant professor who teaches social work and special education. As a professor, he collaborates and teaches future social workers and special educators. In his clinical practice, he delivers cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and other evidence-based treatments to adult, children, and adolescents with a wide range of emotional, behavioral, and adjustment problems. In his consult-

ing work, he provides intensive service to adults with disabilities and behavioral concerns.

Nikki Bosca (she/her) is a doctoral student in the Department of Learning and Instruction at University at Buffalo and Assistant Director in the Office of Digital Learning at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. Her research interests include writing as a cognitive process, writing-to-learn, and Writing Across the Curriculum. She holds an MA in English and spent many years teaching first-year writing and working as a CRLA certified writing tutor.

Lyndi Bradley, MSW (she/her) is the Program Manager for the Institute for Family Violence Studies. Lyndi graduated with a Master's in Social Work and a certificate in Leadership and Executive Administration Development from FSU's College of Social Work in May 2018. Her research interests include child welfare, domestic violence, and student well-being.

Janice Carello, PhD, LMSW (she/her) is an assistant professor and MSW Program, Director at Edinboro University. She holds a PhD from the University at Buffalo where she also earned her MSW degree and a Certificate in Trauma Counseling. Her scholarship focuses on retraumatization in educational settings and trauma-informed approaches in higher education. She co-edited *Trauma and Human Rights: Integrating Approaches to Address Human Rights*. She also publishes trauma-informed teaching and learning resources on her blog: traumainformedteaching.blog.

Donna Cherry, PhD, LMSW (she/her) is a professor in the Department of Social Work. She is a licensed clinical social worker and a certified therapist in EMDR. She specializes in trauma therapy and teaches a trauma therapy course. Donna uses her trauma knowledge and experience in her work with the ETSU Strong Brain Institute (SBI), the International Storytelling Center (ISC), and several other community agencies and projects.

James J. Clark, PhD (he/him) is Dean and professor at the Florida State University College of Social Work and co-PI for the FSU Student Resilience Project. His research interests include forensic behavioral health, trauma and resilience, and the study of lives. From 2010 to 2012, James was co-PI on a pandemic study funded by the National Institute for

Homeland Security at the University of Kentucky Center on Trauma and Children that studied the psychosocial effects of pandemic and public health responses on children and families in North America.

Perri Corvino (she/her) is a licensed clinical social worker and educator. She is a full-time lecturer of social work at MSU Denver with a focus on clinical courses. She integrates relational and liberatory practices into her pedagogy with BSW and MSW students. She is completing her PhD studies at Smith College's School for Social Work. Her dissertation is on trauma-informed teaching and learning. Perri provides clinical consultation for social workers, counselors, and addiction counselors as well as organizational support on becoming trauma-informed.

May Elawar, PhD (she/her) holds a PhD in Philosophy and Religion with a concentration in Women's Spirituality from CIIS and is an assistant professor in that program. May is interested in bridging spirituality/religion with social justice activism. She is Lebanese and came to the US as an international student. May is particularly interested in exploring alternative and non-western philosophical frameworks to address theories of knowledge, identity, gender, colonialism/postcolonialism, transformative justice, and globalization. May's research and activism has focused greatly on social justice in the Arab and Muslim world, particularly for women.

LaKeithia Glover (she/her) is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. She graduated from the University of Georgia and holds a master's degree in Social Work from Clark Atlanta University. Through these educational endeavors she worked to provide mental health support and program skills to vulnerable and disadvantaged populations of the greater Atlanta area as well as rural counties in Georgia. Lakeithia is a Social Work PhD student completing her education at Clark Atlanta University. After completion of her degree she hopes to work toward developing healthcare and public health strategies to promote mental health strategies in lower socio-economic communities.

Joanne Gozawa, PhD (she/her) holds a doctorate degree in Integral Studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies where she is an associate professor in the Transformative Inquiry Department. Her academic interests are in transformative pedagogies that include enacting radical inter-subjectivity, extended epistemologies, presence and contemplation, synergistic principles, and practices that problematize "normalcy." Her pedagogy is applied in the learning contexts of education, leadership

development, and diversity and inclusion. She is also interested in how to bring embodiment and deep learning into virtual learning spaces.

Jenny Jones, PhD, MSW, ACSW (she/her) is Dean in the Department of Social Work at Clark Atlanta University. Jenny's scholarly interests include examination of constructs in administrative practice (supervision and organizational culture) in child welfare organizations; child well-being to include children and families impacted by HIV/AIDS; and culturally responsive evaluation practices. Her interest in promoting quality programs for vulnerable children and families is grounded in over 20 years of professional experience in direct service, administrative practice (supervision and management) with children/youth in out-of-home placements and their families (CPS, foster care, residential treatment) program development, and evaluation practice.

Katherine McCarthy (she/her) has been at the Indiana University School of Social Work since August 2013. She brings to her teaching over a decade of experience as a social worker addressing issues of mental health, both in urban communities and on a college campus. Her research involves strengthening learner-centered social work pedagogy and supporting college student wellness. Katherine completed her doctoral studies at Smith College School for Social Work. She has an MSW in Clinical Social Work from Boston College Graduate School of Social Work and a BS in Biology and English from the University of Notre Dame.

Aiko Minematsu (she/her) is a doctoral student in the Department of Learning and Instruction at University at Buffalo and a lecturer at Center for Language Education and Research at Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. Her research interests include multilingual and multicultural education and teacher education. She holds an MA in TESOL and a secondary school teaching license for foreign language education in Japan.

Tiffany Karalis Noel (she/her) is a clinical assistant professor and Director of Doctoral Studies in the Department of Learning and Instruction at University at Buffalo. Her research utilizes qualitative methods, such as narrative inquiry, to explore teacher preparation, professional identity formation, mentoring relationships in higher education, and sociocultural inequity issues within and across educational contexts. Her most recent publication examines the history of pandemic-prompted xenophobia, its relationship to sensationalized media discourse, and its impact on the global economy and educational landscape.

Karen Oehme, JD (she/her) is the Director of the Institute for Family Violence Studies in the Florida State University College of Social Work, the director of the FSU Student Resilience Project, and Chair of International Academic Resilience Consortium (academicresilience.org). Her research focus includes the impact of trauma, abuse, and victimization. The Institute specializes in creating large-scale online multidisciplinary trainings for professionals including child welfare workers, judges, lawyers, social workers, and first responders (familyvio.csw.fsu.edu). Before joining FSU, Karen served as an attorney for Legal Services of North Florida and the Guardian ad Litem Program of the Second Judicial Circuit.

Ann Perko, JD (she/her) is the Director of Policy and Special Projects at the Institute for Family Violence Studies, College of Social Work at Florida State University. Her interests include the long-term effects of childhood maltreatment on adult functioning and building effective trauma-informed resilience interventions. She has also served as an attorney and legislative policy advocate for low-income families and domestic and sexual violence survivors. Ann graduated from The University of North Carolina School of Law, Chapel Hill, with a JD, with Honors in 1990, and from Duke University, with a BS, in Biology in 1987.

H. Michelann Quimby (she/her) is an award-winning Assistant Professor of Instruction in the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). She researches, writes, and speaks about online culture and behavior, online trauma-informed practice, and ethics. She holds a PhD in Human Development from Fielding Graduate University, a Master of Organizational Leadership and Ethics from St. Edward's University, and a Master of Music from San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Elizabeth C. Ray, PhD (she/her) is a postdoctoral scholar for the College of Social Work at Florida State University. She holds a PhD in Communication and an MA in Integrated Marketing Communication from FSU and is also a University of Florida graduate, with a BS in Telecommunication-News and a BA in Political Science. Her research is focused on health and crisis communication. Before becoming a postdoc, she worked as a public relations professional and as a television news reporter.

Sara H. Salazar, PhD (she/her/ella) is an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies. She